

[1973. In *Baker's Dictionary of Christian Ethics*. Carl F.H. Henry, ed. Washington D.C.: Canon Press.]

**BEHAVIORISM.** See also *Determinism*. Behaviorism is an implication from materialism and as such is implicit in ancient Democritus and explicit in Thomas Hobbes. Contemporary behaviorism can be seen in William James (*Essays in Radical Empiricism*, Magnolia, Mass., Peter Smith, Chap. 1, "Does Consciousness Exist?"), but is more popularly known as originating in the works of John B. Watson. Watson was a psychologist; philosophical behaviorism is expounded by Gilbert Ryle (*The Concept of Mind*, New York, Barnes and Noble.)

Both Watson and Ryle repudiate a soul, and Watson in particular deprecates introspection. The theory equates thought with bodily motions, at first motions in the larynx; thinking is called sub-vocal speech.

The motivation is to make psychology scientific and restrict it to what is observable, as mind is not. But if thought is laryngeal motion, then Watson's "observation" of my behavior is simply the motions of his larynx.

An objection specifically directed against laryngeal motion is that the removal of the larynx by a surgeon does not prevent the patient from thinking.

To get around this, John Dewey gave thought a wider base. "Habits formed in the process of exercising biological aptitudes are the sole agents of observation, recollection, foresight and judgment: a mind or consciousness or soul in general which performs these operations is a myth... Knowledge which is not projected against the black unknown lives in the muscles, not in consciousness" (*Human Nature and Conduct*, New York, Modern Library, III e; cf. *ibid* I vi, and *The Quest for Certainty*, New York, Putnam, pp. 86, 166).

If thinking is a motion of the muscles or, as Dewey adds, interaction between muscle tissue and motions of things outside one's skin, it would follow that two persons could not think the same thought and therefore could not communicate. The reason is that one set of motions is not another set of motions. The wiggles of my muscles are not the wiggles of your muscles, and if a thought is a wiggle we cannot have the same thought.

For the same reason it is impossible for one person to have the same thought twice. Since my wiggle today is *ipso facto* not my wiggle yesterday, I can never recover yesterday's thought. This makes memory impossible, prevents comparisons among disparate sensations, and destroys the foundation of knowledge.

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