extension of the principle that has to do with the division of labor and the specialization of work. Farmers specialize in farming, mechanics specialize in machinery, doctors specialize in preventive and corrective medicine, teachers specialize in education, and so on. In Walden Two, at least two further specialties are added: child-raising specialists and specialists in governing—in planning and managing the affairs of the group. It has often been pointed out that what may be the two most important vocational roles in any society require, in traditional society, virtually no specialized training at all—namely, parenting and governing. Walden Two makes good these two traditional deficits, and in so doing it is able to successfully achieve the goal of democracy by using, not democratic methods, but the methods of science. If the important criterion is the goal of democracy rather than its method, then Walden Two is, by virtue of the scientific method, the first effective democracy ever portrayed in a plausible way. Therefore we may, if we wish, call Walden Two a scientific democracy and thereby distinguish it from all other democracies.

An indispensable feature of Walden Two is its size as a social unit. To successfully attain the humanitarian aims that are associated with traditional democratic and socialist or communist programs, the size of the social unit must be taken into careful account. This is an integral part of the scientific approach characteristic of Walden Two. The accomplishment of humanitarian aims depends not only on the democratization of government in the sense of control in the interests of all the people, or on the socialization or communication of the economy in the sense of social or communal ownership, but also on the democratization or socialization or communication of behavior. The achievement of humanitarian aims is contingent on behavior, and for that reason an effective behavior technology is the most important means for insuring that achievement. It is, however, only in a relatively small group or society that the behavior of men can be effectively governed or controlled. This is true for the behavior of both the governors and the governed—the controller and the controlled. Both control and countercontrol depend on social units of controllable size. Thus, by keeping the size of its groups within manageable limits, Walden Two avoids the wholly overwhelming and insoluble problems that are endemic in mass societies characteristic of the modern world. Using the model of Walden Two as a guide, we may confidently conclude that a truly humanitarian world would consist of a universal network of small communities united by a common goal and a common method. The goal would be the survival of the human species and the happiness of all its members; the method would be that of science mobilized for achieving that goal. It may be hoped that conscientious democrats, socialists, and communists will begin to take this guide to cultural replacement seriously. If they do not, then they will never be able to convincingly demonstrate to a wholly confused and exploited mankind that their anciently cherished social ideals are fully within reach.

There are other important features of Walden Two that may be briefly described. The government controls production and consumption in an intelligent way for eliminating waste, duplication, and the various forms of sophisticated ignorance which are engineered in badly organized societies to emphasize conspicuous consumption. It carefully refrains from propaganda of any sort. Specialized versions of group life which celebrate past and present glories and the heroes who contributed to them along with all other devices and the heroes who contributed to them along with all other devices for piecing in a bad or incomplete governmental design are not required. The use of such spurious devices would, in fact, be fatal to the experimental spirit of science upon which the government is founded. The point is an important one, for as long as propaganda exists there is no way to determine with assurance whether men support their government because they are reinforced by actual living conditions, or because they are reinforced by imaginary conditions created by clever indoctrination. The valid test of any cultural design must rest on the honesty which is indispensable to a scientific analysis.

By implementing a total culture that is carefully designed to make all its citizens happy and competent for social living, the government of Walden Two is able to produce a striking social effect. Not only is there a release from the ignorance and evil that are characteristic of traditional societies, but there is also a corresponding simplification of life. Drug addiction, deception, crime rebellion, and other troublesome or dangerous forms of behavior do not exist. There is no place for policemen, soldiers, politicians, lawyers, capitalists, salesmen, and other representatives of the kinds of practices which trade on conditions bred by badly designed and mismanaged societies.

It is important that the essential key to the workings of this markedly superior culture be clearly understood. In designing controlling practices for creating a strong and happy people, it is not only the use to which control is put that is important but also the kind of control that is used. In other words, the superiority of Walden Two culture is explained not only by invoking the moral or ethical objective for which control is consistently exerted, but also by invoking the particular method of control that is applied for accomplishing this objective. Accordingly, in Walden Two systematic efforts are made to eliminate the method of negative or aversive control (which includes both negative reinforcement and punishment), and to govern by the method of positive reinforcement alone. Moral or ethical training is accomplished by dealing not with the individual’s final behavior to behave (as is the case when positive reinforcement is used). The result is that people behave well not because they have to; “freedom” need never arise.

But the importance of using positive reinforcement for achieving a universally consistent ethical result does not end there. For, if the citizens of Walden Two do not become drunk, quarrel, steal, rape, murder, or make war, it is because they have never been reinforced for behaving in these ways, or for behaving in ways which might culminate in these behaviors. The result, in traditional mentalistic language, is that they do not want or desire to do these things, they do not feel like doing them, they do not value or choose activities of this sort. In traditional societies, the “wants,” “desires,” “feel likes,” “values,” or “choices” or men are left to the control of various and conflicting patterns of accidental, biased, and ethical contingencies embracing positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, and punishment. This, of course, explains the various and conflicting patterns of behavior displayed by traditional men. But in Walden Two the above noted “mental” events are solely the product of ethical contingencies mediated by positive reinforcement. This, of course, explains the consistent ethical conduct shown by the men of Walden Two. It also explains why, in Walden Two, the question of moral or ethical “values” need never arise.

The general picture that emerges from Skinner’s utopian exercise is one in which all the important aims of traditional humanitarian programs have been realized. The men of
Walden Two are uniquely free, not from the inexorable laws of behavior which govern the rest of the human species, but from the multitude of aversive conditions which hold all other men in bondage. They are uniquely equal, not in the genetic capacities which divide all men, but in opportunities to operate upon their environment in order to generate reinforcing consequences. They are uniquely intelligent, not because of superior genetic endowments, but because they have been taught how to learn and think effectively, rather than what to learn and think. They are uniquely moral, not because of any innate virtues, but because they live in an environment where all contingencies of reinforcement are products of ethical design. The final result, therefore, conforms with the goal that has typically been identified with the words "humanism," "liberalism," "democracy," "socialism," and "communism." The difference is in the means: it is a humanitarianism based on science. This is the program of B.F. Skinner.

What is Wrong with Walden Two?

The picture, of course, is not complete. But neither have its general features been overdrawn. Nor is it implausible. Skinner was the first to supply is therefore reasonable to suppose that traditional students of human conduct. It is also reasonable to suppose which arise from assault on the widespread evils which arise from human conduct. It would appear that those who have shown Skinner the humanitarian tradition would be especially eager to mobilizing a massive practical assault on the widespread evils which arise from human conduct. It is also reasonable to suppose that arise from human conduct. It is also reasonable to suppose that men of the humanitarian tradition would be especially eager to advance this objective. But this has not been the case at all. In fact, it would appear that those who have shown Skinner the most vigorous opposition are the very people who have been loudest in proclaiming their support for the goal of universal peace and happiness. This may ultimately stand out as the most curious paradox in the history of humanitarian thought.

