B.F. SKINNER AND THE GRAND INQUISITOR

by William A. Rottschaefer

Abstract. B.F. Skinner allures us with the possibilities of turning the stones of materialistic rewards into the bread of human values. He tempts us by assuring success in achieving our goals through behavioral science, if only we give up our autonomy. He offers the power of complete control over our behaviors, on condition that we relinquish responsibility for our lives to a technological elite. Is B.F. Skinner a flesh-and-blood Grand Inquisitor? This essay tries to persuade the reader that Skinner's offers are worth considering.

Keywords: freedom; Grand Inquisitor; science and technology of behavior; science of values; B.F. Skinner; values.

It is a truism that science and technology raise serious questions about traditional conceptions of ourselves as autonomous, moral agents. Equally obvious is that we have not yet come to any satisfactory resolution to this challenge to our self-understanding. This essay explores one aspect of this challenge as it concerns our understanding of freedom and the good life. I shall use as reference points the tale of the Grand Inquisitor in Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov,* and B.F. Skinner's *Beyond Freedom and Dignity.*

In his famous novel, Dostoevsky has Ivan Karamazov tell his brother Alyosha the story of the Grand Inquisitor. Its setting is sixteenth-century Spain at the time of the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic Inquisition. The purpose of the Inquisition was to discover and root out heresy, and heretics often died by burning at the stake. The action centers on a brief incident in the city of Seville. Jesus, it seems, returns to earth, healing and raising a dead girl to life. The Grand Inquisitor witnesses the raising from the dead and has Jesus imprisoned.

The story focuses on the Grand Inquisitor's interrogation of Jesus during the night of his internment before his threatened execution

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the following morning. During the interrogation, Jesus remains silent. His crime is to have returned and to have threatened the success of the Church's efforts. For, as the Grand Inquisitor tells Jesus, the Church has had to correct and improve upon his message. The Word of Jesus was doomed to failure, since it assumed that people were capable of freely choosing to love one another and were interested in pursuing a spiritual life of devotion to God and neighbor. According to the Grand Inquisitor, this view of human nature is radically in error. In fact, humans are a wretched lot. They prefer earthly to heavenly bread and choose slavery over freedom to assure themselves of the happiness that material values bring. Only a very few may be capable of following Jesus' path; the vast majority follow the road of obedience and faith in authorities. In the Grand Inquisitor's view of things, Jesus' overcoming of the temptations of the devil—to turn stones into bread, fling himself down from the heights of the temple so that the angels could save him, and to receive the kingdoms of the earth in exchange for worshiping the devil—make absolutely clear the devil's failure to comprehend what is necessary for human happiness. Material values, faith in miracles, and obedience to authorities—these bring the only happiness of which humans are capable. Jesus is thus portrayed as the wild-eyed idealist whose message will leave the majority completely unhappy. The Grand Inquisitor and his cohort are the realists who take things as they are and make the best of them, grim though they may appear. The Grand Inquisitor's remonstrances are met by Jesus with silence and a departing kiss. Jesus leaves unharmed, the threat of execution unfulfilled, but also, it seems, without moving the Grand Inquisitor to change his ways.

Whether religiously inclined or not, we are, more than likely, attracted by the message and person of Jesus in this story and repelled by the Grand Inquisitor's account of who we are and of what we are capable. Freedom is not only a fundamental value for many of us, it seems to be our most fundamental value. We are probably inclined to agree with Patrick Henry's ringing ultimatum "Give me liberty or give me death!" Indeed, if our values are a measure of our worth, then our freedom, our capacity to choose, is the chief constituent of our dignity as humans. Thus, some consider it a mark of Dostoevsky's insightfulness that he has captured an essential aspect of our nature and has realized that it is recurrently threatened by temptations to follow the so-called realistic path, to sacrifice freedom and dignity for a view of ourselves that will inevitably lead to destruction and degradation. The ecclesiastical view of the Grand Inquisitor is one version of that temptation. Today, the threats seem to come from

the scientific and technological elites, the new ecclesiastical establishment. If Dostoevsky were around today, he would have no trouble—nor have many others—in identifying apparently similar tempting appeals to realism. Aldous Huxley portrays a fictionalized form of this temptation in his biologically engineered and chemically managed *Brave New World.* Even more recently, the works of socially concerned scientists, including Harvard sociobiologist E.O. Wilson and behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner, may remind us of the tale of the Grand Inquisitor. The title of one of Skinner's books, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity,* seems to leave little room for doubt that the temptations of both devil and Grand Inquisitor still beckon us. Indeed, the modern sciences and technologies of behavior, anticipated or in process of realization, appear to many as a fundamental threat to our humanity.

This essay explores Skinner's proposal for a science and technology of human behavior, showing that it does not lead, in any obvious way, to the disastrous kind of view of ourselves and our prospect that its association with the Grand Inquisitor's vision might seem to entail. Indeed, I shall claim that Skinner's vision has much to offer us, if we seek to solve the many problems that threaten our freedom and dignity. To put Skinner's point in a paradoxical way: We can and ought to choose to move beyond freedom and dignity and, in so doing, we will better ensure both.

First, I will lay out Skinner's project under three headings: the science of behavior, the science of values, and a technology of behavior. Second, I will examine the charge that Skinner is the Grand Inquisitor reincarnated and show how it fails. Although I defend the Skinnerian science and technology of human behavior from its critics, I end on a less than conclusive note, reflecting on the ambiguities that still remain in our attempts both to understand ourselves in the light of the modern behavioral sciences and technologies and to reconcile these views with more traditional religious and humanistic self-understandings.

SKINNER'S PROJECT

The Science of Behavior. B.F. Skinner has long been concerned with the many problems facing our world. As undoubtedly the most famous of behavioral psychologists, he has attempted to bring to bear the tools of his science in the solution of these problems. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* and other works, he sketches these problems, some proposed solutions to them, and his own views about how to solve them using behavioral psychology.

We know what these problems are: overpopulation, environmental degradation, poverty, injustice, war, the threat of nuclear annihilation. If anything, the problems that Skinner details have gotten worse since he wrote his book in 1971. We now have a much better sense of how threatening our environmental problems are because of the greenhouse effect, the depletion of the ozone layer, air and water pollution, and the destruction of the rain forests. We now know that we are losing or endangering hundreds, if not thousands, of species each year. Despite the recent disarmament agreements, we are aware that nuclear arsenals are more threatening to the existence of all life than ever before. Terrible wars continue to rage in parts of Africa and in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union. Racism and sexism are alive and well all over the world. Drugs, crime, poverty, and injustices are all around us.

