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SKINNER'S THEORY OF LEARNING

- *B.A. Part-1*
- *Paper-1*
- *Psychology (Hons.)*

SKINNER'S THEORY

- Operant conditioning is a theory of learning in behavioral psychology which emphasises the role of reinforcement in conditioning.
- The theory was developed by the American psychologist B. F. Skinner .In his published book ‘ *The Behavior of Organisms*’ he described the functions of operant conditioning.



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- Theory is based on the idea that learning is a function of change in overt behaviour.
- Operant conditioning is distinct in that the organism can emit responses, instead of eliciting a response due to an external stimulus.

CONT..

- Skinner developed his own method and apparatus, commonly known as Skinner box.
- A simple response of pressing a lever/ bar was chosen as a unit of behaviour.



POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

- A positive reinforcement is the provision of a reward or other benefit following a desirable action. This encourages a person or animal to repeat a particular behavior in future, in the hope that the reinforcement will be repeated. Food is a positive reinforcer for a hungry man.

NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT

- Negative reinforcements are the removal of an undesirable or uncomfortable stimuli from a situation. Such reinforcements may involve the ceasing of punishment when a person's behavior conform to a demand. In order to avoid future punishment, an individual may change his or her behavior.



PUNISHMENT

- Punishment is defined as the opposite of reinforcement since it is designed to weaken or eliminate a response rather than increase it.
- It is an aversive event that decreases the behaviour that it follows.



SCHEDULES OF REINFORCEMENT

- 1. Continuous Schedule
- 2. Partial Schedule
- 3. Interval Schedule
- 4. Ratio Schedule
- 5. Fixed Interval Schedule



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- Skinner's theory of operant conditioning played a key role in helping psychologists to understand how behavior is learnt. It explains why reinforcements can be used so effectively in the learning process, and how schedules of reinforcement can affect the outcome of conditioning. Skinner's research also addressed the use of **behavioral shaping**, whereby successive approximations of an expected response are also reinforced, leading a subject gradually towards the desired type of behavior.



CONT..

- Skinner has completely ignored the structural and hereditary factors which are very important in the development of psychological process of language.
- Chomsky criticized that the concepts derived from situations do not apply to the natural conditions of learning .

