Law of Effect Encyclopedia Article

Law of Effect

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Law of Effect Encyclopedia Article.....1

Contents.....2

Law of Effect.....3

Law of Effect

Principle associated with learning and behavior developed by American psychologist Edward Thorndike.

One of the first principles of learning was the law of effect developed by American psychologist Edward Thorndike. The law of effect states that behavior that leads to a satisfying outcome is likely to be repeated; behaviors that lead to undesired outcomes are less likely to be repeated. Prior to Thorndike's assertion of the law of effect, many psychologists interested in behavior attributed learning to the process of reasoning. Thorndike theorized that animals learned new behaviors through trial and error. From his observations, Thorndike concluded that an animal makes an association between a behavior and a positive or satisfying outcome and draws on this association for future behavior. Alternatively, when an animal engages in a behavior that does not have a positive outcome, it is less likely to repeat that behavior.

Initially, Thorndike believed that negative outcomes produced negative associations similar to the positive associations affiliated with positive outcomes. Later, however, he modified his view, believing that negative outcomes were ineffective in shaping behavior, and rather, in Thorndike's view, led instead to unpredictable behavior.

The law of exercise, another of Thorndike's principles, states that responses that occur under a specific set of circumstances become strongly associated with those circumstances. Thorndike believed that the combination of these two laws explained the development of all behavior patterns. He believed there was no need to consider the thought process in considering how behavior is learned, but that all learning could be explained by positive and negative outcomes.

For Further Study

Books

Clifford, G. I, *Edward L Thorndike: The Sane Positivist.* Middletown, PA: Wesleyan Univeristy Press, 1984.

Mackintosh, N. J. *Conditioning and Associative Learning.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.