

Why the Cognitivists Hate the Behaviorists: The Pecker-Envy Hypothesis

Nearly a hundred years ago, Freud revealed the truth. My wife badgers me because I've got something she doesn't.

That has always been a great comfort to me.

It hasn't stopped the badgering, but at least I know why it's occurring. And I know that I'm the better man.

The feminists have tried to turn this around. My sister—who is also a carpenter, by the way—wears a rather offensive pin that reads, "The only one who ever envied a penis was another man." What balderdash!

Of course, I learned my lesson when I sprained my wrist lifting one of her barbells. So I *humor* her. I'm sensible. I value my life, so I *humor* her.

What does all this reminiscing have to do with psychology, you ask?

You see, I worked with the man himself, *B.F. Skinner*. Yes, he was still alive at the time, and, at this writing, he is *still* alive. I often have to reassure people about this.

And I always wondered why people were so dead set against behaviorists. Skinner himself has been called—in print, no less—everything in the book. I once made a list of some of the nasty things people said about him. He has been called:

"Machiavellian,"

"a Nazi,"

and "evil."

(Well, that follows.)

"An opponent of everything good and true,"

and "an enemy of Democracy, mother love, and apple pie."

(What nonsense. The man *loves* apple pie.)

His writing has been criticized thus:

It's "irrational."

It's "not rational."

It "lacks rationality."

These, of course, were Chomsky's criticisms.

And then, my favorite:

"Zero plus zero equals zero."

That one, also by Chomsky, strikes me as truly profound. Truly—well, what else can I say?—truly *rational*.

And I, too, simply by *association*, have been dumped on occasionally by cognitivist colleagues. I have, in various debates, been insulted. My work has been called "for the birds." (A cruel pun, really, I didn't have the heart to tell them.) I have seen red faces. I have seen fists. I have seen *spittle*.

Fortunately, I haven't felt it.

On one occasion, after a talk I gave at a meeting of the

Robert Epstein
Cambridge, MA

KNEELING BOY, by George Minner, Museum of Fine Arts, Ghent.



American Psychological Association, a cognitive psychologist jumped onto the stage and challenged me to a duel. My tape recorder was still running, so she can't deny it.

Why?

A thousand times I've asked the question "Why?"

Why do they hate us so? Why, Sigmund....Why?

As usual, Freud held the key (you know, one of those things you poke into apertures).

It's obvious. What do Skinner, Goldiamond, Sidman, Lindsley, and Azrin all have in common? In fact, even the few females among us—Reese, Segal, Logue—what do we all share that no other psychologists have?

Why, peckers!

It all began when, under contract with the United States Army, a good *macho* organization, well-stocked with *guns* and other symbols of *what it takes*, Skinner and colleagues worked on a top-secret project atop a dusty old warehouse in Minneapolis. There, pigeons were trained—not to play ping-pong or the piano, no, none of that pansy stuff—but to guide *missiles*.

To sit right in the front-seat of the largest phallus ever manufactured by man and blow themselves and four or five thousand people to smithereens!

All right!

Now, sis', you see what you're up against. You can keep your barbells! Give me pigeons any day!

So this, I now believe, is the reason why cognitivists are so damned hostile toward the behaviorists. Freud told us long ago. It's simple pecker envy. We've got 'em, as big as footballs, and they don't.

(I don't expect this to stop the hostility, but at least now I know why it's occurring.) ■