



Instinct and learning

Directed by: Carlo & Lodovico Prola

Produced by: Ditta Prola

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As life was evolving on our planet, the ability to learn gradually developed along side instinct. This faculty steadily contributed to the cultural patrimony of individuals, In some species learned behaviour even predominated over instinctive behaviour.

Being the fruit of individual experience, learning does not manifest itself in uniform and fixed responses or solutions, but varies from individual to individual. Instinct operates in the opposite way: it manifests itself as a series of immutable schemes which every individual of the species follows.

Today etiologists no longer maintain as they once did that there is a marked separation between instinctive and learned behaviour. Indeed, the category instinctive behaviour is falling into disuse. Thanks also to research on imprinting, learning acquired in the prenatal phase and in the first few days after birth, instinct and learning are now recognised as a complex synthesis of behaviour.



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