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Behaviorism, Overview

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Reference: Smith, L. D. (2014). Behaviorism. In. T. Teo (Ed.), Encyclopedia of critical psychology (pp. 156- 164). New York Springer

Introduction:

Behaviorism shares with psychoanalysis the rare status of being a major tradition of psychological thought with a long history of critical exposure, fluctuating fortunes, and unprecedented diffusion into the larger culture. Like psychoanalysis, it emerged from a conducive backdrop of social and intellectual trends to pose challenges to orthodox cultural beliefs. But unlike the psychoanalytic tradition, behaviorism has sought to understand psychology by external (156) manifestations (157) rather than inner depths, and it represents a particularly American expression of the psychological enterprise. In that role, behaviorism has been afflicted with paradoxes, not least of which is its focus on the behavior of infrahuman subjects in narrow experimental settings while claiming to offer solutions to human problems in the wider world. Those solutions are often framed in terms of a behavioral technology to be applied to problems of social control and self-management. 157

Definition:

Behaviorism is a family of theoretical approaches to psychology that treat the observable physical activity of organisms as psychology's subject matter (or at least as its basis for postulating inferred entities) and hold characteristic assumptions about the environmental determination and malleability of behavior (O'Donohue & Kitchener, 1999). 157

Translation-clarification of some words:

- exposure (révélation, dénonciation)
- fortunes (chance, luck, opportunity, good fortune, destiny, fate)
- conducive: favorable to, beneficial to, advantageous to, opportune to
- pose: constitute, present, create, cause, produce, be
- sought: to seek (chercher)
- enterprise: initiative
- not least of which: au premier rang desquelles
- self-management.: autogestion