Deconditioning the Mind for Better Learning: The Gift of Reasoning

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses classical or Pavlovian conditioning, deconditioning, and critical thinking within the context of the human condition and relevant literature. The practical goal of this analysis is to demonstrate how to 'reprogram' our thinking from previous, somewhat dysfunctional learning to improve our responsiveness to others and our joy. Becker (2020) defined deconditioning as a systematic self-training process to free oneself from “undesirable desires”-urges and emotions that pop up when we would prefer they did not, thereby making life more stressful. By training oneself to ‘tune out’ these undesirable or distracting desires, one becomes more capable of making and adhering to intentional decisions. Such purposefulness can lead to increased experiences of the pleasures of life emanating from a sense of freedom rather than compulsion (Becker, 2020,p.1). To achieve that goal, this paper explores the important distinctions between conditioning and deconditioning, examining their roles and usefulness in learning generally. In this pursuit, several pertinent articles and books describing conditioning and deconditioning, combined with critical reflection on the researcher’s relevant experiences, are examined to illustrate how people can ‘decondition’ their thinking to stimulate appropriate reasoning for improved learning and memory. Briefly, deconditioning can lead to superior reasoning, resulting in benefits for learning, character development and beyond.

Keywords-- Deconditioning, Conditioning, Logical Reasoning, Critical Thinking, Reasoning, Theories of Learning

I. INTRODUCTION

Self-knowledge, or learning about oneself every day, brings about a new mind. we have denied the old mind. Through self-knowledge, we have denied our conditioning. The mind's conditioning can be denied only when the mind is aware of its operations, how it works, what it thinks, what it says, its motives (Krishnamurti Foundation Trust Ltd, 2021). One of the critical elements of the adaptation process is learning. All reasonable living beings or animals are acting instinctively to learn to adapt to their environment. Learning enables living beings to do work that is unfamiliar to them. The scientific progress accumulated in the twentieth century and the twenty-first century are the result of learning. Of all these advances, one of the things that still retains humans alive is the landing of the man on the moon. We can predict that there are still things to come as man continues to learn. Despite all this, there are still obstacles without which the learning process would be better. In this context, we indulge in talking about this subject, "Deconditioning the Mind for Better Learning," to facilitate the learning process. We hope to achieve this through a more detailed pedagogical study.

Classical conditioning is responsible for students' positive and negative feelings, whether directed toward subject matter, peers, teachers, or education in general (Tauber, 1990). People can use classical conditioning to exploit others for their gain. A prominent example of this occurs in advertising. The advertiser generally attempts to get consumers to associate their product with a particular response or feeling, so they are more likely to buy the product. Advertisers can use music or mouth-watering food in their ads to create an association with their product. These associations can lead to increased spending and poor eating habits, especially if the product is unhealthy food (Rehman et al., 2020).

According to Olson and Hergenhahn (2016). The terms Pavlovian conditioning and classical conditioning are synonymous. The ingredients necessary to bring about Pavlovian or classical conditioning include:

1. An unconditioned stimulus which elicits a natural and automatic response from the organism.
2. An unconditioned response which is a natural and automatic response elicited by the unconditioned stimulus.
3. A conditioned stimulus which is a neutral stimulus in that it does not elicit a natural and automatic response from the organism.

When these ingredients are mixed in a certain way, a conditioned response occurs ( pp.152-153). However, the influence of classical conditioning in the classroom is strong. However, the principles of classical conditioning can be purposively utilized in an educational program, as they were in Albert's case. Little Albert's story is one of the most confused and controversial in psychology. The one who conducted this experiment is none other than the famous John B. Watson, as cited in Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), considered the father of behaviorism.
In summary, this experiment wanted to demonstrate that stimuli and responses condition human beings' behavior. Before we delve into what happened with Watson as cited in Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), let us briefly review what little Albert's experience consisted of. According to Watson's notes, as cited in Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), the child was an orphanage nanny's son. He was chosen for the experiment because of his quiet character and his indifference to external stimuli. Watson exposed the boy to different stimuli. A monkey, a white rat, a burning paper. When presented to him with these animals and objects, he was attentive. He was nonetheless emotionally indifferent. He was only expressing a touch of curiosity. Then Watson introduced an additional stimulus. Whenever the white rat appeared, it would hit a metal bar with a hammer. He thus produced a violent noise that frightened the baby. The child then began to associate the sound with the rat and was scared just seeing the animal after some time. He then generalized his fear of rabbits and other furry animals. Little Albert's experience allowed Watson to demonstrate that stimuli can condition behavior. So, the experiment ended because the child had been adopted. When Pavlovian techniques are used to modify behavior, the situation appears to resemble brainwashing more than education Olson and Hergenhahn (2016).

