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The Master Gunz Speaks: On John B. Watson

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As John B. Watson indicated in his *Studying the Mind of Animals* the time would come when research structure and better equipment, and more importantly the amount of time spent with the animals, would predict the behavior of animals. Pavlov, on the other hand, stumbled onto this concept while observing the digestive glands of dogs.

Watson started watching the behavior of a Rhesus monkey, Jimmie. Watson tethered Jimmie and put a bunch of grapes out of his reach. The monkey was given a wooden toy rake in hopes that he would use the rake to bring the food toward him. Instead, the monkey picked up the rake, tasted it, and upon finding that it had no flavor threw the rake away. The food remained too far out of Jimmie's reach. Next the rake was put over a grape. Jimmie took the handle, which moved the grape toward him. He ate the grape. Jimmie never put it together that he needed to use the rake to get the grape. The only way Jimmie was ever able to get a grape was if he was assisted, as mentioned previously. What Watson concluded by studying Jimmie was that the powers of reasoning are not present in tame Rhesus monkeys, or at least not Jimmie.

Since Watson's time there is more structure and discipline, as well as technology, to make experiments more accurate. Watson did say that the animals needed to be observed from birth and handled as much as possible from a very young age. In that way the time spent with the lab animals allows the observer the needed time and interaction to come to a more accurate conclusion about animal behavior. On the other hand, a more famous behavioral psychologist, Ivan Pavlov, was instrumental in delving deeper into the behavior of animals. He was studying the digestive system of dogs and accidentally discovered that the dog would salivate even before given the food. "The dogs salivated at the sight of food or at the sound of the footsteps of the man who regularly feeds them. The unlearned response of salivation somehow come connected with, or conditioned to, stimuli previously associated with receiving food." (Shultz & Shultz)

What Watson presented holds true today. I've learned this from my own animals' behavior as I have raised them from early on. They routinely react to certain actions of mine. For instance, when the cat is lying in the middle of the floor and I step over him he puts his paws in the air in a protective manner.

What Watson chose to research was the behavior of animals when given a specific scenario. He was unable to prove his hypothesis. Pavlov, on the other hand, was actually studying the digestive glands of dogs when he achieved Watson's desired results of animal behavior without intention. This led to his famous "conditioned reflexes", which seemed to be Watson's goal.