Of course, this is just a summary, inadequate picture of the problems. We probably do not like thinking about them too much. And, unless we are immediately affected by them, we might avoid doing so. But we realize that we need to and have to. Skinner recognizes this responsibility, too, and sets out to figure out why it is that we have been seemingly so unsuccessful in solving them. His diagnosis is that we have been relying on inadequate conceptions of who we are and why and how we do what we do. We conceive of ourselves as responsible persons who ought to pursue freely what is valuable for ourselves and others. As a result, Skinner claims, we understand neither why we continue to fail to solve our problems nor how to solve them. We incorrectly believe that the reason for our difficulties is that we do not act responsibly and have chosen freely to disregard what is truly valuable. This incorrect diagnosis causes us to pursue inadequate solutions. We urge that it is time to return to basic values, to teach people to be responsible and do what is right. In sum, we believe that our worth resides in being responsible persons. To be responsible means that we must act responsibly, and to act responsibly, we must freely choose to pursue what is good for ourselves and others.

Skinner believes that we need to substitute a scientific view of humans, based in part on his own behavioral psychology, for the commonsense, religious, and humanistic views we have of ourselves. Though these views differ in various ways, they all share the conception of humans as doing what they do because they have certain wants that they desire to satisfy and certain beliefs about how these wants can best be fulfilled. According to this view, we choose between our various wants on the basis of the values we assign to them and on the basis of what is demanded of us by our moral obligations and

values. People may differ about what is the ultimate basis for our moral values and obligations. Some may say, as religious people do, that they come from God. Others, like some humanists, may claim that they come from ourselves and our creative choices. Still others may maintain that they come from society. Whatever their source, all agree that we choose freely to satisfy, or not to satisfy, certain wants on the basis of our moral values and obligations.

Skinner, however, has different ideas. Extrapolating from his study of animal behavior and human learning, he believes that we must substitute a causal explanation of why and how we do what we do for the commonly accepted account based on free choice. Skinner and other behavioral scientists maintain that our behavior, like that of other animals, is governed by identifiable causal factors. These causal factors and the effects that they bring about can be formulated in some basic laws. The two basic laws of behavior are those of respondent and operant conditioning, each of which we will look at in turn.

The famous Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov is responsible for the earliest formulation of the law of respondent conditioning—probably almost everyone has heard of Pavlov's dog. Pavlov knew that his dog's mouth watered whenever he brought him a piece of meat. He decided to see if other things, stimuli, would do the same thing, so he rang a bell before he presented his dog with some meat. Ordinarily, dogs do not salivate when they hear a bell ring. Salivation is the result of a stimulus such as meat. After Pavlov had repeated his trials for a while, it turned out that his dog began to salivate when he heard the bell ring and before the meat was presented. In technical terms, the meat, the unconditioned or unlearned stimulus, elicited or brought about an unconditioned or unlearned response. The bell, the conditioned or learned stimulus, elicited the salivation response also. The dog had learned to salivate at the ringing of the bell. It turns out that there are a whole set of unconditioned stimuli, different for different animals, which bring about different unconditioned responses. These unconditioned stimuli can be associated with other nonrelated stimuli, like the bell with the meat, to bring about the same behavioral effect as the unconditional stimulus. In fact, a whole chain of learned stimuli can be associated with the unconditioned stimulus and thus evoke the behavior that the unconditioned stimulus does. For instance, a loud noise may be an unconditioned stimulus that elicits from you a frightened response of jumping. The loud noise itself may be preceded regularly by a flash of light. You may then, after a time, jump in response to a sudden flash of light just as you do to the loud noise. This kind of learning is called

respondent conditioning or respondent learning, and the affected behaviors are called respondent behaviors.

What about the other major type of behavior, operant behavior? Pavlov's dog can illustrate this type of behavior, too, though Pavlov didn't discover the laws of operant behavior. Edward Thorndike, working with cats, was the first to do so. We have all seen how dogs can roll over. Suppose one saw a dog roll over and play dead, that is, it stayed on its back motionless with its legs extended stiffly in the air. The first thing one would probably notice is that its behavior is rather unusual, unless, of course, it really were dead. Dogs salivate when presented with meat without learning to do so, but they do not roll over and play dead naturally. Therefore, the behavior is not one that could have resulted from respondent conditioning since in respondent learning new stimuli evoke naturally occurring behaviors. How did Pavlov's dog learn this new behavior?

Dogs sometimes roll over when they are playing or when they meet a dog that is their superior. A trainer, then, can be alert to when this happens and reward her dog when it rolls over. Gradually, by the skillful application of rewards, she can get her dog to roll over and keep its body stiff and its legs straight up in the air.

Here's an example of another type of operant learning. Suppose you're teaching your dog to walk on the leash. At the beginning, it tugs hard and almost drags you along, but you hold firm and walk at a moderate pace. After awhile, the dog is walking along at your pace. This time, instead of rewarding it for doing something, you have presented it with a negative consequence for the continued behavior of tugging at the leash, the negative consequence of the collar digging into its neck in an uncomfortable fashion. So it learns to avoid that consequence by walking at the right pace. One more example. Suppose you're in the park walking your dog, and you decide that it would be good to let it off the leash so it can have a good run. You know that when you have done this before, it tended to run off, and you had a hard time finding it. You had to hunt for it and then chase after it to get it back on the leash. So sometimes you have given the dog a little whack on its rear end when you finally caught up with it. You hope that this punishment will decrease the running-off behavior. You're not sure that it has. Sometimes the dog may avoid you because of the whacks! Now for a summary in technical terms.

We have been talking about what Skinner and the behavioral scientists call operant learning, of which there are two kinds: reinforcement and punishment. The first two cases were examples of two kinds of reinforcement, positive and negative reinforcement. The last case was an example of punishment. There are actually two

types of punishment learning, but the purposes of this essay do not require further explanation of that. The chief difference between reinforcement and punishment is that reinforcement increases the chances that the behavior that precedes the reinforcer will occur. The first type of reinforcement, the case of Pavlov's dog rolling over and playing dead, is an example of positive reinforcement. In positive reinforcement, the rewards, the positive reinforcers, increase the probability of the behavior for which they are a reward. The reward of a pet increases the probability that the dog will roll over and keep its legs stiff and straight up in the air.

The second type of reinforcement learning is negative reinforcement. Negative reinforcers, like positive ones, increase the probability of a behavior. But negative reinforcers, as in our example of your teaching your dog to walk on a leash, increase the probability that the behaviors for which they are the consequences will be avoided. The negative reinforcer in our example was the uncomfortable pull that your dog felt on its neck. The behavior that brought that about was the dog's tugging. The consequence, the uncomfortable pull, tends to bring about an increase in behaviors that eliminate or avoid it. Your dog avoids the negative reinforcer by walking along at your pace. In punishment, the consequence of the behavior diminishes the chances of that behavior occurring rather than increasing the chances. Our example of punishment learning was the case of your attempting to get your dog not to run away when off the leash. The whacks on its rear end are the punishers. The diminished behavior is running off. One of the things that Skinner and his colleagues discovered was that reinforcement learning, particularly positive reinforcement, is a more powerful mode of learning than punishment.

