

Cognitive science and behavior analysis: operant conditioning

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Reinforcing a behavior strengthens it while the opposite weakens and eventually extinguishes it (Palmer & Donahoe, 1992). Although the Darwinism hypothesis has had a fair share of followers, operant conditioning has a valid non-teleological explanation of the diversity of life. Although there are many factors that interplay to affect behavior, the reinforced actions are more likely to repeat in the future. For this reason, human action does not entirely rely on genetic transfer but also depends on the external factors that are non-biological in nature (Palmer & Donahoe, 1992). As Skinner asserts, relatively undifferentiated baseline behavior by successive contingencies of reinforcement can shape highly organized and complex behavior.

The history of Skinner's work contains an integrated and comprehensive experiment to reject an informed conceptualization that offers misleading knowledge about behavior. He has successfully grasped the variable nature of the intended subject and specified an appropriate methodology woven within the scientific fabric of modern biology (Palmer & Donahoe, 1992). His assertion of operant behavior focuses on the action within the conscious control of the organism, either spontaneously or purposely. In his understanding of behavior, he conducted research using the Skinner box that held a small animal with various keys that an animal would press to obtain a reward. Additionally, he developed a cumulative recorder to establish responsive slope line (Palmer & Donahoe, 1992). Using a rat as the experiment object in a Skinner box, he set the generic nature of the concept of stimulus and response in the analysis of operant behavior.