



The Elements of Psychology

Edward L. Thorndike

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Edward Lee "Ted" Thorndike (August 31, 1874 - August 9, 1949) was an American psychologist who spent nearly his entire career at Teachers College, Columbia University. His work on animal behavior and the learning process led to the theory of connectionism and helped lay the scientific foundation for modern educational psychology. He also worked on solving industrial problems, such as employee exams and testing. He was a member of the board of the Psychological Corporation, and served as president of the American Psychological Association in 1912

William James (January 11, 1842 - August 26, 1910) was a pioneering American psychologist and philosopher who was trained as a physician. He was the first educator to offer a psychology course in the U.S. He wrote influential books on the young science of psychology, educational psychology, psychology of religious experience and mysticism, and on the philosophy of pragmatism. He was the brother of novelist Henry James and of diarist Alice James. In the summer of 1878, James married Alice Gibbens.

Thorndike was a pioneer not only in behaviorism and in studying learning, but also in using animals in psychology experiments. Thorndike was able to create a theory of learning based on his research with animals. His doctoral dissertation, "Animal Intelligence: An Experimental Study of the Associative Processes in Animals", was the first in psychology where the subjects were nonhumans. Thorndike was interested in whether animals could learn tasks through imitation or observation. Thorndike was able to create his own theory of learning. The puzzle box experiments were motivated in part by Thorndike's dislike for statements that animals made use of extraordinary faculties such as insight in their problem solving: "In the first place, most of the books do not give us a psychology, but rather a eulogy of animals. They have all been about animal intelligence, never about animal stupidity."

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