I have kept my examples simple to bring out what the different kinds of learning are. I have given examples from animal behavior; but according to Skinner, the same principles apply to human learning. Perhaps readers have heard of the example of how students conditioned their teacher to stand in one small section of the classroom near the blackboard by reinforcing him with smiles and nods of approval when he was in certain sections of the room. Initially, he would roam the classroom while lecturing and discussing with his students, but by a judicious use of reinforcers, the students confined their teacher to the corner of the classroom.

Remember that the point is to illustrate the laws of behavior. According to Skinner, these basic laws govern what we do. Of course, our behaviors are much more complicated than jumping and standing in a corner, but the idea is the same. According to Skinner, our everyday activities, even though much more complicated, can be

explained by these basic laws. Naturally, the explanations would be much more intricate because there would be many more stimuli, reinforcers, and punishers involved in complicated causal chains bringing about many different kinds of behaviors. Skinner's claim is that we can analyze the stimuli, behaviors, reinforcers, and punishers involved in the problem-causing behaviors that we are all now engaged in and then we can figure out how to change the stimuli, reinforcers, and punishers so that we can produce different behaviors, ones that do not cause the difficulties that seem to be overwhelming us. We can learn behaviors that lead to positive results for ourselves and everyone. This brings us to Skinner's next major thesis.

The Science of Values. Let's grant to Skinner for the sake of argument that he has come up with the laws that govern how we do what we do. The question of why we do what we do remains. We need to know the goals for which we act and we need to know the right kind of goals, correct values, not just the means to achieve them, if we are going to solve our problems. So we must discuss Skinner's answer to the why question, his provocative claim that the science of operant conditioning is the science of values.

To do this, we shall focus on the notion of positive reinforcers. In Skinner's view, values are positive reinforcers and disvalues are negative reinforcers. Since behavioral scientists study the ways that reinforcers govern our behaviors, they are necessarily concerned with the way values direct our behaviors. Insofar as they can discover a systematic account of the relationships between positive and negative reinforcers and our actions, they are developing a science of operant conditioning that is, by the nature of positive and negative reinforcers, also a science of values.

How is it that we can describe positive reinforcers as values? Skinner would consider it a mistake to confuse reinforcers and punishers with the pleasures and pains that, from a commonsense point of view, we often identify with values and disvalues. Recall that, technically, positive reinforcement is the effect or consequence of a behavior that increases the chances that the behavior will be performed again. Pleasures are sometimes, but not always, a result of positive reinforcers and pains are sometimes the results of punishers. In avoiding negative reinforcers, we on occasion avoid painful events, but pleasures and pains are experiences that we sometimes have as a consequence of positive reinforcers and punishers. They are inside of us; the positive and negative reinforcers are not. Values are those things, properties of things or events that, because they are positively reinforcing, increase the chances of a behavior happening again.

What are the kinds of things or activities that induce us to continue to seek after them? Putting the question that way helps us to see what Skinner has in mind. Food, clothing, shelter, the things that make for good health, friends, family, learning, athletic and artistic activities are some positive reinforcers. Notice that some positive reinforcers are so only for individuals. For instance, you may be reinforced by spinach. I may not be. Other reinforcers are cultural. North Americans are more reinforced by football than by soccer. For South Americans, it is the other way around. So there are both individual, cultural, and societal differences in reinforcers and, thus, in values. But Skinner also claims that there are values that are common to all of us as a species. These specieswide values are, therefore, cross-cultural and cross-temporal. They can be found in all cultures and in all times. All of the things on our list of examples would count as specieswide values. Of course, there are individual, cultural and societal variations on the kinds of food, clothing, shelter, and so on that people find reinforcing and therefore valuable. It is important in applying the science of values for the technologists of behavior to know these individual, cultural, and societal or group variations.

We realize that identifying specieswide values gives us only a set of general laws. We can predict which things or events will attract humans so much that they will tend to perform those behaviors that will bring them about. To have a science, we need not only general laws to predict and explain individual phenomena, we also want theories to explain the general laws by enabling us to understand the basic realities that are behind the phenomena that are captured by the laws. If Skinner is serious about offering us a science of values, he needs to answer the question of why it is that positive reinforcers are reinforcing, or why it is that values are valuable.

At this juncture, behavioral psychology connects with evolutionary theory. One of the aims of evolutionary theory is to explain the origin, maintenance, modification, and extinction of living things. Evolutionary biologists attempt to describe the patterns of these changes in living things and then to find the causal mechanisms that can account for these patterns. One of the factors that accounts for the patterns of stability and change in a species or a population is the differential ability of its members to survive and reproduce. Those members of the population that are better adapted to their environments are relatively more fit, that is, have the better chance to survive and reproduce. If other factors do not intervene, the better-adapted do survive and reproduce more than the less well-adapted.

What do adaptations and fitness have to do with the science of operant conditioning and the science of values? Recall that the question was, Why are reinforcers reinforcing and values valuable? The evolutionary answer to that question is that some reinforcers are things that help the reproduction and survival of organisms. That is why they are reinforcing and valuable. Better-adapted organisms are more fit than less well-adapted ones because they more successfully achieve these reinforcers. A key assumption here is that reproduction and survival are reinforcing. Given that assumption, we can understand why many of the reinforcers on our list, especially what we called the specieswide reinforcers, are reinforcing. It is clear that food, shelter, clothing, and family contribute to reproduction and survival. Thus, the former are means to the latter. But there is another way to understand how evolutionary theory helps explain why reinforcers are reinforcing and that is to notice that reproduction and survival are necessary for the achievement of other reinforcers. Survival and reproduction are not the only ultimate reinforcers; there can be others. But without them, most, if not all, of the other reinforcers are unachievable. If we don't survive, we cannot expect to be positively reinforced in other ways; nor will our children, if we don't reproduce. The same thing is true if we now consider positive reinforcers as values. Survival and reproduction, as one set of ultimate values, help explain why other values identified by the science of operant behavior are valuable. They are valuable because they enable survival and reproduction. The latter are valuable as necessary conditions for the achievement of the values discovered by the science of operant behavior. So Skinner maintains that the science of operant behavior, or, more broadly, behavioral science, fits in with biology, in particular with evolutionary theory, and that the two together can offer an explanatory and predictive account of values.

So far, then, I have tried to lay out two parts of Skinner's program. First, we discussed his notion of a science of behavior and particularly the laws of operant conditioning. Next, we examined his claim that the science of operant behavior is the science of values. Now we have to move out of the realm of theory and into the practical world. All of the theories in the world will not do any good if we cannot use them to create a better world. Skinner believes that we can achieve a better life for ourselves and others, if we use his science of values to engineer it. Thus, the science of operant conditioning as a science of values leads to the final part of Skinner's program, a technology of behavior.