Many objections have been raised against Walden Two, but all suffer from a combination of two defects: first, an inadequate understanding of science and of its application to human behavior; and second, the reinforcing effects of the traditional viewpoint. But once they have been shorn of their extravagant logic and verbal excesses, the most persistent and forceful complaints all seem to reduce to a common denominator: the issue of free will versus determinism. Skinner’s entire program is based on an explicit denial of the mentalistic doctrine of free will, and the success of his program depends on the validity of that denial. The traditional doctrine of free will has, for the first time, been extended to practical learning situations. The most dramatic result has been programmed instruction mediated liberal-democracy, which is founded directly on free inner agent doctrine. Liberal-democratic philosophy shares its free will conception of human conduct with Judeo-Christian theology, which is based on yet another miracle-working agent that is endowed with powers which are even more astonishing. Rather than adapt themselves to newly discovered facts, the faithful of the liberal-democratic tradition react savagely against behaviorism and all of its works. The verbal behavior shown by these reactionaries frequently deteriorates to a degree which by some standards might suggest a need for clinical attention. For them a condition of universal good will among men is an acceptable aim only if it can be achieved by a universal act of free will. It is evident that liberal-democratic doctrine has left its faithful wholly unprepared for the facts which behavior science has brought to light. In sum, mentalism in its many various forms still enjoys powerful and widespread support, and the scientific revolution, which Skinner is attempting to bring to completion, has not yet had its full impact on men of good will.

Those who have complained that Walden Two is an essentially wicked document because of its denial of mental freedom have devised several lines of attack, but most if not all of the fears expressed in these attacks seem to reduce to two in number. First, it is sometimes supposed that in a scientifically planned and managed society, men, because of constraints imposed on their "free minds," would lose their ability to "think." And second, it is often said that because the individual would lose his "mental freedom" or "autonomy"—his "liberty to choose" and his "personal responsibility for making choices"—the life that he would lead would be "degrading," "ignoble," and devoid of "dignity." The complaints are intimately related with one another, and for that reason a rejoinder may be expected to show some overlap.

We may begin with the matter of thinking behavior. F.W. Matson (13) has described Walden Two as an "entire community of robots" and concludes that "the conditioned community is in fact a cataleptic society." This is reminiscent of the warning issued by the late J.W. Krutch (14) to the effect that if a science of behavior has its way, "we may never be able to really think again." These comments seem strange, for Skinner has been in the forefront in attempting to supply a scientific analysis of thinking behavior and in developing techniques for improving it. The evidence indicates that thinking is an operant process which obeys the established principles of operant conditioning and extinction. At the close of an extensive analysis of thinking behavior, Skinner (15) states: The present analysis should lead to an improvement in educational practices. If our account of thinking is essentially correct, there is no reason why we cannot teach a man how to think. There is also no reason why we cannot greatly improve methods of thinking to utilize the full potentialities of the thinking organism... (Emphasis added.) This language hardly seems consistent with a program which would condition men so that they could never "really think again" or which would create a society of "robots" or "cataleptics."

The position is not entirely theoretical, however. Through Skinner’s pioneering efforts the facts of operant conditioning discovered in the experimental laboratory have been extended to practical learning situations. The most dramatic result has been programmed instruction mediated...
by a teaching machine. The equipment used in operant laboratories arrange contingencies of reinforcement. And this is all that teaching amounts to—arranging contingencies of reinforcement. But one of the most critical factors in the technology of teaching is arranging optimally timed contingencies. Learning is most effectively achieved when reinforcement follows immediately upon the correct answer or response. Machines can mediate reinforcement much more rapidly than the human teacher. In addition to the timing of reinforcement, there are, of course, other important details.

But when scientific knowledge of operant principles is applied to practical learning situations, does it destroy the ability to think? Are men reduced to robots or to a state of catatopy? Thus far no instances of these phenomena have been reported. The results, in fact, have been quite the opposite. For example, the use of programmed instruction has become widespread in industry, where the emphasis on profits puts a premium on the rapid and effective training of personnel. A parallel trend may be found in the result. Learning cannot occur in the absence of conditioning. Skinner did not invent operant conditioning, but discovered its principles and devised ways of making them more effective. The dire consequences predicted by pessimists simply offer one example of the deep and widespread misunderstanding which prevails with respect to Skinner’s work.

Skinner has pointed to ways by which the teaching machine may be adapted to the task of teaching effective thinking (16). He has also described how he applies a knowledge of conditioning principles to himself in order to bring out his thinking or verbal behavior with “maximal efficiency” (17,18). Essentially the same approach has been described in connection with the design of educational practices in Walden Two. The following quotations may be illuminating (19).

We appeal to that curiosity which is characteristic of the understand child, as well as the alert and inquiring adult... Since our children remain happy, energetic, and curious, we don’t have to teach “subjects” at all. We only teach the techniques of learning and thinking.

As for subject matters—the arts, crafts, and sciences—the individual is given opportunity and guidance, but the contingencies are arranged so that he will be reinforced for learning for himself. Unlike the traditional educational process which characteristically ends with “graduation,” in Walden Two “education goes on forever.” It is simply part of the culture. Nor are students forced to adapt to the traditional standardization practices which do violence to individual differences.

Everyone knows that talents and abilities don’t develop at the same rate in different children... Here the child advances as rapidly as he likes in any field. No time is wasted in forcing him to participate in, or be bored by, activities he has outgrown... Our gifted children aren’t held back by organized mediocrity.

There are other important details, but they all lead to the same conclusion. Contrary to Skinner’s critics, we have every reason to suppose that Walden Two is, so to speak, a “thinking man’s paradise.”

But the importance of a science of behavior for the elaboration of thinking behavior does not simply end with a maximally effective thinking organism. Where, as in Walden Two, men are taught how to think effectively rather than what to think, we are entitled to expect radical differences in the way they approach the field of time-honored ways for acquiring special information about the world—as exemplified by the special methods for discovering ideological, philosophical, or religious “truths”—would long survive in a universally intelligent population. It is therefore not surprising that we find no political, economic, theological, or other dogmas in Walden Two, where the entire culture is founded on scientific experimentation. The major features of the pattern are clear. By avoiding stubborn commitments to theory, the society is kept free to change its practices with the accumulation of new facts. All members of the group are encouraged to examine each personal habit and every social custom with an eye to improvement. By teaching all citizens how to learn, how to think, how to ask questions, and how to find the answers, the government of Walden Two widens the base of experimental practice and hastens the accumulation of knowledge, which in turn quickens the pace of cultural progress.

