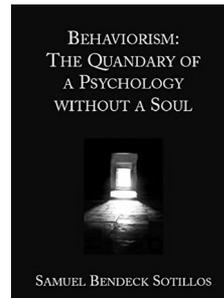


# *Behaviorism: The Quandary of a Psychology without a Soul*

*By Samuel Bendeck Sotillos (2017, Chicago:  
The Institute of Traditional Psychology)*

*Reviewed by Brian Welter*



**I**n *Behaviorism: The Quandary of a Psychology without a Soul*, counsellor Samuel Bendeck Sotillos argues convincingly that this school of psychology remains alive and well even if this fact is not always obvious. Along with psychoanalysis, it forms the roots and therefore the basic assumptions of modern psychology according to the author. The social science was therefore poisoned from the start, and any attempts, such as via cognitive psychology, to address behaviorism's shortcomings are doomed to failure because of these sick roots.

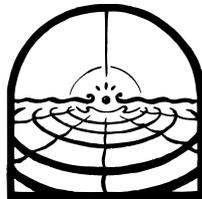
What is this sickness? Behaviorism has thrown out what should form the core objects of its inquiry, the soul and spirit. Arguing from a traditionalist perspective with references to René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, and other traditionalist thinkers, Bendeck Sotillos shows the materialist, reductionist, and scientific basis to behaviorism. Starting from a materialist perspective, it rejects the spiritual realm and the soul. It regards psychological issues as solely physiological and resulting from the environment. Humans possess no innate qualities or essences, and

are nothing but sophisticated animals. Behaviorism therefore devolved from the already low point of Watson's emotionally abusive Little Albert experiment to the observation and training of rats. Behaviorism's reductionism leads it to restrict definitions of human behavior to Pavlovian classical conditioning and Skinnerian operant conditioning. The author cites Watson's famous confidence in his method: "Give me a dozen healthy infants, well-formed, and my own specified world to bring them up in and I'll guarantee to take any one at random and train him to become any type of specialist I might select – doctor, lawyer, artist, merchant-chief and, yes, even beggar-man and thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors" (51-2). This is the height of Locke's *tabula rasa*, and allows no place for the soul or the notion that the human is the *imago Dei*.

Behaviorism's scientism causes it to advocate for and express, on the one hand, the scientific rejection of metaphysics and ontology and, on the other hand, the reduction of epistemology to whatever can be observed and measured. Behaviorists limit the human to observable and measurable behavior, with the rest, which is to say the soul and spirit, ridiculed as nonsense. Behaviorism is psychologism, which the author defines as "the reduction of reality to that which can be validated by some psychological criteria" (6). The author's focus on the method and outlook of behaviorism takes him away from an analysis of the more practical aspects of this school of psychology, namely what takes place in the counselling session or with educational research and teacher training. Yet a broader discussion would have greatly benefitted readers, as we are left with only an attack at the theoretical level. Bendeck Sotillos does clearly point out the unscientific nature of scientism. Ironically enough, the assertion that science-based knowledge is the only truth cannot be proven scientifically.

The author succeeds at juxtaposing the traditionalist and behaviorist views. This contrast draws our attention to behaviorism's colossal deficiencies. These deficiencies construct a warped image of human psychology that denies basic truths, including the fact that "the human psyche longs for Spirit and can never be at rest with anything less than transcendence itself" (8). A traditionalist psychology, which is centered on the nature of the psyche, has entirely different roots and therefore comes to vastly divergent conclusions about our psychological nature

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