According to Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), Learning is a general term used to describe changes in behavior potentiality resulting from experience. Conditioning, however, is a more specific term used to describe actual procedures that modify behavior. According to Basri and al. (2020), Learning is an important activity that everyone must carry out as maximal as possible to overcome or obtain something. The principles of Learning include physical and spiritual maturity; such as healthy body, strong, adequate age, and psychologically and have the ability to think including memory and fantasy; have readiness; mental readiness (interest, motivation), and healthy physical; understand the purpose; the direction of learning objectives is understood by knowing the benefits of Learning; have the ability; sincerely in doing and expecting a satisfying and maximum result, test and exercise; are something need to be learned and to be repeated in order to enter in the brain; the factors that influence Learning, namely the factors that influence the achievement of learning outcomes, it originates from inside and outside of the person who is learning (Basri et al., 2020).

II. DECONDITIONING

Deconditioning is a complex process of physiological change following a period of inactivity, bedrest or sedentary lifestyle (Gillis & MacDonald, 2005). The world around us depends on how we perceive it and the social and cultural factors that operate in it and influence us. We are all conditioned for example, the phone companies that almost every year produce a new phone model that does not differ much from the old model, but we are so conditioned we prefer to sacrifice to have the new model. Let us take another example: many people change furniture every year even though the furniture is still in good condition because we apply the brand new all good formula, which may prompt us to make choices that are not beneficial to us. However, this is not inevitable since, as a human being, we are all dissatisfied. On the other hand, when we start to ask questions about the merits of the way we live, about our societies, about our habits (often illogical), then we take a step towards freedom. To decondition our mind, we must ask ourselves as human beings the most obvious questions, yet they are not. Deconditioning is the only way to intellectual development. It is accepted that education is an important tool for personality development. Simultaneously, one must try to decondition one's Mind; otherwise, one cannot receive the fruits of education (YesYesWay, 2010).

The Human Condition

According to Guinan (2010) the human condition is the “totality of the experiences of being human and living human lives. The exposition of this idea has occupied philosophers from the beginning, but more recently has been examined as an aspect of existentialism (Guinan, 2010).

Critical Thinking

There is an excellent connection between deconditioning the mind and critical thinking. We have to decondition our minds to think before making decisions. The ability to think critically, on the other hand, has been associated with wellness and longevity. Though often confused with intelligence, critical thinking is not intelligence. Critical thinking is a collection of cognitive skills that allow us to think rationally in a goal-orientated fashion and a disposition to use those skills when appropriate (Butler, 2017). The author further highlighted that critical thinkers are amiable skeptics. They are flexible thinkers who require evidence to support their beliefs and recognize fallacious attempts to persuade them. Critical thinking means overcoming all kinds of cognitive biases (hindsight bias or confirmation bias). The ability to think critically, on the other hand, has been associated with wellness and longevity. Though often confused with intelligence, critical thinking is not intelligence. Critical thinking is a collection of cognitive skills that allow us to think rationally in a goal-orientated fashion and a disposition to use those skills when appropriate (Butler, 2017). The author further highlighted that critical thinkers are amiable skeptics. They are flexible thinkers who require evidence to support their beliefs and recognize fallacious attempts to persuade them. Critical thinking
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The advantages of being intelligent are undeniable. Intelligent people are more likely to get better grades and go farther in school. They are more likely to be successful at work. And they are less likely to get into trouble (for example, commit crimes) as adolescents (Butler, 2017). The critical thinking assessment measures five critical thinking skills components, including verbal reasoning, argument analysis, hypothesis testing, probability and uncertainty, decision-making, and problem-solving (Butler, 2017).

Butler (2017) found that critical thinking and intelligence against each other to see were associated with fewer adverse life events. People who were strong on either intelligence or critical thinking experienced more occasional adverse events, but critical thinkers did better.