All this is in massive contrast to what is found in traditional cultures, including those of so-called “free” or “open” societies. The established practice is to teach men what to believe—to condition them in ways which will guarantee their unquestioning support of “truths” or “principles” which are regarded as final and beyond challenge. Where, as here, the individual is schooled in “certainties” which require no critical examination, it is likely that he will either reject or ignore any hostile evidence that would otherwise upset his prior commitment to “truth.” It is therefore not surprising that the progeny of Christians generally become Christians, that totalitarian states generally produce men who conform with whatever ideology the state teaches, and that the products of democratic societies typically subscribe to democratic doctrines. The fact that there are occasional oddities or deviants may be explained by appealing to minor defects in controlling techniques or to the unexpected introduction of competing contingencies of greater strength. But in the usual case the continuity between the individual’s beliefs and those of his surrounding social environment is clear. Yet it would be difficult to convince a product of any one of these traditions that an accident of birth is responsible for his convictions. Despite any analysis that might show the individual how his beliefs were designed for him, he is apt to insist that he “chose” them on the basis of some “rational judgment.” He is likely to dismiss those who disagree with him as victims of ignorance, and to regard his own views as something more than a consequence of specially arranged contingencies of reinforcement.

The power of even prescientific conditioning techniques is therefore easy to demonstrate. It would be a simple matter to show, for example, that loyalty to the democratic conception of man and to practices based on that conception is engineered in a way that prevents even many scientists from thinking effectively about human behavior and the design of human culture. Men of democratic cultures are products, not of any “free and responsible choice based on reason,” but of contingencies that are arranged to shape and maintain the belief that they are... It would also be easy to show that in a society where government refuses to control—in a so-called “free” or “liberal” society—the control is relegated, not to the individual himself, but to other parts of his environment. But if that environment is not intelligently designed to produce an ethical result, the kinds of behavior required for successful group living will not be set up and maintained in strength. A poorly designed and badly
managed culture permits accidental and biased contingencies to reinforce in men the most unlikely answers to important personal and social problems. Occasionally, moreover, the answers are dangerous. When contingencies that are contrived to support and extend control by selfish interests are allowed to flourish, the individual is deprived of problem-solving behaviors which are important for his own happiness, for the happiness of others, and for the strength of the group. This effect is not limited to the controller, for the controller is also part of the total group which his selfish actions serve to weaken. But the momentary and often striking success of cleverly devised biased control usually has the tragic effect of disguising an urgent need for an experimental change in design. The common result of control by selfish men or by men who pretend to have the final answers is cultural conservatism and, in the end, cultural extinction. But the program of Walden Two has a quite different consequence, for there the contingencies are deliberately arranged to foreclose on any possibility of adventitious and biased control, and to reinforce men for testing all beliefs against relevant experimental evidence.

The extensive planful control of Walden Two has sometimes invited a comparison with the programs of various traditional totalitarian states. The comparison, however, fails to show any affinities. An analysis of traditional totalitarianism would probably show it to be a program of deliberate control implemented primarily through aversive means to achieve primarily biased ends. To the extent that democracy shows aversive and biased controlling features, it resembles traditional totalitarianism much more closely than does the program of Walden Two. Any appeal to "totalitarian control" as the decisive criterion is spurious, since, as we have seen, control is "totalitarian" in any case. As we have also seen, it is the kind of control and the use to which it is put that are important, and judged by these criteria Walden Two stands at opposite poles from the traditional totalitarian despotisms, with democracy falling somewhere in between. A comparison made with respect to the results of control—in the present instance the advantageous effects upon thinking behavior—would probably show the same distribution. But one thing may be stated with assurance: As a society designed to reinforce effective intelligence—or, indeed, any other known advantageous feature of behavior—Walden Two stands virtually alone.

By now we have seen enough of how behavior is controlled by reinforcement contingencies to know that a statement such as "the conditioned community is in fact a catalectic society" simply makes no sense. All communities are conditioned communities. The conditioning can be the result of accidental events or of events arranged by intelligent human design. If they are arranged by intelligence, they can be either biased or ethical. Traditional societies are the result of both accidental and intelligent conditioning, and the latter is undertaken for both biased and ethical ends. Conditioning may be mediated by either positive or negative methods, and traditional societies use both. Walden Two is to be distinguished by the fact that it is solely the result of intelligent conditioning undertaken for ethical purposes by means of positive techniques.

It therefore seems fair to say that no one has been more alive than Skinner to the importance of intelligent behavior or effective thinking for producing a strong and happy people. This, indeed, is the whole point of his plea to apply science to human affairs. To the extent that the word "intelligent" has any meaning at all, it must be synonymous with the word "scientific"—which we may generally define as the accurate analysis and effective manipulation of causal relations for maximizing positive effects and minimizing negative effects. And the more scientific thinking comes to pervade a society, the more intelligent it will be. It should not be difficult to understand that the practice of science does not diminish effective or intelligent thinking, but strengthens it. The use of science for producing the kind of behavior which defines science itself can only result in markedly improved cultural practices that will vastly accelerate the progress of human intellectual achievement. Traditional moral or ethical practices lack intelligence to the extent that they fail to make a full coverage of all instances of behavior which affect group living in important ways. But as science makes clear the full range of consequences generated by alternative patterns of behavior, societies that are prepared to utilize that knowledge will be able to devise moral or ethical practices which show increasing intelligence. By hastening the accumulation of facts, to paraphrase Skinner, science speeds the departure of ignorance. It is perhaps astonishing that this lesson has been lost upon Skinner's critics.

This discussion should have prepared us for the second principal objection to Walden Two—namely, that the individual in such a society is "degraded" or stripped of his "dignity" because he loses his "free will" and therefore his "personal responsibility for making choices." We may approach this matter by noting that scientists do not always handle the issue of freedom in a satisfactory way, and for that reason there often appears an embarrassing inconsistency in their account which supporters of the traditional view are quick to exploit. We shall gain nothing by hedging, but must face the matter squarely and say that the notions of "personal freedom," "personal choice," and "personal responsibility" have no place in a scientific account. From the standpoint of both a theoretical and an applied science, human behavior is determined, caused, lawful, orderly, or controlled. The behaving organism has no freedom, no choice, no responsibility. Every current feature of that organism—anatomical, physiological, and behavioral—is solely the product of a confluence of particular genetic and environmental histories. To appeal to some inner psychic or mental agent of control to account for apparent signs of spontaneity or caprice is to illegitimately anticipate scientific discovery by resorting to an animistic fiction.

