



Learning

Psychology 390

Psychology of Learning

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Learning

- Many Definitions
- Webster's Dictionary
 - The act or experience of one that learns
 - Knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study
- Older psychology
 - Changes in behavior as a result of experience.

Klein

- An experiential (not experimental) process resulting in a relatively permanent change in behavior that cannot be explained by temporary states, maturation, or innate response tendencies.

Three Points

- Change in Potential of Behavior.
- Behavior is Relatively Permanent.
- Other Processes are Important.

Change in the Potential

- Learning reflects a change in the potential for a behavior.
- Learning does not automatically lead to a change in behavior.

Behavior is Relatively Permanent

- Changes in behavior due to learning are relatively permanent.
- New experiences can override previously learned behavior.

Other Processes

- Changes in behavior can be due to processes other than learning.
- E.g., eating may be motivated to eat by physiological processes (blood sugar).
 - However eating can be influenced by learning (classical conditioning, experiences with new food, etc.)

Philosophical Assumptions and Trends that have Influenced Learning

Empiricism

- Aristotle, Locke
- All human knowledge comes from experience.
- Nothing is innate
- Tabula Rasa (blank slate)

vs. Nativism

- Plato
- All knowledge is inside of you when you are born.
- Use different methods to get it out.
 - Reasoning
 - Questioning

vs. Rationalism

- We get knowledge by reasoning about things.

vs. Determinism

All behavior is predictable.

People's behavior is entirely determined by their heredity and the environment.

Includes both past and present environment.

vs. Free Will

- We have the power to determine our actions.
- You are responsible for your behavior, not the environment, genetics, etc.

Second Major Group of Thought

Associationism and Atomism

- Associationism

Knowledge is a series of connections or associations about things.

- Atomism

Complex things come from simpler elements.

Complex things can be broken down into its simpler elements (have to assume something is connected).

Third Major Influence

Scientific Materialism

- Don't need anything beyond scientific, physical principles.
- People can be explained by simple physical principles without a "special life force" (e.g. mind).
- We can use the same terms for humans as we do for other things.