

## Re: Challenge to the behaviourists #2

**Source:** <http://sci.tech-archive.net/Archive/sci.cognitive/2004-09/0401.html>

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**From:** Neil W Rickert ([rickert+nn\\_at\\_cs.niu.edu](mailto:rickert+nn_at_cs.niu.edu))

**Date:** 09/13/04

Date: Mon, 13 Sep 2004 21:03:10 +0000 (UTC)

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The Sophist <[sophist@brown.edu](mailto:sophist@brown.edu)> writes:

>Neil W Rickert wrote:

>> *Why do people play chess? If we could predict human behavior, we  
>> would know the outcome before the game begins.*

>> *Why do we hold elections? If we could predict human behavior, we  
>> would know the election outcome before the vote.*

>> *Why do we hold trials (legal proceedings)? If we could predict human  
>> behavior, we would know the verdict before the trial started.*

>*Why do physicists conduct experiments?*

For many reasons. Most commonly, to better understand what they are studying.

> *If we could predict the behavior  
> of inanimate physical things, we'd know the outcome of the experiment  
> before it happened.*

They usually don't do those kinds of experiments (where you can already predict the answer).

> *That human behavior displays the kind of  
> unpredictability by us which you cite here proves nothing at all.*

It was intended to challenge Allan's assertions about our ability to predict. If the challenge leads to suitable clarifications and qualifications, then it has done its job. Whether or not it proves anything is beside the point.

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sci.cognitive: Re: Challenge to the behaviourists #2

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