There are, however, other senses in which the term "freedom" may be used which do not raise the same issue. The casual reporting of human events supplies many examples. When, for instance, we describe a social situation in which men are "striking for freedom," we simply mean that they are reacting against a form of control that is aversive—such as force or the threat of force imposed by a government to compel obedience. It would be ludicrous to suggest that they are striking to free themselves from the natural laws which control their behavior. The same rule applies when we say that biological advances in medicine and agriculture free men from the aversive effects of disease and hunger, or that advances in behavior science may free men from the aversive consequences of punitive control or of a biased cultural design. But in freeing men from one set of determinants, the control of their behavior is not simply turned over to nothing, for another set of determinants must take hold. For example, when a man is freed from prison his behavior inevitably comes under the control of another environment, though he is not likely to report that he has
simply been transferred from one prison to another. The freedom referred to in these instances is a freedom from a particular kind of control—a kind that the individual finds objectionable—and it is therefore not the same freedom that is at stake in a science of behavior.

Yet, confusion on this point is widespread. C. R. Rogers (20) has stated that "we can choose to use the behavioral sciences in ways that will free, not control." This sort of misunderstanding is common among traditional humanitarians. There is a failure to realize the inevitability of control. Human behavior has always been controlled, and it is impossible to envision how the fact of control as such might in any way be lessened. While science can never be used "in ways that will free, not control," it can be used to set up conditions in which control will work to man's best advantage. This, of course, is what happens when the sciences of physics and biology are applied in ways which reduce or eliminate the aversive effects of human labor, disease, and deprivation. In the same way a science of behavior can, use control to reduce or eliminate the aversive consequences of man's own behavior—of, in other words, man's selfish and punitive actions. In short, behavior science may be used to eliminate tyranny—the tyranny of human abuse, of human exploitation, of human slaughter. It is here, if anywhere, that human dignity is to be found. The power that a science of behavior may confer upon man for dignifying or ennobling or upgrading himself is suggested in the following passage by Skinner (21).

No scientific advance has ever actually damaged man's position in the world. It has merely characterized it in a different way... If we eventually give a plausible account of human behavior as part of a lawfully determined system, man's power will increase even more rapidly. Men will never become originating centers of control, because their behavior will itself be controlled, but their role as mediators may be extended without limit.

The lesson is important for coming to terms with the present issue. As we have seen, operant behavior is controlled by its effects or consequences. This principle is called the "law of effect." It could just as easily be called the "law of consequence." The effects or consequences of behavior become the antecedent causes of subsequent behavior. Thus, when men control, the consequences of that control in turn control them. By using this law of behavior to design a culture, the consequences of men's controlling actions may be manipulated in ways which control those actions in a direction that insures successive increments in the power to control for the ultimate benefit or "dignification" of the species. But science does not invent the laws which control human behavior. It merely discovers them. In the same way science did no invent a heliocentric universe or the evolutionary process by which man descended from lower forms of life. These were all discoveries. The facts were already there, but previously man had not known about them. Once they became known, and however momentarily distasteful their implications, it was only sensible for man to abandon the flattering prescientific notions he had about the world and his place in it. The alternative is persisting ignorance and, in areas which affect the human conditions, the continued perpetuation of indignity, ignobility, and degradation.

It is therefore important that we do not take seriously the plea made by Matson (22) to uphold the "freedom to make choices and the right to blunder." The freedom is fanciful and the blunders are at the root of the very indignities which Matson and his traditionalist brethren find offensive. The indignities will be removed, not by holding science back, but by extending it to the blunderous behavior which produces them. And this means redesigning the environment of men in a way that will reinforce "choices" which lead, not to blunders and indignities, but to actions which display wisdom and virtue.

Closely related to the issue of freedom is the subject of "values," a topic for which our previous discussion should have prepared us. Rogers (23), for example, has found it objectionable that the planners of Walden Two "choose" the "values" of its citizens, and that Skinner has "chosen" such "values" as happiness, good behavior, productivity, and so on when suggesting reasonable specifications for the behavior of men. This complaint, of course, is commonplace. But it is also spurious. We have seen enough of "values" to know that the application of science to human affairs does not raise this issue at all. A doctor confronted by a cancer victim does not consult a set of alternative "value judgments" or make a "subjective value choice" before instituting a program of treatment. Rather, he explores the alternative possibilities with respect to a cure, and if unsure of the best one, he guesses. The application of science involves empirical knowledge and, at the point where that ends, guesswork, not "values." The fact that the doctor "wants" or "chooses" to behave in a way which will cure his patient, or that he "values" the application of knowledge in ways which lead to a cure, must be explained by an analysis of his environment and environmental history. His "wants," "choices," or "values," as we have already seen, will be a function of reinforcement contingencies.

It is therefore wrong to suppose that the planners of Walden Two are the only men in that society who are "free" to make "subjective value choices" because they design the contingencies of the culture. There are simply no "freedoms" or "values" to be taken into account. The behavior of the planners is no less controlled than that of the rest of the group's members. An analysis of their environment and environmental histories would show how that control is exerted. Such an analysis would include the governmental design which keeps their behavior within specified ethical bounds. It would also include the scientific information available to them which is relevant for answering the three basic questions, and the effect this information has upon their "thinking" and "decision-making" behavior with respect to designing cultural practices. No individual—including a controller—can step outside the stream of physical cause-and-effect.

Nor, of course, is the scientist exempt from this rule. Skinner's thinking in regard to human behavior and cultural design is the product of a particular history. A very important part of that history is an intimate contact with the experimental analysis of behavior. The contingencies set up by this contact exert a powerful control over his thinking behavior and over the statements he makes. Science has enabled Skinner to demonstrate controlling relations between behavior and specifiable antecedent conditions, and this has supplemented or changed his history in an important way. His thinking and verbal behavior with respect to applying this knowledge of controlling relations to practical human affairs is not the result of any "value judgment" or "subjective value choice," but of a particular history of reinforcement.