A Technology of Behavior. According to Skinner, it doesn't do any good at all to have used our science of operant behavior and values to identify in general what we ought to do and how we might do it if we do not know how to apply our knowledge to concrete situations. As it stands, a science of operant conditioning and values gives us only generalities. Of course, this kind of situation is not a new one. Consider physics and materials science, for instance. They're necessary for building bridges but certainly not sufficient. If we wanted to build a bridge across the river in our town, we would have to know a lot about terrain, weather, and wind patterns in the area where we planned to build and about the amount of traffic we expected, the materials that we wanted to use, and a lot more. Moreover, we would have to know how to translate our general knowledge about forces, stresses, and materials into particular knowledge about the particular bridge we are planning to build. Skinner believes that the same thing is true of the values problems that we face as humans, either as a group or as individuals. We need to have the know-how and the skills to be able to apply the science of values in order to achieve concrete solutions to our many pressing problems. Consequently, Skinner argues that we should learn methods of behavioral control. We need to discover the particular stimuli and systems of rewards that will enable individuals, groups, whole societies, and the entire species to change problematic behaviors, adapt more beneficial behaviors, and maintain and increase value-enhancing behaviors. In particular, we will have to learn how to shape our behaviors to more long-term values that enhance the welfare of all people and that preserve and enhance the environment and other species besides our own.

If we want to create a world that enhances values and that gives us a better chance of the good life, then we must reject notions deriving from common sense, religion, or humanism that our problem has been that we have not paid enough attention to searching our inner selves for our basic values, have failed to educate our children about these basic values, and have not built up our character so that we would be able to exercise our responsibility and choose what is right. It is this image of autonomous persons freely achieving the good that we must reject for another image. We must realize that we are shaped in our behaviors by a whole panoply of forces, particularly environmental forces. Our job is to discover these causes using a science of behavior. Armed with this knowledge, we have the task of applying it by means of a technology of behavior to the achievement of the values that the science of operant conditioning can help us discover. Instead of the image of autonomous persons seeking the good, we need the vision of automatic persons actually

achieving the good. The former image may soothe our vanity, but it gives us an unreal and ultimately disastrous notion of our dignity. The latter image is realistic and, if pursued, will lead us to the world we all desire. Or so claims Skinner.

SKINNER AS THE GRAND INQUISITOR REINCARNATED

By now the similarity of Skinner's program and the Grand Inquisitor's mission seems forbiddingly clear. Both deny human freedom. Both hold that such a denial is part of the process that will lead us to the good life. Both, finally, seem to require that we give up our dignity and freedom in order to be ruled by an elite who will somehow enable us to achieve the good life that we all desire. Has the Grand Inquisitor come back to tempt us? Let's consider these charges in more detail and speculate as to how Skinner might respond to them.

Skinner Denies Our Freedom. The Libertarian, one who holds that we have freedom of choice, charges that Skinner's determinist position is both factually false and inconsistent. It is inconsistent since, on the one hand, he claims that our behaviors are all governed by our genetic and learning histories, and yet, on the other, he urges us to choose those long-term positive reinforcers, values, that enhance our species and the environment. However, if we have no choice but to do what our genes and environments dictate, we are not free and cannot choose freely. So a dilemma is posed for Skinner: either we are free or we are not. If we are free, then his science and technology of behavior are inadequate. If we are not, then his science of values is beside the point. As a result we must either abandon his science and technology of behavior or give up his science of values. For the latter presupposes that we are free and the former presuppose that we are not; therefore, we should resist the temptation to give up our conception of ourselves as free persons. Not even angelic power can prevent Skinnerian scientific determinism from crashing against the solid pavement of facts and logic.

Let's first see how the Skinnerian tries to avoid dashing his feet against the hard facts; then we can see how he hopes to get around the charge of inconsistency. To solve the factual issue, we have to consider what the Libertarian and the determinist each mean by freedom. In contrast with the determinist who claims that everything that happens could not have happened otherwise, the Libertarian says that some things could have happened otherwise. In particular, the Libertarian maintains that free human actions could have

happened differently. Instead of choosing to eat a dish of ice cream every evening at Trifon's, one could have chosen to jog. Humans are able to choose something or not and to choose one thing rather than another. These choices are not determined by genes or environment. That's why we are free. It is this basic ability that makes for both our glories and failures. If our choices are based on genuine values, then we will create a world of happy humans living in harmony with their environment. If they are not, then we live miserably in a miserable world. Skinner seems to have been blinded by his faith in science and technology, just as the Grand Inquisitor was by his faith in Church dogma and authority.

Let's consider the Libertarian's view a little more closely. The first thing to notice is that Skinner need not claim that things could not have been otherwise than they are now. If the causes had been different, then things would be different. If your genes and learning history had been different, you would have been out jogging in the evening rather than gobbling up chocolate sundaes. So the Libertarian doesn't have a corner on the things-could-have-been-different market. But can we really make sense of the notion of free choice? Here's a Skinnerian argument that the Libertarian is talking nonsense. Either something made us make the choices that we did or nothing did, but it doesn't make sense to say that nothing made us do what we did. Something has to have brought about our choices. The Libertarian has mentioned choices based on values. Skinner, on the other hand, talks about actions based on positive and negative reinforcers and punishers. If values (or reinforcers and punishers) are the bases for our choices, then we have determinism. If it's nothing, then we are talking nonsense.

The Libertarian has a straightforward response to this charge. Skinner seems to have left out—not surprisingly—the most important variable in the equation, the person herself. Choices either come from nothing, something, or *someone.* Skinner's characterization of the sources for choice is inadequate. But Skinner will press his point. He will ask the Libertarian to consider how her choices come about. Sure, they are her choices and not someone else's. But how does she make them? Do they just pop out by chance? Or does she create them out of nothing as God is supposed to have created the world? Neither alternative is very satisfactory. If we take the first one, we seem to run into problems with one of the Libertarian's favorite doctrines, the notion that we are responsible. We hardly think that a person has acted in a responsible fashion, if her choices just spring out of her in a random fashion, without a consideration of alternatives and a weighing of the values involved in each alternative. Besides, it could

well be that behind every chance event there is a lawful relation waiting to be discovered. On the other hand, the Libertarian will have a rather tough time trying to show that she has the creative powers of a goddess, so it is not clear that it really helps to say that choices come from the chooser and not from something else or nothing.

