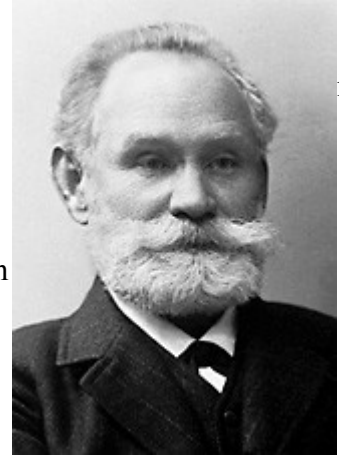


CLASSICAL CONDITIONING

The most basic behaviors that organisms exhibit are called reflexes. Reflexes are an automatic, unlearned response to a stimulus. In other words, reflexes are something that occurs naturally, without thinking about it in certain situations. For example, we have a reflex to snatch our hand away from hot water. We are born with this reflex. Reflexes are not learned, but we are born with them.

So, what do these reflexes have to do with classical conditioning? When an organism has a reflex, it is caused by a certain stimulus. In classical conditioning, organisms become conditioned to “reflex” the same way to a different stimulus. For example, suppose every time you heard the toilet flush the shower water became very hot and you jumped back away from the water. You jumped away from the hot water because it's a reflex. However, eventually, you will become conditioned to jump away from the water when you hear the toilet flush.



Ivan Pavlov, known for his studies in classical conditioning (1849-1936)

Before conditioning

Stimulus: hot water → Response: jump away

Stimulus: toilet flush while in shower → Response: no response

After Conditioning

Stimulus: hot water → Response: jump away

Stimulus: toilet flush while in shower → Response: jump away

In the above example, a new stimulus is causing the reflex response of “jumping away.” No longer does the hot water alone cause jumping away, but the sound of a toilet flushing causes a learned, conditioned response.

When an organism learns to react to a new stimulus in a manner that before was a reflex to another stimulus, classical conditioning has occurred. However, unlike a reflex, the conditioned behavior is not permanent. It can go away. Reflexes, on the other hand, are reflexes. They will not go away because they are not learned.

Here are more examples of classically conditioned behaviors:

- You eat a new food and then you get sick. Now, whenever you smell the food you feel sick.
- Dogs drool when they put their tongues to food. A bell is rung each time food is given. Now, dogs drool simply by hearing the bell.
- A bright light is shined in your eyes every time you hear a bell. Now, whenever you hear the bell you close your eyes.

While organisms are born with some behaviors, such as reflexes, many behaviors are learned. Classical conditioning is one way that organisms learn behaviors.