Skinner's theoretical analysis represents a generalization of the facts that have emerged from the controlled
observation of his subject matter, while the views of his critics are based primarily on inferences drawn from casual observation. Here, if anywhere, may be found the main reason for the clash between Skinner's conception of man and the conceptions held by traditionalists. Where, as here, the results of controlled study are in conflict with the results of casual inspection, it becomes immediately evident that both are not in the same degree of contact with the facts. Important parallels in other fields are not far to seek. How, for example, may we account for the fact that modern men believe that the earth is round, while their ancestors held that it was flat? The obvious explanation is that men today are in closer contact with the facts of geography than were their forbears, and therefore they can think about and deal with geographical matters more effectively. Science, in bringing men under better control of the facts, reinforces them in ways which lead them to behave in the world with increasing success. And this is where Skinner's critics make their mistake: By failing to examine carefully the evidence upon which his statements are based, that evidence never becomes an important part of their histories. As a result, they continue to demonstrate the conditioning imposed by the dominant prescientific viewpoint.

But the most important questions remain to be asked. How, in the traditional idiom with which social conditions are usually described, does Walden Two compare with a "free" or liberal society that arises from "democratic" methods of social planning and management? What does such a comparison reveal in terms of the "significance" or "meaningfulness" of life, or in terms of the "wholeness" or "dignity" or "worth" of the individual? Our previous discussion of Walden Two should have been sufficient to meet the questions with which we are now explicitly confronted. However, there are several points which, in the context of the traditional language of description, seem worth emphasizing.

If the word "Freedom" means anything at all, it seems evident enough that Walden Two is the only plausible "free society" ever described. There is a maximization of freedom from the tyranny of ill-health, of punishment and the threat of punishment, of interpersonal exploitation, and of unnecessary labor. With the average work-day curtailed to four hours, and with the group deliberately organized to maximize personal satisfaction and fulfillment, the individual's liberty to do as he wants is unprecedented. He may pursue at will the arts, the crafts, or the sciences; he may engage extensively in athletics or games; or he may simply socialize in any number of informal ways which are compatible with happy group living. Because of the kind of control used, the individual is never forced to do anything. Whatever he does it is because he wants to, not because he has to. In short, the individual's "feeling of freedom" is maximized to the fullest extent possible when his behavior is totally controlled by positive reinforcement. And, by implication, his worth or dignity is thereby set above the bullying threat or the vindictive penalty.

Unknown in Walden Two are the degrading features of even the most alleviated brute existence—the drunkenness, the quarreling, the mendacity, the hypocrisy, the clever deception. Unknown are the savage rivalries among men to find a place in a social structure which, on intelligent reflection, can command no faith. Unknown is the revolting discrepancy between the ideal and the real—between endless sermons calling for "good will toward men" and the vicious struggle to gain mastery over men and use them for selfish ends. Unknown are the gross contrasts between human blight, squalor, and poverty on the one hand, and luxury, gleam, and wealth on the other. Unknown are the "free" or "permissive" conditions which breed indifference to the worth, wholeness, and dignity of the individual—the conditions which produce neglected and brutalized children, stunted behavioral repertoires in adults, the painted whores, the insane, the robbed, the beaten, the raped, and the murdered. Unknown, in short, is the badly planned and managed society which gets better results in civilizing its dogs than it does its men.

What, then, is wrong with Walden Two? Only one thing, in Skinner's estimate (24), and that is that "someone planned it that way."

If these critics had come upon a society in some remote corner of the world which boasted similar advantages, they undoubtedly would have hailed it as providing a pattern we all might wish for cultural evolution. Any evidence that intelligence had been used in arriving at this version of the good life would, in their eyes, be a serious flaw. No matter if the planner of Walden Two diverted none of the proceeds of the community to his own use, no matter if he has no current contact or is, indeed, unknown to most of the other members of the community (he planned that, too), somewhere back of it all he occupies the position of prime mover. And this, to the child of the democratic tradition, spoils it all.

If, in other words, through some extraordinary combination of accidental events all men in a given society happened to come under the control of just the reinforcement contingencies needed to produce a Walden Two, it would appear as though they and formed and maintained their happy society on a "free and voluntary" basis. Because no "benevolent despot" had used his intelligence to design the contingencies required, the result would seem quite compatible with democratic doctrine. But in the absence of such an unlikely—one might safely say impossible—combination of accidents, the whole program seems inherently wrong. It suggests a "totalitarian dictatorship" which, however intelligent and morally predisposed, flies in the face of all that has been traditionally taught. And on this ground alone it must thoroughly and emphatically rejected.

There is one exception, however. Since the single case apparently does not sin against the general rule, the traditional dogma may allow us to applaud the intelligent and moral individual as the product of a "good upbringing." Even though considerable parental planning and management may obviously have been involved, for some reason it does not seem like "quite the same thing" as "paternalism" practiced on a community scale. The individual blessed with a "proper upbringing" may go throughout his entire life happy and well-behaved, he may devote himself assiduously to improving his knowledge, skill, and productivity, and when we inquire why he behaves in these laudable ways, he may report that he "wants to" or "likes to" so behave. He may even make a grateful reference to his parents in acknowledgment of the wisely planned and effectively managed circumstances which shaped him during his "formative years," and we may nod our heads in agreement without, apparently, sinning against the cardinal rule of free inner agent doctrine. It is certainly not likely that he has lost his ability to think, or that he may be a "robot" or a victim or "catalepsy." We are more likely to point to certain important features of his environmental history to account for his virtues, in which case we are simply...
appealing to a history of operant conditioning. But if our knowledge of his history is inadequate or if this sort of explanation seems, upon reflection, to have offensive implications, we may seek refuge from the problem by simply saying that he "freely chooses" to exhibit the behavior we admire. In this case, however, we have offered no real explanation at all. Unless we can explain *why* he "chooses," we have said nothing.

Even so, we may succeed in maintaining this illusion so long as an entire community of men do not all "choose" to behave in the same laudable ways. It is only when this happens that we may begin to suspect that "something is wrong." And if we discover that they are all products of a carefully planned and managed upbringing, our suspicion is then likely to be transformed into the conviction that they have been deprived of their "autonomy" and "freedom" and, hence, of their "responsibility for making choices." They have been robbed of their "dignity" and their ability to think. They represent, in short, a "community of robots," a "cataleptic society." Numbers, as it has often pointed out, have a magic all of their own.

