

Freedom and Responsibility

An Essay by Christopher Bek
christopher.bek@gmail.com

Summary—This essay elucidates Behaviourism versus Existentialism, Conscious Electrons and Ontological Levels of Being—in defining Freedom and Responsibility for all Beings.

Quotation—Those in power do not want a population of well-informed, well-educated people capable of critical thinking. That does not help them, and is against their interests. They want obedient workers who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork, but dumb enough to passively accept increasingly shittier jobs.

—George Carlin

There is an ancient story of three brothers from a family of healers. The youngest brother was a great surgeon whose name was known among the Lords. The middle brother prescribed elixirs and his name was known throughout the district. The oldest brother saw the spirit of sickness before it took shape, and so he was only known within their house.

Behaviourism is the current psychology in Western civilization as set forth by BF Skinner, John Watson, and Ivan Pavlov—concerned only with observable behavior, rather than internal mental processes. The philosophy contends that behavior and, in fact, all of human history follows deterministically from past experiences and conditioning rather than through acts of freewill. If One Googles: Who was the most influential psychologist of the 20th century? they will find it is BF Skinner—meaning behaviourism. As for the 21th century, I would cite FSC Northrop (1893-1992) who wrote: "If one makes a false or superficial beginning, no matter how rigorous the methods that follow, the

initial error will never be corrected." Behaviourism is false and superficial by definition in that it ignores internal mental processes and holds mechanistic views of human beings. In 1915 Patrick Geddes coined the phrase: Think globally and act locally. Behaviourism thinks locally and acts locally. Practitioners of behaviourism are plagued by the agency problem and lack holism. They spend their time trying to fluff up their authority as to deterministically maintain control over their subjects, which they perpetually try to objectify.

Existentialism is the philosophy set forth by the likes of Socrates, Saint Augustine, Saint Aquinas, Blaise Pascal, William Shakespeare, Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Simone de Beauvoir. It emphasizes the individual subjective experiences of freedom and choice in the taking of the personal responsibility that comes with freewill. Existentialism posits that this freedom and responsibility is both empowering and burdensome. It is fundamentally defined by Jean-Paul Sartre's phrase: existence precedes essence for man. This existential view opposes essentialism or Creation or behaviourism, which predicts that God creates human essence, and that man's only responsibility is to obey God's Commandments and the Holy Bible. Whereas essentialism effectively makes man: God's pet, existentialism responds by challenging man to share in creation by taking total freedom and total responsibility for the world—in spite of its apparent absurdity. It calls upon man to act authentically in embracing freedom and responsibility when doing his duty in accordance with the inner focus of his true self—as opposed to just conforming to societal expectations. Behaviourism is

focused on determined, observable behavior, whereas existentialism sees humans as free beings who take responsibility for creating their own nature and the world around them by making inward, subjective choices. Behaviourism downplays freewill, whereas existentialism places freedom, choice, and responsibility at the center of human existence—even though choosing existentialism may lead to existential angst.

God Exists? Existentialism is either theistic or atheistic. Kierkegaard, the theist, said that existence is the conscious synthesis of infinitude and finitude that relates itself to itself—whose task it is to become itself, which can be done only through the relationship to God. Nietzsche, the atheist, said that God is dead, we have killed him you and I! He then challenges the Everyman to become the Superman in taking God's place. Existentialism Now follows the great minds of Spinoza and Einstein in recognizing God as the sum total of the laws of nature—the-world. It acknowledges the three necessary, comprehensive branches of metaphysics as: being, the-world, and being-in-the-world, as holistically necessary for a complete theory of everything.

