



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.

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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.

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Three Points

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

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Change in the Potential

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

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Behavior is Relatively Permanent

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

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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.)

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Philosophical Assumptions and Trends that have Influenced Learning

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Empiricism

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

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vs. Nativism

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

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vs. Rationalism

- We get knowledge by reasoning about things.

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vs. Determinism

All behavior is predictable.
 People's behavior is entirely determined by their heredity and the environment.
 Includes both past and present environment.

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vs. Free Will

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

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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).

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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.

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