The Libertarian may be a little upset at this characterization of her position. She has always said that choices are based on values. They do not spring out of thin air either by chance or divine power. But does this clarification of her position really help? Skinner himself, as we have seen, claims that we do what we do in part because of our values, the positive reinforcers. These are necessary, though not sufficient, conditions of some of our behaviors. Is there then really any difference between the Libertarian and Skinner? Both seem to think that there are some necessary conditions for choice to occur. This seems to be the difference: as a determinist, Skinner claims that there is a set of necessary and sufficient conditions which bring about all our choices. The science of operant behavior and biological/evolutionary theories of behavior identify some of these conditions. Probably, the other social sciences, like sociology, anthropology, political science, and economics, will be needed to identify the rest. The Libertarian, on the other hand, will argue that when all of the necessary and sufficient conditions have been identified, we still have the ability to choose or not choose or to choose this rather than that. Even if values are the basis for our choices, either we ourselves choose these values to be a basis or they do not determine our choices. The meanings of their positions are now clear, and it is time to look at the arguments that each of the antagonists might offer for his or her position.

The Libertarian bases her argument on an appeal to experience. If we attend to our experiences, we will discover that on some occasions we choose freely. We find that there is nothing determining what we choose. Of course, the Libertarian does not have to hold that she is infallible. She may be mistaken about some of these experiences. Sometimes our choices may appear not to be determined, but in fact are. Her point is that she is not always mistaken. Some of these experiences of freedom are genuine ones. She asks each of us to pay attention to our own experience and argues that we will discover the same thing. To further bolster her argument, she appeals to the records of history and the stories of literature. *The Brothers Karamazov,* she argues, gives a vivid portrayal of free choices and their sometimes disastrous effects. How might a Skinnerian reply to this argument from experience, an argument which I suspect many of us find persuasive?

The Skinnerian responds by raising questions about the adequacy of the experiential approach. Suppose, he might say, that you see a leaf falling to the ground. Someone with libertarian leanings might say that the leaf has decided to take flight and leave its homeland to find refuge in a foreign land. Who would believe the Libertarian, even if she insisted that she didn't see a single cause that brought about the leaf's precipitous flight? No one! The Skinnerian response is an example of what philosophers call a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, one that makes an opponent's argument seem ridiculous. But it fails because it presupposes the point that needs to be proved, namely, that the Libertarian has failed to identify the causes of her choice, just as in the case of the free-floating leaf. However, the Skinnerian contends that, given a careful analysis, even the hidden causes of our behaviors can be flushed out. Take the case of doing something that we find very pleasant, such as going to a good movie. The Libertarian argues that she could have gone to fifty-five different films or, indeed, she could have stayed home and watched one of a much larger number of movies on her VCR, but she freely chose to see *My Left Foot.* On the other hand, she could have been unduly pressured by her children to take them to see *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids.* In the first case, she claims to have acted freely; in the second case, she felt compelled, not free. Our Skinnerian champion counters that in the first case the alleged free action should be understood as an action done on the basis of positive reinforcement and in the second case, the apparently unfree action was one done under the influence of negative reinforcement. Our Libertarian wanted to avoid the results of having to stay at home and take care of her complaining children. So she ended up going to that ridiculous shrunken kids film. Notice that in both cases she was acting under the influence of reinforcers. Consequently, from the Skinnerian perspective, free actions are the ones that are done under the aegis of positive reinforcers and unfree, forced actions are ones that are done under the influence of negative reinforcers. What happens, then, is that when we are acting under the influence of positive reinforcers we sometimes do not notice their presence. As a result, we think that we act without the determination of any causes. On the other hand, when we are acting under the influence of negative reinforcers, we often notice the causal factors that are operating. Consequently, we believe that we are not acting freely but are forced to do what we are doing.

This redescription of freedom as acting under the influence of positive reinforcers and unfreedom as acting under the gun of negative reinforcers seems to flop when confronted with the phenomenon of hard choices. Occasionally, we act freely, even though the choice

is a difficult one having nothing pleasant about it. If that's so, then we can still make a case for freedom in the Libertarian sense. We act freely when we make a difficult choice, for instance, deciding not to throw a toxic liquid down the drain even though it would have been very convenient to do so and one could get away with it easily. The problem with this Libertarian response is that it confuses acting under the influence of positive reinforcers and pleasurable actions. Sometimes the two occur together; but, according to Skinner, there is no necessary connection between them. In the example about the toxic liquid, there could well have been some positive reinforcers bringing about one's choice. One does not pour the liquid down the drain because one has come to find the value of keeping the water supply pure more reinforcing than that of convenience and saving time. The Skinnerian asks us to examine the antecedents and consequences of our choices carefully and argues that if we do we will always find a set of positive and negative reinforcers operating. This kind of analysis may take one beyond one's experience, but that shouldn't be too surprising since all of the sciences have succeeded by moving beyond ordinary individual experience, not in the sense of forbidding appeal to it, but by requiring more care and control in its use.

So it is true that Skinner denies that we are free, in the sense of having free choice, but he also maintains that we haven't lost anything that we ever had. Freedom as free choice is an illusion, the result of either failing to recognize the positive reinforcers guiding our choices or letting ourselves come to a false conclusion about their absence because of the difficulty in discerning them. Skinner has not only attempted to dispel our illusion; he has also offered us an alternative account of freedom. According to Skinner, we are free when we are acting under the influence of positive reinforcers. In other words, we are free when we are acting on the basis of genuine values. We can now see that Skinner and his Libertarian opponent are taking up two classical philosophical positions on freedom. Skinner's notion is the Platonic one that freedom is doing what is good. The Libertarian's is the Aristotelean notion that freedom is the ability to choose to do either evil or good. In the Platonic view, people always seek what is genuinely good or what appears to them to be good. If they do the former, they are free; if the latter, they are unfree. For the Aristotelean, on the other hand, we can do either good or evil freely or unfreely.

Skinner, then, believes he can avoid the dilemma posed to him by the Libertarian. One horn of the dilemma requires Skinner to give up his science and technology of behavior because we are in fact free,

not determined, as his science of behavior implies; but since, in Skinner's view, freedom of choice is an illusion and freedom as acting under the influence of positive reinforcers is compatible with determinism, he does not have to relinquish his behavioral science. The first horn of the dilemma is blunted. Nor must his science of values go because, as the second horn of the dilemma insists, values presuppose freedom and his science denies it. According to Skinner, we are free if we act on the basis of positive reinforcers, genuine values. Precisely these value-seeking actions are the object of Skinner's science of values. So the second horn of the dilemma is also blunted. Only the Libertarian's Aristotelean concept of freedom as free choice forces one onto one or the other of the horns of the dilemma. Since Skinner holds for the Platonic conception of freedom, he can avoid the Libertarian trap.