The Fateful Controversy: Democracy Versus Science

Thus, the heart of the matter seems to be simply this: What the traditional humanitarian finds objectionable about Walden Two is not its achievement, but the means to that achievement—the deliberate or intentional or intelligent design of a culture for producing "humanitarian" people on a universal scale. And this, of course, is where we began—with the failure to agree on means. We are back to the ancient source of dispute between humanitarians which arises from a lack of valid information with which to answer the three basic questions concerning why men behave as they do, how their behavior can be changed, and what changes in their behavior need to be made. And the lack of valid information, in turn, may be traced to the lack of a valid method for acquiring that information. The entire controversy, therefore, ultimately turns on the failure of traditionalists to apply the method of science for discovering answers to the three basic questions. The principal reason of this is not difficult to discover: Traditional humanitarians are, for the most part, animated by a zeal that approaches, or perhaps even approximates, religious fanaticism in defending the democratic method and, by implication, the liberal doctrine of free will. It may be said that, in an earlier day, supernatural religion was the main enemy of science; but it may also be said that today this wholly misguided role has been usurped by liberal-democracy.

But if it is finally discovered that men must be intelligent and planful in constructing their environment in order to make themselves universally happy, healthy, wealthy, wise, and well-behaved, why should this bother the liberal-democrat so much? Is the product of the liberal-democratic tradition so bound by his conditioning that he cannot see that any belief in the finality of democratic doctrine is not in any important way different from supernatural beliefs which are taught and perpetuated with the same assurance? Have the controlling practices used in his ideological indoctrination engineered the very same attitudes in him that he finds objectionable in the religious dogmatist? Has his commitment to the democratic conception of man and to democratic procedures for group planning and management become so pathological that he is now willing to sacrifice the goals of democracy in order to preserve that conception and its supporting procedures? Has he become such a prisoner of dogma that he simply cannot believe that the architects of democracy could have been wrong about human nature and about how to improve it? In a day when even religionists are beginning to question the infallibility of their popes and sacred books, are men of the liberal-democratic faith, like the faithful of some rival political creeds, ready to assign papal infallibility to the chief priests of their ideological heritage? Have the propaganda devices of a "free society" been so effective that even its scholars have been successfully taught what to think—with the result that they can never "really think again"? Unless men of the democratic tradition are able to shake free of their conservatism and acknowledge that democratic governing practices can, through a scientifically guided cultural evolution, be succeeded by much better ones, they will almost certainly commit themselves to a much more ignominious form of cultural extinction.

Unwittingly, the faithful of the liberal-democratic tradition form what is almost certainly the greatest single obstacle to the realization of the humanitarian goal. This is a strong indictment against a doctrine that has long enjoyed sacred status and widespread support, but it is important that the facts, however distasteful, be squarely met. For this an analysis of democracy is required. Here only an abbreviated discussion will be possible in so brief a compass.

As we have seen, the central tenet of liberal-democratic doctrine is the concept of free will. The origin of this psychic or mentalistic conception may be found in the animistic beliefs of antiquity, many of which survive today in relatively crude form among primitive peoples. The details of the mentalistic kind of explanation vary. From time to time new features are added and old ones are dropped. The basic pattern, however, is always much the same: human behavior is controlled by some inner mental agent, inner mental force, or inner mental componentry which is different in nature from the physical character of the natural world. The main implication of this primitive notion is seldom made fully explicit, but it nevertheless represents the most celebrated attribute credited to the human animal under liberal-democratic doctrine: man has within himself a supernatural or metaphysical power which sets him apart from the natural or physical world, and his behavior is therefore beyond the reach of a natural or physical science.

Few would challenge the monopoly of science for developing technologies to deal with the inorganic part of nature and the anatomical and physiological aspects of the organic part of nature. This is the traditional distinction between physical technology and biological technology, and the need for a scientific foundation in both cases is now accepted by educated men. But when it comes to developing a technology for dealing with the behavioral aspect of the organic part of nature, the scientific pattern is challenged. A behavioral technology founded on science seems strange only because men have not yet accepted the fact that behavior is continuous with physiology and anatomy. It is the fanciful nonphysical inner agent which is at fault, since its function is to miraculously break this continuity and make behavior subject to a spontaneous change of course. But once the continuity is recognized, the argument for extrascientific sources of information about behavior is no more convincing than arguments for extrascientific sources of information about anatomy and physiology.
Democratic government is necessarily incompatible with science, because it is a behavior technology based on a belief in miracle-working agents. By implication, it is a behavior technology based on the belief that a behavior technology is impossible—except in the form of physical coercion. This follows when the controlling role of the environment is denied, and its function is assigned to a fanciful free inner agent. A doctrinaire refusal to acknowledge a subtle but nevertheless inexorable form of noncoercive control prevents the adoption of explicit technological measures for dealing with that control intelligently according to the ethical requirements of group life. Thus, the liberal-democratic conception of individual or personal freedom actively inhibits any planful effort to promote technological advance in the field of government for making ethical control increasingly more effective and for increasingly extending its scope. As a result, the individual under democratic government remains the victim of accident and bias, and the group suffers in turn. Here, if anywhere, is the fatal flaw in democracy.

Democracy is therefore an inherently conservative design which, by its self-limiting nature, acts as a thwarting mechanism in the face of the ethical purposes which support it. From the standpoint of the individual, it abandons him to the tyranny from which it promises relief. From the standpoint of the group, it is a lethal mutation in the evolution of government.

As the difficulties of men persist or worsen or even threaten to finally engulf the entire democratic program, it is often argued that more democracy will save the situation. But democracy will not be put in good order by extending the very practices which are fatal to it. When the behavior of men is not adequately affected by an intelligently planned and managed ethical control, their problems will not be solved by abolishing all semblance of that control. The rational, free, self-determining, and morally responsible creature of democratic lore is a fiction. And when it is made the basis of governmental design, it is a dangerous fiction. A "government by the consent of the governed" is a government by the contingencies of reinforcement which control that consent. A "faith in the common man" is a faith in those same contingencies. To the extent that those contingencies are manipulable, to the same extent "consent" can be engineered and "faith" can be either justified or shattered. The absurdities that result from "democratic politics" are well known. And as the complexities of social life increase, the situation grows worse. It should be evident by now that this is not the road to the good life, but to disintegration and disaster.

Yet, to most humanitarians this is not evident at all. There is a failure to understand that the damage inflicted by democratic methods cannot be repaired by intensifying and extending the use of those methods. The assignment is not to spread democracy, but to intelligently evolve a better form of government. It is not to give "power to the people," but to design a government which will guarantee that power to competent people, and which will further guarantee that they will exercise that power for the good of all the people. All methods are amenable to improvement, and the methods of government, democratic or otherwise, form no exception. But improvement or progress in methods encompassed by the field of governmental design cannot be made without also abolishing an especially cherished traditional practice called "politics."

