

Behavioral Perspective (Lecture 5)

I. Behavioral Perspective

A. Intentional and Behavioral Explanations

- Consider John B. Watson's quote from 1925:
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 a beggar-man thief, regardless of his talents, penchants, tendencies, abilities, vocations, and race of his ancestors.
- What do you think of this?
 - Do people internally choose their own destiny?
 - Are people's destiny under external control?

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A. Intentional and Behavioral Explanations

- Conceptualizing people as internally choosing their own destiny reflects an intentional explanation
 - **Intentional explanations:** Behavior is under internal (mental state) control
- Conceiving of people as controlled by external forces what are out of their control is a behavioral explanation
 - **Behavioral explanations:** Behavior is under external (environmental) control.

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B. Behaviorism and Learning

- **Behaviorism:** The school of psychology that accounts for behavior in terms of observable acts or events, with out reference to mental entities, such as mind or will.
 - At its heart, behaviorism is the position that all behavior can be explained by processes of learning.
- **Learning:** The relatively permanent change in behavior (or behavioral potentiality) that results from experience (except for changes due to fatigue, injury, or disease).
 - Behavior is a function of its consequence: $B \rightarrow C$

I. Behavioral Perspective
C. Behavior → Consequence

- Edward L. Thorndike (1911) formulated the **Law of Effect**
 - Studied how cats escaped from of puzzle boxes.
 - If the consequence of a behavior is a *pleasant*, the prob. of the behavior occurring again is *increased*.
 - If the consequence of a behavior is *not pleasant or noxious*, the prob. of the behavior occurring again is *decreased*.
 - Law of Effect assumes that behavior can be altered by its consequence **without reference to mental states**.
 - Law of Effect is an example of **Associative Learning** – certain events occur together

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