Characterizing Skinner as a Platonist leads naturally to the second way in which he seems to be the Grand Inquisitor come back to tempt us. Even if we would grant to Skinner for the sake of argument that freedom is acting on the basis of positive reinforcers, we cannot, argues the Libertarian, accept the idea that values, the good, are to be identified with positive reinforcers. The stone of positive reinforcers cannot be turned into the bread of values.

Skinnerian Values Are Empty. Even though Skinner includes such apparently nonmaterial values as family, friendship, and artistic and intellectual pursuits on his list and maintains that since they function as positive reinforcers they are legitimately there, the Libertarian may feel that they have no real home in the Skinnerian kingdom of values. They are ill-fitting aliens whose home is really in commonsense, humanistic, and religious accounts of values. Aristotle provides the Libertarian with one way of putting this feeling of uneasiness into an objection. Aristotle maintains that values are built on human nature. By that he means that we have a set of capacities that constitute our nature and whose development and exercise make us well-functioning human beings. Besides our bodily needs for food, clothing, and so on, we also have capacities for knowledge, love, friendship and other nonmaterial goods. Thus, what makes something valuable is that it promotes well-functioning by fulfilling the capacities of human nature. Since, for Skinner, values are only reinforcers, he can only identify a value as something which makes someone increase his or her activity in its pursuit.

To answer this objection, the Skinnerian asks us to recall the connection between his behavioral science and evolutionary theory. Operant conditioning depends on genetic capacities. Learned

behaviors and secondary reinforcers are founded on unlearned behaviors and primary reinforcers. What this means concretely is that our chances at survival and reproduction have been bettered because we have certain unlearned capacities and capabilities, such as our cognitive powers and our abilities to cooperate and to form social groups. These abilities and capacities have themselves been enhanced and extended to a wide range of behaviors through learning. We can include in these learned achievements such things as culture, ethics, science, and religion. There is a way that Skinner can make use of the Aristotelean notion of human nature without all of the Aristotelean baggage about species being eternal. Human nature is a historical, not an ahistorical, eternal phenomenon. On that score, Skinner and Aristotle differ, but they can agree in large measure about the needs, capacities, and capabilities that make up human nature. So Skinner, as well as Aristotle, can appeal to human nature to explain why values are valuable.

The Libertarian, still unsatisfied, objects that Skinner's concept of human nature is biologically reductionistic. If something is valuable only because it promotes survival and reproduction, then we have only two things that are valuable in themselves, and the rest are valuable only instrumentally, that is, because they lead to what is intrinsically valuable. Recall, however, that all Skinner has to claim is that survival and reproduction are necessary conditions for the continuation of such values as culture, ethics, science, and religion. Thus the former are means to the latter just as much as the latter might be means to the former. Moreover, unlike biological reductionists, Skinner does not claim that culture, ethics, science, and religion must somehow be biological adaptations, that is, that they are the result of natural selection acting on heritable variations. Most probably they are not. Rather they are, as most psychologists and others would claim, learned, not inherited traits. Thus, even though they might contribute on occasion or frequently to survival and reproduction, they could, from Skinner's perspective, have an independent value.

But this response doesn't really get Skinner out of the woods, since to claim that these values are learned and possibly independent of the biological basis of survival and reproduction seems to commit Skinner to another foundation for values and to certain values that are nonmaterial and involving the realm of the mind. Of course, Skinner has made his reputation, in part at least, by his denial of the existence of the mind. One such foundation for morality that involves the mind and other apparently nonmaterial realities

is, of course, religion. Surely Skinner cannot accommodate religion and God into his system. Let's try him out.

For instance, you know that Al and Lisa are religious people. They help other people and are honest because they believe that that's what God wants them to do. In their view, then, the ultimate foundation for values is God. But Skinner appears to be an atheist just as, it seems, the Grand Inquisitor was; so he cannot found values in God. But if you cannot found values in God, you cannot found them in religion. Indeed, there doesn't seem to be any point to values or religion without God. Therefore, Skinner has to account for the value of religion and the idea of God, even though he might deny the existence of God.

For the Skinnerian reply, consider Al and Lisa again. They go to a church school and attend church every Sunday. These are their major learning environments. When they are taught about such important values as cooperation and concern for the environment, these values are put in the context of pleasing God and doing God's will. When they actually work in the shelter for the homeless or help clean up trash along the river bank, they receive a lot of smiles, words of praise, and rewards from their parents, teachers, and pastor. In particular, they hear how God is pleased with what they have done. If they litter or are selfish, they then see a lot of frowns and are reprimanded. They are told how God is not pleased with what they are doing. Thus, one can see how the primary reinforcers of smiles and frowns, material rewards and punishers, are linked together with words about what God commands, what pleases God, and God's plans. As a result, the behaviors that were once governed by simple material reinforcers can now come under the control of talk about God. Indeed, people can come to internalize this kind of God-talk so that their parents, teachers, and pastors do not need to be around reinforcing them or punishing them when they do something that is good or bad. Al and Lisa can apply their own reinforcers to promote good actions by talking to themselves about how what they are doing is or is not pleasing to God. From their perspective, they are acting freely to carry out what God wants. From the Skinnerian perspective, they are acting because of the positive reinforcing effects of the God-talk that they have internalized and which has its reinforcing effects because of its connection, perhaps through a long chain of intermediate reinforcers, with some basic material reinforcers. That's a simplified account of how the Skinnerian, without betraying his principles, might attempt to show how he can keep an apparently nonmaterial value like religion on his list of values.

The religiously inclined Libertarian is not likely to be satisfied with this account of religious values because it reduces them to material values by making them merely a set of words that get their reinforcing effect, and so their values, from association with material values like hugs and kisses or frowns and slaps. Setting this objection aside, one might still think that the emptiness of Skinner's account is evident in his attempt to reduce ideas and the mind to conversation and self-talk. Values belong to the realm of the mind since they are in the first place ideas that lead to action, ideas that motivate. Values are subjective, not objective facts about reinforcing effects. Even Skinner's account of so-called material values, like good food, is inadequate. Food becomes a value for us because we have the cognitive abilities to recognize it as something that is necessary for our well-being and so choose to pursue it and to help others get their fair share. Skinner's account of values is empty because, as his critics have told us over and over again, his psychology is about empty organisms, organisms without a subjective side, and so, necessarily, about organisms without values. Thus even someone who does not value religion, some humanists say, will still find fault with Skinner's account of values.