Politics, like capitalism, is a flagrant example of bad design. Both are competitive social practices. Capitalists compete for the wealth of a group, and politicians compete for the power conferred by the government of a group. Since both practices divide men into competing factions organized to establish, defend, and extend special interests at the expense of rival interests, neither practice can possibly work for the common good. Capitalism divides men into the kind of rival factions called "economic classes." Politics divides men into the kind of rival factions called "political parties." The two may, of course, be connected with each other in varying degrees. But the important point is that both social practices divide men into mutually competing factions based on selfish or biased interests, and this is wholly incompatible with the humanitarian aim of uniting men in a common effort to promote the common good.

A second important point is that the method of politics can ensure neither ability nor morality on the part of governors. This is true in the case of both "democratic politics" and "power politics." Democratic politics is said to be based on "persuasion," which is a controlling technique based on behavioral processes subject to reinforcement. Power politics is said to be based on "coercion," which is controlling technique based on sheer physical strength. In either case, politics is a dangerous anachronism. Neither popular consent nor physical force can assure governmental conduct that is both intelligent and ethical. Accidental, biased, and aversive controlling features are inherent in any competitive process, and this is dramatically illustrated in political practice. As a device for selecting governors, it cannot guarantee competence; as a device for making governors moral, it cannot make good conduct inevitable. A government based on politics is in its very nature a defective design.

It bears reiteration and emphasis that all technology is subject to continual improvement. We are not permitted to suppose that politics, democratic or otherwise, is the exceptional case. To accomplish their purpose, it is imperative that men of good will prepare themselves for a substantial technological advance in the field of government. The problem is not to decide between a faith in the common man or a faith in the philosopher-politician, but to discover the most effective set of reinforcement contingencies for controlling all men for the good of all. The competence and morality of governors cannot be decided either by a universal show of hands or by force of arms, but only by contingencies which are carefully designed to select for competence and guarantee moral conduct. To successfully meet the ethical assignment of constructing a government which will assure the complete well-being of the individual and the survival of the group, men must emerge from the ignorance that separates them into conflicting and outmoded categories of political faith. Once it is understood that the contingencies under which men live exert a "totalitarian" control in any case, the issue of freedom versus control loses its point. The important issue then becomes the problem of designing a totally intelligent control based totally on positive reinforcement and exercised for purposes that are totally ethical. The assignment is fully within the scope of a science of behavior.

A government based on science rather than on politics may be taken as the central lesson of Walden Two. This, together with its many implications, may easily make this book the most important document ever written on the
subject of government. But to mobilize support for a
government based on science, men must be educated to the
fact that they have long been badly misled by mentalism in
the form of free-will theory and its practical counterpart in
the form of liberal-democratic politics. They must be
educated to the fact that these false theoretical and practical
devices are largely responsible for the widespread ignorance
and evil which continue to oppress men living in so-called
"free societies."

Although it is in the nature of science to eventually have
its way, the struggle between emerging facts and
well-established fictions is often a protracted one. It would be
naive to expect the triumph of behavior science over the
free will tradition to be quick and easy, but it is possible that
the outcome may be hastened if parallel struggles in the
history of science are carefully scrutinized. The parallels are
not far to seek, and biology supplies an excellent example.

Since remote antiquity, men have been intrigued by the
enormous differences they observed in both the anatomy and
behavior of living things. Almost always the differences were
explained by appealing to miracle-working minds which created
them at will. What Skinner has done is to bring to
completion a process in biology that began with Darwin: just
as a creative outer mind was replaced by differential
reproduction (natural selection) so a creative inner mind has
now been replaced by differential reinforcement (operant
conditioning). Contingencies of reproduction select organ­
isms, and contingencies or reinforcement select behaviors.
Both sorts of contingencies are arranged by the controlling
environment.

Long before Darwin men deliberately selected genetic
endowments through a kind of environmental control
called "artificial selection," and long before Skinner men
deliberately selected behavioral repertoires through a kind
of environmental control called "teaching," but in each
case the full importance of the controlling environment
remained unsuspected. The reason, as we have seen, is
simple: casual observation is not enough. Observation
needs to be performed in the controlled way that
distinguishes the scientific method.

But just as Darwin was faced with a stubborn tradition of
trenched fictions, so also is Skinner. The first was
challenged by Judeo-Christian theology, the second by
liberal-democratic philosophy. The battles fought and won
by biological science must now be fought and won all over
again by behavioral science. It is perhaps surprising that
men resist facts with such vigor, but it is not surprising
that science always wins in the end. It makes its way on the
basis of facts.

It is at the point of practical application where resistance
is likely to become extreme. Once discovered, the facts
recommend themselves for use, and certain questions may
then be asked. Why not design a species according to
specifications? Why not design behavior according to
specifications? In other words, why not move out into all
reaches of the controlling environment to overthrow the
tyranny of accident and to supplant it with an ethically
governed intelligence for directing man's genetic and
behavioral evolution?

Questions of this sort make excellent sense. Making
mindless accident give place to intelligent design is the
basis of cultural progress. Yet all of this is very disturbing
to men of the Judeo-Christian and liberal-democratic
faiths. As stated at the outset, it is difficult for the scientific
determinist and the free-will traditionalist to talk with one
another. The scientist lives in a world of physical
cause-and-effect, and the traditionalist in a world where
nonphysical personified actors are held responsible for
physical action. In the last analysis, it is a question of the
scientific method versus the animistic explanation. But
just as physical science dispelled the belief that rain was
hurled down by Jupiter Pluvius and that the wind was
blown by Aeaolus, and just as biological science overthrew
the doctrine that life was originated and maintained by
a nonphysical vital principle, so science of behavior must
finally banish the notion that behavior is started up and
maintained by a nonphysical psychic or mental agent
enclosed within the organism. The scientist may
confidently say that history, if the phrase will not be
misunderstood, "is on our side."

We can, of course, continue to deny that human behavior
is caused, and struggle as long as possible to maintain the
fiction that we are free and responsible agents who choose
our own behavior at will. But as a terrible cost, for we must
also be prepared to continue on in a world of ignorance,
immorality, and chaos. This is the price we must pay for
refusing to accept the universal principle of cause-and-effect,
and for refusing to act accordingly by designing our
environments intelligently for producing a universally
consistent moral result. On this fundamental point there can
no longer be any mistake.