**Prompt Students to Ask Questions**

Asking questions about any topic, strategy six, facilitates the effectiveness, novelty, and self-direction of critical thinking by generating additional information for improved reasoning, judgments, decision-making, and problem-solving (1, p.8) cited in Lunney et al. (2008). Helping students to ask the “right questions” to guide their thinking by prompting them to ask questions of themselves, each other, and the instructor related to the content. This strategy works exceptionally well when used along with the application of the content to a decision making or problem-solving task (Lunney et al., 2008, p.92). Adults have many challenges today, such as multiple careers, fewer stable social structures to rely on, living longer, and to deal with aging parents (Cerceone, 2008, p.139).

**Can the Mind be Free of Conditioning?**

Rehman et al. (2020) states that learning is the process by which new knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and ideas are acquired. Learning can occur through both unconscious and conscious pathways. Classical conditioning is one of those unconscious learning methods and is the most straightforward way in which humans can learn. Classical conditioning is the process in which an automatic, conditioned response is paired with specific stimuli (Rehman et al., 2020).

Deconditioning can be defined as the multiple, potentially reversible changes in body systems brought about by physical inactivity and disuse. Such changes often have significant functional and clinical consequences in older people. Deconditioning commonly occurs in two settings. Firstly, a sedentary lifestyle is common in older people, even in the absence of significant disease or disability. This may result in a slow, chronic decline in physical fitness. More dramatically, bed or chair rest during an acute illness can lead to disastrously rapid physical decline (O’Keeffe, 2002).

Wilson (1984) defined deconditioning as a process where habitual and problematic ways of perceiving reality, resulting from initial socialization, are eliminated. Pavlov described the classic form of learning via conditioning. He observed that after a learning phase, during which a bell rang simultaneously with feeding, test dogs already salivated when the bell rang alone, although they could not (yet) see the food. His interpretation of this observation was that frequent simultaneous presentation of the bell sound (neutral stimulus) and the food (unconditional stimulus, which activates a reflex reaction) created a connection between the two stimuli. This converted the previously neutral stimulus into a conditional stimulus, which alone can already cause the same reaction (salivation) as the unconditional stimulus (food) to which it was initially connected. In this way, a conditioned reaction to the bell sound was generated from the unconditioned, involuntary reaction(salivation) to the food (Ahlert & Beier, 2007).

The learning of more complex reaction types than those described above is also called conditioning ("operant conditioning"). If the conditioning mechanism is to take effect, emotional tensions (desires or aversions) and instinctive unconditional reflexes must be present, activated, and resolved in conditioning. So-called amplifiers (positive reinforcement or punishment) during conditioning ensure that specific reactions and behavior types are favored or discouraged. Which type of amplifier is suitable depends on the person whose behavior mode is reinforced. (Ahlert & Beier, 2007).

Yes, persons can be deconditioned. Persons can be deconditioned by way of instruction by question and answer used by Socrates to elicit from his pupil’s truths he considered to be implicitly known by all rational beings. We should let our brain think; people can decondition their Mind. According to Kapoor (2009) the sweetest and highest possibility for human being is to live in unconditioned happiness.

We are all conditioned to act in a certain way. Everything is a conditioning factor. Our clothing, our food, the climate of our regions, our education, our environment, our music, and worse than all our consumer society with all its newspapers, magazines, games, advertisements. Everything conditions us; everything helps to shape us to hold in us. Many, not to say everyone, are related to things.

To be able to decondition yourself, we must first observe our conditioning. Once people observe their conditioning, it does not mean that they live like strangers; people can live up to the standards, but knowing it, there will inevitably be actions and thoughts that will no longer hold in us.
Deconditioning oneself will consist of taking sufficient distance from oneself and society to see the conditioning in which one evolves. This decline, if it is persistent, will allow access to his thought. The freedom to think, which is the fundamental freedom of all living beings, is oddly not or little used. Freedom of thought should not be confused with freedom of expression. It is hard to know what to say and what not to say. It is often difficult to tell the difference between what is constructive and what is destructive, what is liberating or what is dangerous, the truth, the lie, or the wickedness. Freedom of expression has always been more or less stifled, and this in all countries of the world. Expression, no matter what, will never be free. However, in order to claim freedom of expression, one must already use the freedom to think.

