

THE BALLAD OF ST. SKINNER

Espen Sjøberg

Take forth thy holy writ
Of Skinner's author share
Truth it must, across the script
Contest it not, beware

Come forth and levers push
And fortune will be thine
Except in some cases
Where we shock your spine

It be a pattern, to be sure
Where behaviours increase
When rewarded they are
But if stopped, it will cease

What's that? The mind, you say?
I cannot hear myself think
For there is no mind
Lost in the operant's blink

I had a thought, but now 'tis gone
Perhaps it was never there
My neurons lie
Or they did not care

Sail ho, says the linguist
A harbinger of function
Down falls the reinforcers
Into psychology's dungeon

Hail, selection by consequences
Science must be protected!
Yet behaviourism ironically
Was not by psychology selected

Select this, select that
To call it evolution is not fair
Its details are not refined
So sayeth Sjøberg and Kennair

Fighting from the grave
Speaking from retirement
I say, there is more to life
Than just the environment

A herald of science, you are
This much is true
Your ideas were great
Just not thought through

Your legacy survives
At least in part
Of that, be proud
'Twas told on a flow chart

So rest, my weary man
Thou work is done indeed
Your disciples praise you
But I will not concede