Week 5 Essay

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Author Note

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# 2. Pets Response to Stimuli

As an owner of two pet cats, I had always observed them run towards the kitchen whenever they would hear me opening up the jar and pouring cat food into their bowl. The theories of unconditioned and conditioned stimuli finally helped me discern their response. For the cats, the scent of food serves as the unconditioned stimulus that prompts them to run towards the place where they sense the aroma emerging from. However, connecting the noise that occurs from opening the jar and pouring the cat food in the kitchen is a form of learned or conditioned response. The unconditioned stimulus originates from a feeling of hunger which naturally comes as a response to the smell of food, while the sound of the jar became associated with that hunger. Thus, whenever the cats hear a familiar sound in the kitchen, it evokes the feeling of hunger in them as a response and as a result, the cat becomes excited hearing that sound and runs towards the place where it is emerging from. Similarly, if the cats associated hunger to the sound of a whistle, it would elicit the same response as it does in the case of the jar.

The theory of conditioning also helped me understand techniques I could use to train my cats to respond to a particular smell, sound or behavior. Trainers often use clicker sounds to associate a particular desired behavior to a food reward and once the association develops, the cat would react every time with the same conditioned response, once the clicker is activated (McLeod, 2018). In essence, the conditioned response is a learned response to stimuli, whereas the unconditioned response takes place naturally against a stimulus, without the need to train.

# 4. Removal of Aversive Stimulus

Negative reinforcement involved arriving at desired consequence by removing an aversive stimulus. It differs from positive reinforcement wherein a response is strengthened by means of a pleasurable stimulus following a response. Negative reinforcement works by increasing the likelihood of repeating a particular behavior by arriving at the desired consequence. Among the most common types of negative reinforcement, taking painkillers to relieve pain, or fastening the seat belt to remove the beeping sound in the car is a classic example (Meyers & DeWall, 2016).

In the case of taking aspirin for a headache, the headache serves as an aversive stimulus that an Individual removes by taking aspirin. This conditions the Individual to avert any painful feelings in the head by means of medicine and strengthens the habit of taking medication to stay pain-free. Similarly, in the case of hurrying home to get out of the cold, the cold serves as the aversive stimuli that hurrying back home removes. It strengthens the Individual's behavior by prompting him/her to seek warmth at home struck by the cold outside, and eventually, the Individual may be conditioned to always hurry back home. Another example of negative reinforcement includes smoking to relieve anxiety, in which anxiety serves as the aversive stimuli which smoking aims to remove, thereby conditioning an Individual to smoke to avert his/her troubles. A common form of negative reinforcement comes from giving in to an argument upon repeated or irksome requests, or to a dog's begging. The aversive stimulus in the form of repeated begging is removed by means of giving in to the request, which would condition an Individual to find it difficult to say no to any insistent request. Further examples include using a fan to avert the heat, putting on a safety belt to avoid hearing the irritating beep, using an umbrella to escape the rain, or turning the loud volume of radio down to escape the noise. In each of these cases, the irritating beep from the car, the noise of the radio, or the heat serves as an aversive stimulus that the Individual removes which, in turn, conditions him/her to develop or strengthen a particular habit as a result of the desired consequence.

# References

McLeod, S. (2018, October 8). *Pavlov's Dogs*. Retrieved July 4, 2019, from Simple Psychology: https://www.simplypsychology.org/pavlov.html

Meyers, D. G., & DeWall, C. N. (2016). *Exploring psychology in modules* (10th ed.). New York, NY: Worth Publishers.