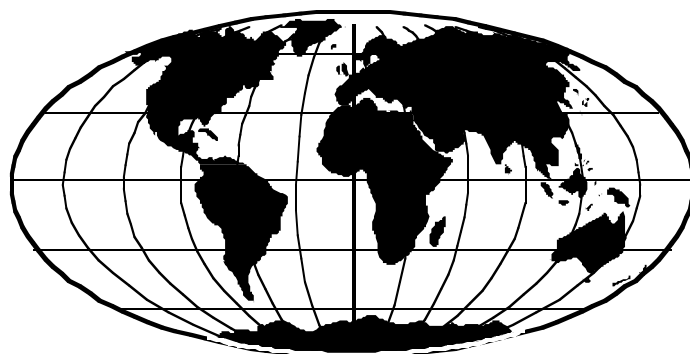


## A 100th Birthday Conference

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The Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Iceland hosted, on 29 February 2004, the “Where is it now? The Legacy of Behaviorism in the 21st Century” conference at the University of Iceland, Reykjavik, a conference we organized in celebration of the centennial birthday of B.F. Skinner (which occurred on 20 March 2004). The notion of organizing a conference originally surfaced early in 2003 when we three students, from the university psychology program, noticed that we had not heard of any celebrations, anywhere, being planned in honor of Skinner’s 100th birthday. So, in a perhaps naive display of overconfidence, we decided to plan something special. But what? The answer of “a conference” came quickly.

Our main objective for this conference was to address the following questions: When and where did Skinner’s behaviorism start? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Where can it go from here? And, last but not least, how can it be put into practice? The conference should also be a venue for people who had collected behavior therapy or experimental analysis data to present their findings at a poster session. The desired outcome would be to enable and encourage the general public, professionals, and students to get to know behaviorism better.

To achieve our objective, we got nine lecturers to present ten lectures on various topics in a single-track format. The morning featured basically philosophy-based lectures while the afternoon featured basically data-based lectures. The sequence of lectures was such that even people who had never heard of behaviorism could attend and get an introduction to it.

In the morning part, the philosophy of behaviorism lectures began with an historical lecture about the origins of Skinner’s behaviorism, then proceeded with lectures on the pros and cons of Skinner’s Radical Behaviorism from a philosophical viewpoint, and finished with a lecture on some contributions of behaviorology—a name for the independent natural science of behavior—to the future of humanity. [This last paper is on pp. 4–8 in this issue (Volume 7, Number 2, Fall 2004) of *Behaviorology Today*.—Ed.] Altogether, these philosophical lectures provide something for everyone.

The conference afternoon turned to technical and practical data-based lectures. Topics included experimental analysis with rats, behavioral interventions with young children, benefits of behavioral analysis in business, and teaching behavioral techniques on a regional level.

This coverage of philosophical, technical, and practical aspects guaranteed that people new to behaviorism could understand its foundations while also giving professionals new material to ponder and discuss. To further such outcomes, the University of Iceland Press will publish the conference papers in a book.

In the book of conference papers, some lectures will appear in Icelandic and some in English. Here is some information on each of the four papers to appear in English: (a) *The Emergence of B.F. Skinner’s Theory of Operant Behavior: A Case Study* (Kristján Gudmundsson): In this article the author argues that Skinner’s behaviorism is not rooted in animal experiments but experiments with people. This finding is based on the author’s research into some of Skinner’s earliest work, and on an interview he conducted with Skinner in which Skinner acknowledged this interpretation. (b) *Dennett and Skinner* (Magnus Kristjánsson): Here the author explores Dennett’s critique of Skinner’s views on mentalism and mentalist explanations, and considers what Dennett got wrong. (c) *Skinner’s Psychology: Unique Solutions and Suspected Problems* (Sigurdur J. Grétarsson): In this article the author discusses Skinner’s fresh approach to behavior, compared to the psychology of his day, acknowledging that much of the common criticism launched against him is misguided and that alternative solutions are hardly free of problems. Then some credence is given to the notion, that Skinner’s suspicion of concepts from folk psychology, such as belief or desire, may not have been altogether revolutionary. (d) *The Future and Behaviorology* (Stephen F. Ledoux): Here the author discusses the value of an independent natural science of behavior and how the products of this science are of vital benefit to humanity both now and in the future.

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