

## Books: Beyond Reality With B. F. Skinner

By CARROLL QUIGLEY

BEYOND FREEDOM AND DIGNITY. By B. F. Skinner.  
Alfred A. Knopf. 225 pages. \$6.95.

Although John B. Watson's "Behaviorism" was a best-seller in 1925, I did not get to read it until 1926. I was not impressed favorably, but regarded it as simplistic, naive, dogmatic, confused, and ambiguous. Burrhus Fred-eric Skinner probably read Watson about the same time, when he was a senior at Hamilton College, but he was captured by it. His latest book, "Beyond Freedom and Dignity," is an inferior version of Watson, despite the fact that he insists that it is the latest word in up-to-date psychology. A great deal has been learned about human psychology in the past 45 years, but not much of it has rubbed off on Skinner, who has spent much of that period successfully peddling a slightly inferior brand of Watsonian behaviorism.

In this book Skinner repeats, with the boring monotony of an Asiatic fever-bird, the same range of assumptions and slogans for which he has been so richly rewarded since he took his Ph.D. in experimental psychology at Harvard 40 years ago. These assumptions were stated in his widely-read "novel," "Walden Two," published in 1948, the year in which he became professor of psychology at Harvard. In that "novel" Skinner portrays himself, under the name "Professor Burris," visiting a contemporary utopian commune operated by a certain T. E. Frazier, who is Skinner himself under a different name. Most of the novel consists of Skinner talking to Skinner under these two pseudonyms. The book ends, appropriately enough, when Burris decides to stay at the commune with Frazier.

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Much of Skinner's writings are in this form in which he provides both sides of the discussion: He begins with a statement of what he intends to discuss, but never gets to do so, because, instead, he is immediately diverted into an attack on any versions of psychology different from his own. These are presented in Skinner's words and are refuted by dogmatic statements of his own assumptions which are presented as experimentally demonstrable facts. His attacks are directed at any version of psychology which attempts to deal with what goes on inside of a person, such as perception, thoughts, feelings, ideas, or conflicts. Since these are what most of us mean when we say "psychology," Skinner's version of this subject makes it possible for him to pose as a psychologist without ever concerning himself with the subject. If any reader is confused about how a man who never concerns himself with psychology can be regarded as an authority on the subject, the explanation is that most people simply assume that a professor of psychology at Harvard must be talking about psychology when he says he is and must know something about the subject. These mistaken assumptions result from the prevalent widespread ignorance about the Alice-in-Wonderland world which has conquered most higher education and much intellectual life (including publishing) today.

Skinner is concerned in his writings and teaching, not with human psychology, but with human behavior; this, he