

Chapter 7:

Conclusion

This account of the emergence of behaviorology had five main parts, Chapters Two through Six. Chapter Two examined the nature and origins of the behaviorology concept. Chapter Three examined contingencies supporting individual commitments to a disciplinary independence movement. Chapter Four presented a comprehensive review of the activities to organize the behaviorology discipline and examined the cultural engineering by which the behaviorology discipline was formalized and installed in the community of natural sciences. Chapter Five reviewed the prevailing cultural milieu and analyzed the support for, and the opposition to, the behaviorology movement. Chapter Six emphasized the prevailing views of the early behaviorologists on where their discipline fit both among the community of natural science disciplines extant in the culture and in the cultural marketplace. This chapter, Chapter Seven, provides a conclusion for this account of the emergence of behaviorology; it is followed by the endnotes and the references for all the chapters in this account.

This multi-part work has addressed the questions that naturally arise with respect to the emergence of a new discipline. It has described (a) the nature of behaviorology as a science, (b) the facts and circumstances of its origins as a concept, (c) its formal organization as a new and independent disciplinary verbal community, (d) the behavior of its leaders as they conducted a behaviorological development project to establish this discipline, (e) the place of this discipline within the scientific community at large and within the culture in general, and (f) the cultural bases of resistance to behaviorology. This work not only has included the *chronicle* of the emergence of this discipline, but also it has described the *nature* of its development.

Powerful technologies are developing from this behaviorology discipline. They can effectively support a wide variety of behavior-related fields. But enthusiasm about the effectiveness of these technologies is sometimes accompanied by disdain for their behavioristic origins. As one psychology student in an introductory behaviorology course recently asked in a hopeful vein, “May one simply adopt the behavioral technologies based upon this science without accepting the underlying science, assumptions, and philosophy?” Addressing that kind of question, Eshleman and Vargas (1988) admonish that our

...technology should not lose its behavioristic character. More explicitly, as practitioners of a behaviorological technology, we should not disguise its origins. Not only does such disavowal impart an apologetic air to our professional activities, which then denigrates those activities (along with us), but it also reinforces any tendency, on that part of a verbal community that is hostile, to continue punitive actions. At worst, others in the community join in on the condemnations—believing the arguments they make against a behaviorological technology without knowing why they make them. At best, the rest of the community remains ignorant as to where credit should accrue,

with consequent effect on delivery of resources for professional work by behaviorologists. Such selling out in order to buy in leaves everyone holding the bag, including, eventually, the community we try to help. (p. 30)

Behaviorology is not the first discipline that has had to separate from another field in order to advance. Psychology itself is one example. Fraley (1987) notes:

Psychology was a revolution based on experimental methodology; behaviorology is one based on a science of philosophy. Today's behaviorologists have more valuable contributions to make to the culture than rehabilitating psychology.... Behaviorists should now move forward, ...unburdened, toward the fulfillment of their own cultural destiny and adapt an effective behavioral science to the varied institutions and agencies of our culture. (p. 125–126)

Future readers, should their lives have unfolded within the context of a culture pervaded by behaviorology, might have difficulty appreciating a past era of antithesis to behaviorological science. That people would not have readily invested in a repertoire that effective—one that obvious and well demonstrated in its validity and implications, one that elegant in its parsimonious reduction of false complexities—could tax the comprehension of those who live in such a future. But behaviorology being taken for granted is not presently among our cultural assets.

The most effective behavioral science ever to emerge appeared among the behaviors of only a small number of people. A subset of these continued to work on the socio-cultural arrangements to protect, develop, and share it. Its importance was enough to evoke the commitments of entire professional lives, but to different and sometimes incompatible courses of action.

The smaller group whose members called themselves behaviorologists confronted a wide world of people most of whom were drifting down culturally destructive paths because they lacked a science of behavior that was sufficiently effective and sufficiently relevant to help them avoid doing so. The behaviorologists also confronted other behaviorists who entertained elements of behaviorological science but who acted to invest their pieces of the intellectual treasure in other ways. While the outcome of the struggle to strengthen a discipline of behaviorology could not be predicted at that time from the data base of those circumstances, behaviorologists acted in part because they already knew that future. They knew it as a tenuously resolved vision, a vision that emerged as a product of many variables inhering in their particular special histories.

If the behaviorologists' judgment proves to have been correct, and if they shall have prevailed in the effort to make common the behaviorological repertoire, then the culture—and eventually the whole planetary biosystem—will have benefited, perhaps most importantly by surviving. The early behaviorologists believed, of course, that this was what was at stake, or they would not have incurred the costs of organizing the behaviorology movement. ✻