

About Behaviorology

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Like biology, chemistry, or physics, behaviorology is a comprehensive basic *natural* science of much complexity. Furthermore, as is true of these other natural sciences, persons new to behaviorology find that it contradicts some conventional wisdom and perhaps some of their previous assumptions—in this case, about behavior, including ideas that are commonly taught or implied in grade schools, homes, religious institutions, and university courses.

Compatibility with Other Teachings and Assumptions

Behaviorology, being a natural science, is a separate and independently organized scientific discipline. In contemporary culture one encounters behaviorology along with other disciplines such as psychology operating concurrently, sometimes in a parallel manner. Behaviorology and psychology respectively offer different ways of thinking about the subject matters upon which those disciplines are focused. For example, behaviorologists and psychologists often study the *same* behavior-related phenomena and attempt to solve the same problems—problems that both kinds of thinkers encounter in a given behavior-related field—problems that may pertain to administration, to a personal or professional activity, or to clinical practice. But behaviorology is a disciplinary alternative to psychology.

The behaviorological way of thinking about behavior differs from the way of thinking about behavior that predominates in psychology. Behaviorology is not a kind of psychology and cannot logically be a part or aspect of psychology. Having been organized within the past 15 years (starting in 1987) with independent disciplinary integrity, the discipline of behaviorology is represented in most institutions of higher education by individuals who are currently housed in various social science departments where behaviorology offers an epistemological alternative to traditional psychology and its related cognitive sciences. Contemporary universities typically have no independent academic department for a *natural* science of behavior, and faculty members who represent such a natural philosophy and science of behavior are dispersed among units in which its fundamentally superstitious alternatives prevail.

Behaviorology, as a natural science foundation, can inform the work of professionals in *any* behavior-related field. Behaviorology is comprehensive and its applicabil-

ity correspondingly broad. This means that behaviorologists do not turn away from their discipline to study, in some other way, any aspect of behavior-related events. Behaviorologists may specialize in any applied field (education, advertising, history, journalism, nursing, law, entertainment, public relations, ergonomics, public policy, etc.). They believe that behaviorology offers the most effective analytical approach to *any* kind of behavior-related activity within such fields.

Behaviorology is based in part on different fundamental assumptions about the nature of behavior than those supporting much of traditional psychology. And importantly, behaviorology focuses on a different aspect of the subject matter. Behaviorology is the study of *behavior/environment functional relations*.

In contrast, psychology has traditionally maintained a focus on events thought to occur within the body, many of which are cast as the operations of metaphorical constructs such as *minds* and *information processors*. Such constructs are posited as models of psychological events presumed to occur within people's nervous systems. In the psychological view, many of the important characteristics of behavior originate internally, often in what appears to be spontaneous ways. Interpretations of environmental events are rendered by a mystical pro-active mind. The views of many traditional psychologists allow for the possibility that behavior can also originate through interventions from external but mystical sources, an allowance that accommodates common religious perspectives on behavior.

On the other hand, in behaviorology behavior is cast as a function of measurable physical events in the behavior-controlling environment. In the behaviorological view, the body serves only mediating functions in the production of behavior insofar as body structure enables behavior to occur and imposes limits on the forms and ranges of possible behaviors. But, within those body-determined limitations on the behavior that can be exhibited, *the selection of specific behaviors is left to the environment*. As a natural science, behaviorology also eschews all metaphysical explanations for behavior including reliance on spirits, psyches, and concepts of mind that feature interfaces between the physical world and a hypothesized metaphysical world.

As a result of such large differences in basic assumptions and general approach, the *scientific principles* respected by behaviorologists and psychologists can differ substantially. Not surprisingly, these two kinds of scholars will frequently reach different conclusions. No one should expect otherwise. As students in higher education become aware of these differences, they should remember that they are in a higher education institution. While they are there to contact the *products* of prevalent thinking on a number of frontiers important to their culture,

they are also there to study different *ways of thinking*. There is no guarantee that any one of those schools of thought will be compatible with any others.

One thing is relatively certain: If a student leaves the university as a professional in some behavior-related field, that person is going to have to produce results in the form of substantial and important changes in how people behave—including how they think and feel, which are also kinds of behavior. Rhetorical obfuscation aside, that is what they will be paid to do—and *expected* to do. Unless the basic behavioral discipline that informs their work is capable of supporting an effective and efficient technology of behavior by which they can accomplish such behavior change (and with respect to *all* classes of behavior), they will fail in their professional mission.

In programs for professional training in this culture, the predominant scientific foundations have long been drawn from what is connoted by the phrase “cognitive, mentalistic, and developmental psychology.” The essence of that disciplinary tradition has existed for the past century as a set of formal disciplinary concepts and precepts, and since antiquity as culturally imparted assumptions.

In contrast, from the behaviorological perspective, within normal ranges, what occurs inside of a human body while that organism behaves (including the internal workings of the brain and other parts of the nervous system) is *not* relevant to the kind of behavior technology through which professional practitioners can conduct effective behavior-related operations. Remember, unless you are training to be a surgeon or a person who can alter the body with synthetic improvements or with drugs, you are not going to be in a position to work with independent physiological variables. True, a person needs a body that works well internally, and physiological technicians are working on synthetic enhancements that will give us better working bodies including more effective and efficient nervous systems. However, a practitioner in a behavior-related field probably will not be intervening professionally among variables within bodies. That’s just not in the nature of the business. Furthermore, regardless of the presence or absence of any rights of a behavior-related practitioner to intervene internally within a person’s body, the behavior is still only mediated by that body and occurs only in response to environmental stimuli. A foundation of behaviorology supports a comprehensive behavior technology that specifically identifies and analyzes the points of intervention that *are* available to various practitioners who deal with behavior problems.

Professional Organizations of Behaviorology

The principle professional organizations of the discipline of behaviorology are *The International Behaviorology Institute* and its Association (TIBI and TIBIA) and the *International Society for Behaviorology* (ISB). TIBI concerns

itself with the establishment of training opportunities and the coordination of professional activities at the interface with the rest of the culture, while the ISB concentrates on the integrity of the scientific community. The members of both organizations are variously focused on (a) basic and applied research on behavioral phenomena, (b) the effectiveness of the philosophy and science of behaviorology, (c) the philosophical and scientific integrity of the discipline, and (d) cultural redevelopment based on effective practices informed by the naturalistic philosophy and science of behavior. ☞