In addressing this objection, it will be helpful to consider some points about the subjectivity and objectivity of values to find out where the Skinnerian and the Libertarian agree and disagree. It should be clear that the Skinnerian can talk about values as subjective in the sense that they are fulfilling for the subject, that is, for the person for whom they are values. Food and doing God's will are subjective in the sense that eating food is fulfilling for the person having the meal and doing God's will is fulfilling for the person doing it. So both the Libertarian and the Skinnerian can agree that values are subjective in at least one sense of the term. Moreover, we should notice that the Libertarian probably will not want to say that values are subjective in the sense that they are not genuinely valuable, that they are only apparently fulfilling of the person who enjoys them, but not really. In this sense of being genuine as opposed to fake, values are not subjective but rather objective. That is, I can't make something valuable merely by thinking about it or wishing it were valuable. I can't make stones valuable as food by merely thinking that they are food. They need to be real food. The Skinnerian and most Libertarians can agree about this too. Indeed, recalling the Skinnerian distinction between personal, social, cultural, and specieswide values, they could also agree on another point about the subjectivity and objectivity of values. They can concur that there are some genuinely valuable goods which are so for a particular

individual because of her unique learning history and genetic makeup. These goods are both objective insofar as they are genuinely valuable and subjective because they are unique to a particular individual and not common to a group or to the species.

Though we might suppose that an irenic Skinnerian and Libertarian might come to some agreement about shared meanings for the subjectivity and objectivity of values, there remains the fundamental objection that Skinner views humans as empty organisms. They lack a subjective side, and since that is essential for having values, Skinner's account of values is ultimately hollow. In order to present the Skinnerian reply, we need to introduce another important concept in the science of behavior, the notion of learning history. Consider Lisa and Al again. They have been going to church and church school now for quite a while. And they have been reinforced and punished for their behaviors for a substantial period of time. Indeed, they are considered to be good, even though not perfect, young adults. In technical terms, their past experiences constitute their learning histories. Because of their learning history, Al and Lisa will tend to do certain things and not others in a given situation. They will tend to do what is right when it comes to the environment or helping someone out who is in need. Does Skinner, then, deny the existence of thoughts and so the existence of values? In one sense he does. He does not believe that thoughts as we usually think about them exist. According to the commonsense view, they are things in our minds that enable us to know about the reality outside of our minds and to act on it. In Skinner's view, this is half right. Ideas are the consequences of our actions and the actions of the reinforcers. So they are, in part, another way to talk about learning history, but they are neither the primary movers of our cognitive achievements nor our actions. The natural and social environment and its reinforcers are the primary movers. We do not act or change because we are moved by our ideas or have changed them. Our ideas change because we have acted or acted differently. Every individual has a genetic history and a learning history. No individual is a blank slate or an empty organism. But our genetic and learning histories do not come from nowhere, just as our free actions do not; they are shaped by the natural and social environments that produced our evolutionary history as a species, our cultural and social history as cultural and social beings, and our individual learning histories as unique persons.

Suppose then we grant to the Skinnerian that there can be a science of values in the sense of a scientific discipline that (1) identifies values for the species, a society, or a culture; (2) discovers empirical laws

that show how values are related to behaviors and to the conditions in which various behaviors occur; and (3) develops theories that explain these laws by laying out the causal factors at work in producing the regularities captured in the empirical laws, thereby giving us an understanding of the foundations of values. Nonetheless, such a descriptive and explanatory account of values does not seem sufficient for Skinner's enterprise. What we need to know is not just what our values are but what they ought to be. We need ethics, the philosophical discipline concerned with the study of moral values and obligations, what is morally right and wrong, and the prescriptions that bind us morally, as well as the ways in which we can justify these prescriptions and give an adequate foundation for values. To put it very simply, science deals with facts and causes, but ethics deals with values and justificatory reasons. It may be a fact that food is reinforcing and is a value, and Skinner's science of values may help us understand why that is so, but the science of values can do nothing to tell us what we ought to eat or even that we ought to eat or that everyone ought to have sufficient food. Nor can it give us any justificatory reasons for what we ought to do. Hasn't Skinner confused his science of values with ethics? If so, he has committed what philosophers call the naturalistic fallacy. That is, he has attempted to derive what ought to be the case from what is the case.

Let's consider an analogous problem. Suppose you are writing a paper on Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. One of your friends asks you how you are doing on it. Your reply is that you are doing just fine. You expect that you'll finish it with relatively few problems. Your friend is the Socratic type, so she asks for the basis of your optimistic assessment. You reply that you dreamt last night that you would finish the paper in a blaze of glory. Or you say to her that you heard it last night on TV. Your replies sound like jokes, not justifications of your claim that you will successfully complete your paper. At best, they tell her how you might have gotten the idea that you will have no problem finishing an excellent paper. But what you need for a justification is something like the facts that (1) you have successfully completed similar papers in the past, (2) the Dostoevsky paper is like those you have done, and (3) Dostoevsky hasn't driven you mad yet. The point is straightforward. There is a big difference between where you get an idea about something and what justifies it. Consider a famous example from chemistry: Frederick Kekule was a well-known nineteenth-century German chemist who discovered the structure of a complex chemical structure called the benzine ring. This is how it happened. One night after he had come home from a hard day's work in the lab, he fell asleep while sitting in front of his fireplace. In a

dream, he saw a snake biting its tail as it whirled in the fire. He awoke with a jolt; he had what he had been searching for, the hexagonal structure of the benzine molecule. Now suppose he went into his lab the next morning and told his colleagues that he had made this great discovery and that it turned out that he was right. If they asked him to justify his conclusion, the response that he dreamt it would not count as an adequate basis for his claim. He would have to point to various observations that he had made in the lab and the fit of his new finding with other laws and theories that were already held to be justified by the scientific community. You yourself have probably come up with a lot of ideas in various odd or not so odd ways. But just because you got the idea doesn't mean that it is a correct one. Justification of a belief is different from the discovery or origin of a belief.

Now consider another case. You're out with some friends for the evening. While you are eating at the local gathering spot, you notice Al and Lisa in the ticket line at the theater across the street. "There's Al and Lisa," you blurt out. You're surprised because you thought that they were going to be working on a Dostoevsky term paper. Your Socratic friend is again at your side with the familiar question: "How do you know that it was Al and Lisa whom you saw?" You say that you saw them and tell her to take a look herself. The area is well lighted. You are at a window table, and you have just had your eyes checked and they're in good shape. Now consider how you got the idea that Al and Lisa were in the ticket line. You saw them. And how do you attempt to justify your idea? By your visual observations. In this case, you are using the very same means that you used to get your idea in order to justify it. Is that cheating? No! Sometimes the way that we get an idea is also a reliable means for justifying it. That's often the case with perception. Even though we might want to say that the mechanisms by which we acquire ideas are not always satisfactory for justifying them, sometimes they are. What we want to find are the mechanisms that reliably generate beliefs. If we do, then we can use them to justify the beliefs which they also generated.