The manipulation of opinion is part of politics. In addition, we are now entering an era of communication via the media, which often offers us a distorted view of reality. It is interesting to manipulate opinion because people read little, inform themselves little.

1. Why change a cell phone that works very well to get another?
2. Why we need to change furniture every year

These are just a few of the many questions that came to my mind that show that today's society conditions us, makes demands on us. The education level is increasing, so we have people who can read and write correctly, but the people remain poorly educated in a good sense. People with an adequate level of education are all as conditioned as others, if not more, because they are often well integrated into the system. To decondition oneself is to doubt and cross information.

Logical reasoning is a form of thinking in which premises and relations between premises are used rigorously to infer conclusions that are entailed (or implied) by the premises and the relations (Nunes, 2012). According to Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), all forgetting occurs, according to Guthrie, as cited in Olson and Hergenhahn (2016), because an alternative response, rather than a previously learned response, occurs in the presence of a stimulus pattern. That stimulus pattern will thereafter tend to bring about the new response. Thus for Guthrie, all forgetting must involve new learning. (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2016, p. 198).

III. ILLUSTRATION OF DECONDITIONING

Consider this illustration, which challenges each person to decondition their mind to promote reasoning for better learning. This illustration shows the importance of deconditioning the mind for good learning. Let us take this short illustration to show how people can be deconditioning the Mind to stimulate reasoning for better learning.

I remembered one day that I was on my way to work. I was going to the station to take a taxi. Suddenly a driver was standing in front of me, begging me to get in his car. But looking at him I saw he had long hair and he had earrings. Looking at him with a haughty look, something came to my mind, I said that he was a bandit, a person who wanted to steal my suitcase which contained precious things. So the young man felt what I thought was saying wisely, sir: << I am not what you think and remember what is embodied in your mind is not necessarily true, appearance is often deceptive>>. Finally, I had to look for a solution since the taxi is the only way I have to survive with my family, and since then, I have found peace with the gangsters; I worked and returned home without giving a grudge. When I heard his testimony, I realized that my mind was conditioned any man with earrings and long hair is gangsters, but the young man taught me to decondition my mind because every man with long hair and who has earrings is not bandits.

With this lesson learned by the driver today, I thought otherwise, my mind is deconditioned to judge a person according to his appearance.

IV. INTUITIVE VERSUS ANALYTICAL REASONING

One must reason before acting, because Intuitive or analytical reasoning will make it possible to make the right decisions. People with a high level of critical thinking can develop skills, abilities, and core values to succeed in life. In education, however, it is not the only goal separate from other essential components, and it is seen the most critical competencies of the learner to develop (Huong et al., 2018). Paul (1993) defined that critical reasoning in several different ways that should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Among his various definitions of critical thinking are “thinking about your thinking while you’re thinking to reason better” (Paul, 1993, p. 91).

According to Benner et al. (2008) critical thinking underlies independent and interdependent decision making. Critical thinking includes questioning, analysis, synthesis, interpretation, inference, inductive and deductive reasoning, intuition, application, and creativity. The ability to think critically uses reflection, induction, deduction, analysis, challenging assumptions, and evaluation of data and information to guide decision-making. Critical reasoning is a process whereby knowledge and experience are applied in considering multiple possibilities to achieve the desired goals.

Paul (1993) is also noted for the distinction he has made between “strong sense” critical thinking and “weak sense” critical thinking, reflecting a robust moral concern.
in his theory with pervasive bias and egocentric thinking. His concept of intellectual virtues has served to establish a line of demarcation between (a) sophistic or weak-sense thinkers, those who use or attempt to use thinking skills to defend vested interests and point out inadequacies in the reasoning of others rather than applying the same skills to their arguments, and (b) right critical thinkers, those who strive to recognize and set aside their egocentric and ethnocentric biases, apply thinking skills to their own arguments, and seek truth or the morally preferred alternative. Thus, self-criticism has been another focus of Paul’s theory.