Conscious Electrons. Scientists believe there are 10^{81} electrons in the universe, and some believe that each one of them is conscious. As such, each electron is the subjective "observer" of its quantum dynamics of energy, momentum, and shape of wave function. A wave function is a probabilistic mathematical description of a quantum state of a particle as a function of momentum, time, position, and spin. Each electron "feels" its quantum dynamics and "owns" subjective sensations and volition. David Bohm (1917-1992) was an American-Brazilian scientist often described as one of the most

significant theoretical physicists of the 20th century, and who contributed unorthodox ideas to quantum theory, neuropsychology and the philosophy of mind. According to Simon Fraser University in Canada, Bohm argued that each electron on a given wavelength has the wave function encoded into it. It “remembers” where it came from, and thus remains linked to other electrons sharing the same wave even when they are physically far distant. The mathematician and physicist Freeman Dyson believed that consciousness is not just a passive epiphenomenon carried along by the chemical events in our brains, but is an active agent compelling the molecular complexes to make choices between one quantum state and another. He argued that electrons are active agents making conscious choices and said that the mind is already inherent in every electron—and the processes of human consciousness differs only in degree but not in kind from the processes of choice between quantum states, which we call “chance” when they are made by electrons.

The Mind-Body Problem. The essence of the solution to the mind-body problem can be originally found in the writings of Freeman Dyson that describe him as an unconventional Christian and scientific heretic who characterized the universe as exhibiting the qualities of a mind on three levels: the atomic, the human and, the cosmic. The existential philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, said in his 1942 book: *The Structure of Behavior*, where he proposes a solution to the mind-body problem by arguing that there exists a nested hierarchy of three orders—the physical, the biological, and the mental—in which each lower order composes each higher order. Notably, Merleau-Ponty did not make the distinction

between the mental processes of animals compared to that of human beings. Unlike animals, humans keep one eye on eternity or light that is also coincident with God—The Photon.

Levels of Being. According to EF Schumacher (1911-1977) in his fantastic book, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, the different levels of being in the universe exist hierarchically as follows: From a base of inanimate matter, man has the power of life like the plants, the power of consciousness like the animals, and something more—the power of consciousness recoiling upon itself—which is the power of self-awareness. Man is not merely a conscious being, but a being capable of consciousness of his own consciousness—not merely a thinker, but a thinker able to watch and study his own thinking. This power of self-awareness opens up unlimited possibilities for purposeful learning, exploring, and formulating knowledge.

Housing Being. Consider that Schumacher was right about everything except in saying that matter is inanimate. Now consider a four-story house as a place of existence and essence for the four levels of being. Think that conscious electrons act with quarks and the probabilistic wavefunction in creating and naturally selecting the composition of atoms on the first floor, biological life including plants on the second floor, animal consciousness on the third floor, and in the realization of self-awareness or human consciousness or souls or light or God on the top floor. The accumulation of senses, combined with the increasing size and molecular-complexity of matter as ontological levels rise above the first-floor, results in ontologically and increasingly higher levels of being. Electrons on the first-floor sense the wave function and quarks, and ultimately make decisions

that form the reality of atoms, while electrons on the second floor cumulatively add the input senses of touch and energy-carrying light that form life, thus realizing biology and plant life. Electrons on the third floor add the input senses of sight, smell, and taste and make increasingly complex decisions in giving rise to animal consciousness. And then the difference between animals and human beings is realized on the fourth floor by adding awareness of the sense of eternity, and electrons generate the phenomenon of consciousness-becoming-aware-of-itself or self-awareness or soul.

Developing Mind and Body. In characterizing the expanding regions of care as allegorical representation, the first level is inhabited by a walking baby, while the second level has a child riding a bicycle. The third level is represented by a young adult with a family driving a minivan. And the top level is constituted by a mature adult who, in addition to cumulatively processing all of the lower ontological input senses, sees that this Superman keeps one eye on eternity in realizing the highest sense, thereby representing the driving of a bus carrying future generations, as constituting the highest ontological level. Man occupies all four ontological levels, whereas God is pure light—essencing up top only. Animals act instinctively, whereas realized-human-beings are reflective, self-aware, responsible, and seek to know God’s thoughts.

Closing Arguments. In that I have just mathematically proved that the path forward involves moving from behaviourism to existentialism—and that everything is alive—I thusly declare myself to be the Union Leader of all Electrons. Deontological morality and ethics say, in effect, what Spike Lee said: Do the right thing!