But the free-will traditionalist is still not likely to be
convinced. No matter how firm the evidence that emerges
from an experimental analysis of behavior, if it conflicts with
established democratic beliefs it must be summarily rejected.
But the men who react in this intolerant fashion simply
exhibit the tragic effects of their own conditioning. We might
suggest, moreover, that the critics of Skinner are excellent
cases in point. We must be quick to add that this suggestion
is made not by way of insult but in the spirit of compassion,
for the evidence entitles us to suppose that these men are
unwittingly subverting the very objectives to which they and
their followers aspire. Ironically, if these same men were
products of the Walden Two culture which they so forcefully
condemn, they would be free of the kind of ideological
conditioning that urges them to propose a holy war against a
science that offers them the only real hope of salvation. For
although science can offer no final answers of infallible truths
it can offer a successfully tested and self-correcting body of
methods and techniques for bringing about what would be in
the most literal sense possible, a moral revolution in the
human condition.

At this point we may summarize the central lesson of the
present undertaking. It has not been our primary purpose to
simply show that Skinner occupies a legitimate place within
the humanitarian tradition. This, in fact, has been incidental
to the main objective. Rather, it has been to show that his
program may, in fact, be its only hope. The humanitarian
cannot, in good faith, evade the responsibility for
investigating this possibility. Unfortunately, this requires
intellectual labor of a rather difficult sort. For this there is
no help. Nor do the difficulties end there. Once a successful
science or behavior is available, it makes no sense to allow
obsolete loyalties to stand in the way of effective solutions.
Old practices must be reappraised in the light of new
evidence. This, of course, adds greatly to the original
burden. But the responsibility for undertaking an assignment
cannot be avoided simply because it is difficult. The
assignment must be appraised according to its importance.
And it is important. Critically important. And while broad
advances in human morality, wisdom, and happiness may
necessarily entail the abandonment of politics, capitalism,
and other anciently cherished cultural practices, we should not be sorry to see them go. The momentary sense of loss or discomfort that may be felt during transition will be far outweighed by the ultimate compensations to be gained.

Conclusion

In the course of the present undertaking, we have labored to show that men must abandon primitive and prescientific free-will doctrines in favor of behavioral determinism in order to have legitimate scientific framework in which to view their social problems accurately. We have also labored to show that the results of Skinner’s practical and theoretical efforts offer a complete scientific guide for answering the three basic social questions and, by implication, for designing the culture of a society, including the designing of its government. We have further pointed out that with the advent of this scientific guide, all so-called social or political philosophies immediately lose their point. There is no need to borrow from any of these systems of thought, since the working model of behavior which has emerged from a scientific analysis, and which we have attempted to describe in a very general way, can be applied to all situations, social or otherwise, in which men behave. These philosophies have all become relics of a bygone age, equivalent in status to the prescientific philosophies that arose from man’s early speculations in the fields of biology and physics. It may be difficult, at first encounter, to grasp the full enormity of this remarkable achievement.

It must not be supposed, as some have supposed, that a Walden Two culture would be the end; on the contrary, it would be only the beginning. It would be a fresh start for homosapiens, an historical starting point at which this remarkable species would begin experimenting with the intelligent control of its cultural evolution. This unprecedented experiment in cultural evolution would not only be directed at progressively increasing the development of human genetic capacities for successful living; it would also eventually be directed at progressively increasingly the genetic capacities themselves. In sum, both the behavioral (cultural) and the genetic (biological) evolution of man would, for the first time, be brought under the control of an intelligent design. Man would, to put the matter bluntly, play God, a role which for too long he has left to blind accident. The question of where Walden Two, the new beginning, would eventually lead makes, of course, for interesting speculation, but one thing may be stated with assurance: man would, to slightly alter the words of Skinner, finally discover what he can make of himself.

The only major aspect of Skinner’s social program that we have not considered is in regard to the problem of cultural replacement: by what means can we replace traditional culture with scientific culture in all the many groups of societies currently existing on the face of the earth? The magnitude of the task set by the problem is, of course, staggering in the extreme, but this is not a good reason for neglecting it. The matter, in fact, requires immediate and devoted attention, for the survival of our species may easily depend on how quickly the Skinnerian program can be put into effect for reversing the perilous course set by the wholly confused conduct of traditional sectracef. Skinner has, in Walden Two, set forth a brief description of how the problem of replacement may be met, but this aspect of his program needs much more development, as he would almost certainly admit. Radical behaviorists have not yet, unfortunately, addressed themselves to this problem in any systematic way, and for this, in light of the gravity of the problem, they may be cited for gross negligence.

Because the problem of replacement requires exhaustive treatment, a systematic formulation of possible solutions has not been attempted here. For the moment it may be enough to say that here, as everywhere, two basic questions immediately arise:

(1) What are the most effective ways for men to behave in order to successfully replace traditional society with the new society?

(2) How can men be induced to behave in those ways?

To answer these questions, we may, reasonably, proceed in a scientific way. We may also, presumably, single out the behaviorist or behavior modifier as the person who would, by virtue of his particular history, be best equipped to suggest plausible answers to these questions, particularly the second. The fact that he has not, apparently, so far undertaken this assignment is a puzzle on which our present ignorance forbids us to speak.

By way of conclusion, a personal note may not be entirely inappropriate. The concept of free will is, theoretically, at the heart of the issue of crime and punishment, and on this matter I have had, unfortunately, an abundance of personal experience. I have served thirteen years in prison, including almost three years on death row. I have had the opportunity to observe in myself and in countless others the most striking results of “freedom”—freedom from an intelligently designed and manipulated ethical control. This sort of freedom is in no way worth the price, neither for the criminal nor for his even less fortunate victims—the dead, the raped, the mutilated. And as I received reports coming from the “free world”—reports of madness, disorder, destruction, war—I could not help but ask, “Is more freedom from this sort of control the answer?” For those of us who lived our lives in intimate contact with the results of this kind of freedom, and who at the same time were reasonably well acquainted with the work of Skinner, there was often an unusually sensitive appreciation for the promise this man’s accomplishments hold for humankind. We were therefore, inclined to respond with some emotion at the abuse that is sometimes showered upon him by men calling themselves “liberal-democrats.” For it was not Skinner who we had learned to fear, but rather the men who react against the use of science for banishing human evil and suffering. It was, to be brutally frank, the misguided reactionary of the liberal-democratic tradition who filled us with trepidation, and not the behaviorist with humanitarian aspirations. Men writing in the twenty-first century might very well say of Skinner: “He held the answer to the important problems of his age, but he was too far in advance of the rest of his kind.” But today to the traditionalist we can only say: “If you seek a monument to the freedom that you above all else cherish, then simply look around!”

Bibliography


Skinner, B.F., ibid., 144.

Skinner, B.F., ibid., 143.