Once a Person is Deconditioned, He/She Can be Able to Reason Better

People are conditioned with different kinds of learning with punishment, and so like Edwin Ray Guthrie and Ivan Petrovich Pavlov. The Lord created us to be free to learn, but the society has conditioned us. This, I believe dangerous. Not a philosophical, theoretical, or intellectual danger, but a real, direct danger to human wellbeing. I want to know if it is superficial conditioning or deep conditioning because as long as the mind is conditioned, any inquiry into change has no meaning. If we agree on that, then we can proceed. In other words, what you think you know may not be true at all and can get in the way of learning what is right. Because people are not aware of their conditioning, whenever they try to influence others, this becomes a massive fight, a conflict, a possessive demand, dominance, and all the rest of it. Deconditioning is the only way to intellectual development. It is accepted that education is an essential tool for personality development.

I know community member who was obsessed with the concept of discrimination. He said that unless there is a consideration for members of minority groups, he would not be able to find an excellent job in this country. The researcher said: “No, at present you are thinking in terms of discrimination, but please try to understand the matter in terms of excellence.” The researcher reminded him: “There is always room at the top for educated people.” The researcher told him if you were an average student, then you might face some discrimination, not only here but elsewhere, too. But if you made an effort to do well, then you would undoubtedly get the job you desired. There is a limit to discrimination, and you could cross that limit only with dedication and hard work. The student took the advice and thought again. He increased his efforts, and the result was miraculous. He got good marks and eventually achieved what he wanted to; he got a good job here. Those who look only at external factors invariably underestimate their capacity.

So, it is very good to decondition the mind - just understanding how it functions and giving it a new set of directions — decondition your mind to make way for more robust knowledge and a ton load of wisdom. Conditioning tends to hinder the reasoning process. Consider the part of the mind and how it works (what is its specific role) then understand how those components together to deliver quality thinking and action. We operate in 4 dimensions, and each contains 3 components:

1. DESIRE: Dreams, wishes, and wants
2. DIRECTION: Pictures, emotions, and words
3. DESIGN: Beliefs, values, and choices

The outcome of all this processing is 3.

-DELIVERY: What I think (total of above) determines what I SAY (communications) which drives what I DO (Behavior or action).

According to Kadie, R. (2015). Critical Reasoning is a system that often misjudged as criticism, but instead, it focuses on the ability to follow logical steps and arrive at a decisive and appropriate conclusion.

V. CONCLUSION

Systems thinking helps us look at the world in a new way because it encourages us to look at events and patterns by focusing on the connection and relationship between a system’s parts, instead of only looking at the individual parts in isolation. Systems thinking leads us away from trying to come up with a quick fix to a problem, which we too often do, in favor of considering the long-term consequences our actions may cause. It supports a deeper level of understanding than we typically take the time to seek (Schuster, 2018). Human memory is anything but stable: We constantly add knowledge to our memories as we learn and lose access to knowledge as we forget. People often make judgments and predictions about their memories that do not reflect this instability (Kornell, 2012).

Critical thinking skills learned in the classroom have an impact on future learning in the workplace. Once learned, these skills imprint workers to think deeply and critically about workplace issues and their roles in enhancing corporate cultures while adding value to the products or services that an organization provides to the community or the world. Reasoning skills are transferable from the classroom to the workplace. Transferring critical reasoning skills is evidenced by an individual worker’s ability to make significant, well thought out, and tested decisions that impact daily life in the workplace. Many of these decisions extend beyond that individual worker and have a bearing on others in their own decision making (Murawski, 2014, p.28). One of the most defensible ways to think about best practices or teaching effectiveness is to ask question. (Green and Henriquez-Green, 2008, p. 1.10). The goal of education is the liberation of man and all his conditionings. Only this freedom can give birth to real
intelligence, which will allow him to have the right attitude in his actions in his relations.

Many factors can influence the way we think and make decisions. Including our personality (e.g., intuitive/logical, real-life stories/numbers, tendency to take risks/risk reluctance), our age, the different stages in our life (childhood, youth, adulthood or third age) age; parent; pregnant or trying to get pregnant; retired) our sex or gender (e.g., cis man, cis woman, intersex or trans person), our physical and mental health, our emotions, different cultural norms and your circumstances social (where our life, our type of profession, whether we have the support of our friends or family), all of these are examples of factors that affect the way we think and make decisions.

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