Let's apply this example to moral ideas. Those who think that there is a naturalistic fallacy can be thought of as accusing Skinner of confusing how we get to our moral positions with how we justify them. The science of values may be able to identify the causes that bring us to our moral stances, but they cannot identify the reasons that justify these stances. Recall the previous examples. We can grant to the skeptic that not any and every way to get to a moral stance is also going to justify that moral stance, but that does not mean that none will. If we can find the mechanisms that generate reliable moral

stances, we can appeal to them in our justifications as well as our causal explanations. Just as you appealed to your perceptual powers to justify your claim that Al and Lisa were in the theater ticket line so you could appeal to the reinforcing effects of something to justify it as a value. Of course, nobody is infallible. Maybe you mistook Al and Lisa for Ivan and Katie. And you might mistake that delicious dish of ice cream you were eating when you spotted Al and Lisa for something that is a long-term value for you. The Skinnerian, then, claims that by identifying the laws of operant conditioning he has identified some of the reliable mechanisms for acquiring genuine values. As a result, these mechanisms can be appealed to in justifying claims about what one ought to do. His science of values makes the necessary connection with ethics.

A Surrender of Dignity. This brings us to the last kind of objection that one who sees Skinner as the Grand Inquisitor might have. If, as Skinner seems to admit, our behaviors, ideas and values come ultimately from the environment and if, as Skinner argues, we need a science of behavior to understand all of this and a technology of behavior to put it into practice, then it follows that most of us will be pawns in the hands of a few masters, the scientific and technological elites, who will construct the social environment that will determine our behaviors, ideas, and values. No matter that we are free because we are acting under the influence of positive reinforcers. No matter that we will be achieving the good because the positive reinforcers that move us are the best combination of values for us individually, socially, and as a species. We, nevertheless, will have lost our dignity as human beings, for we will be automatons controlled by the scientific and technological elites. The only difference between the authority of the Grand Inquisitor and his cohort and that of the Skinnerian regime is that the latter will probably be more effective and so the loss of freedom and dignity more profound. The Skinnerian is telling us that if we fall down in submission to his authority, the good life will be ours. How will the Libertarian respond to this final temptation?

Staunchly refusing to give in, she asserts that we have a choice of two hypotheses concerning freedom and values and each of these has profound implications for how we view ourselves, for our dignity as human persons. The Libertarian offers us the dignity of autonomous persons freely seeking the good, while the Skinnerian presents us with a view of ourselves as automatons necessarily achieving the good, if properly programmed. But the latter view, the Libertarian contends, would lead to disaster. Consequently, her view is clearly

preferable. The Libertarian is offering us a kind of pragmatic argument. She argues that her view must be true after all because, if we put it into practice, it will turn out to achieve the most desirable results. We will not achieve the good life we want unless we look at ourselves as capable of freely choosing the good. Dignity is a prerequisite for success, and dignity depends on how we look at ourselves. If we consider ourselves able to achieve what is valuable because we are conditionable and conditioned by natural and social environmental factors, if we consider ourselves as automatons, we will fail. However, if we look at ourselves as autonomous persons we have a chance.

The Skinnerian will be quick to reject this pragmatic appeal to dignity. To him, the Libertarian's calls for us to *think* of ourselves in a certain way or to *choose* a certain view of ourselves are only empty slogans. They leave us empty-handed, without the tools to implement our goals. In essence, they forget about the technology of behavior that is necessary if we are to put our science of behavior and values to work. More specifically, the technology of behavior is a kind of required training program. It is the practical application of the science of behavior to society and the individual. Once we have identified where we want to go, our basic values, the positive reinforcers that we want, then we can begin to develop skills that result in the attainment of these positive reinforcers and the avoidance of negative ones. So the technology of behavior teaches us how to analyze what we are doing now, what the reinforcers are that are governing our behaviors and in what circumstances. We can change the environmental conditions using these analyses so that the desired reinforcers begin to control our behaviors. The Skinnerian maintains that he offers a program, a way to achieve what we want. The Libertarian offers worthless rhetoric. So the pragmatic argument, he contends, belongs to him and not the Libertarian.

Nor, in the Skinnerian view, is there reason to fear the results of implementing a technology of behavior. For what being automatically good means is that we have become so skilled through the successful applications of the technology of behavior that we will spontaneously do exactly the right thing in the right situation. We will not have to go through anxious, prolonged deliberations about what is right and wrong and what is the best way to do what we are morally obliged to do. We will not waste precious time with existential indecision. Of course, the Skinnerian reminds us that this kind of skilled achievement of the good does not come all at once. It requires the hard work of training, but the results are worth it. What about the charge that the Skinnerian program will make us the slaves of scientific and

technological elites? The Skinnerian believes that that problem is easily handled since the science of behavior and values and its technology is open to everyone. The ideal is that of *self-control,* not control by others. Anyone with the requisite knowledge and skills has the ability to exercise countercontrol toward those who would attempt to control others inappropriately. In the Libertarian account, we have only words to ward off oppressors; in the Skinnerian, so he would maintain, we have effective tools. The Skinnerian is not calling for an enslaving submission to the technologists of behavior, but rather for an emancipatory use of these technologies by each of us in pursuit of our collective well-being and that of the environment.

CONCLUSION: ONLY AN AFTERGLOW?

Where does all this leave us? Recall that the Libertarian had challenged the Skinnerian account of how to achieve the good life for ourselves and others because it was fundamentally of the same sort as that of the Grand Inquisitor. It denied freedom, made a mockery of the meaning of values, and made us obedient servants of an elite. We have now examined these three objections and have found a way in which the Skinnerian can apparently disassociate himself from the charge of being the Grand Inquisitor reincarnated. But now we hear a final warning from the Libertarian. In the story of the Grand Inquisitor, Jesus' departing kiss leaves a glow on the old Inquisitor's countenance but does not, it seems, move him from his fixed views. Should we not say that all of these admissions, concessions, and reinterpretations on the part of the Skinnerian are just the expressions of the glow that the Libertarian's gentle challenges have left on his countenance, but that these expressions are empty because they do not signal a genuine change of heart? Just like the Grand Inquisitor, the Skinnerian speaks of freedom but really denies it, extolls values but has none save the basest, and urges self-control and controlling the controllers but demands submission to them. Of course, I am sure that you will not be surprised if the Skinnerian loses no time in reaffirming his view that adopting his position requires only that we give up an inadequate account of freedom and dignity in order to achieve the genuine articles. He will ask us to recall Jesus' words, "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39).

Has it come to the devil quoting scripture to make his point? That is a question that each of us will have to answer for himself or herself. After all, what did Jesus' silence and departing kiss really mean? Was

the Grand Inquisitor's glowing countenance only skin deep? Why did he allow Jesus to go free? Perhaps the Skinnerian's dialogue with his religious and humanist critics shares some of the indecisiveness and ambiguity of Jesus' meeting with the Grand Inquisitor—as does, it seems, our own encounter with the sciences and technologies of human behavior.