The Stimulus-Neural Control of Behavior During and After Learning

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In the present paper I wish to discuss two classical psychological theories dealing with certain aspects of the learning process and to evaluate them in terms of experimentation. The first of these theories is to the effect that “consciousness” gradually disappears during learning, so that the completely learned response is made automatically and “unconsciously.” An individual, for example, is said to be acutely aware of his piano playing in the beginning of the formation of this habit; but as learning proceeds, the playing is done more and more automatically until finally the subject can play all but “unconsciously,” while giving his attention to other things and while simultaneously engaging in other activities. The second theory that

1 Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section I—Psychology, American Association for the Advancement of Science, Boston, December 29, 1933.