

# Insectopedia

## Instinct

*10 (1): 3–36. ISSN 0391-9714. JSTOR 23328997. Raffles, Hugh (2010). Insectopedia. New York: Pantheon Books. ISBN 978-0-375-42386-4. Kim, Alan (2016),*

Instinct is the inherent inclination of a living organism towards a particular complex behaviour, containing innate (inborn) elements. The simplest example of an instinctive behaviour is a fixed action pattern (FAP), in which a very short to medium length sequence of actions, without variation, are carried out in response to a corresponding clearly defined stimulus.

Any behaviour is instinctive if it is performed without being based upon prior experience (that is, in the absence of learning), and is therefore an expression of innate biological factors. Sea turtles, newly hatched on a beach, will instinctively move toward the ocean. A marsupial climbs into its mother's pouch upon being born. Other examples include animal fighting, animal courtship behaviour, internal escape functions, and the building of nests. Though an instinct is defined by its invariant innate characteristics, details of its performance can be changed by experience; for example, a dog can improve its listening skills by practice.

Instincts are inborn complex patterns of behaviour that exist in most members of the species, and should be distinguished from reflexes, which are simple responses of an organism to a specific stimulus, such as the contraction of the pupil in response to bright light or the spasmodic movement of the lower leg when the knee is tapped. The absence of volitional capacity must not be confused with an inability to modify fixed action patterns. For example, people may be able to modify a stimulated fixed action pattern by consciously recognizing the point of its activation and simply stop doing it, whereas animals without a sufficiently strong volitional capacity may not be able to disengage from their fixed action patterns, once activated.

Instinctual behaviour in humans has been studied.

## Hugh Raffles

*Natural History. In 2009, Raffles was awarded a Whiting Award. In 2010, Insectopedia was the winner of the 2011 Orion Book Award and received a Special Award*

Hugh Raffles is an anthropologist and writer based in New York. He received an American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Literature in 2023. He is the author of three books as well as many essays in venues including Granta, Public Culture, Natural History, Orion, American Ethnologist, The New York Times, The New York Review of Books, and The Best American Essays. He is Professor of Anthropology at The New School in New York.

## Ludwik Fleck Prize

*United States, Britain and France, 1890s to 1990s 2012 Hugh Raffles Insectopedia 2013 Isabelle Stengers Cosmopolitics 2014 Helen Tilley Africa as a Living*

The Ludwik Fleck Prize is an annual award given for a book in the field of science and technology studies. It was created by the 4S Council (Society for the Social Studies of Science) in 1992 and is named after microbiologist Ludwik Fleck.

The prize is named after the Polish microbiologist and sociologist Ludwik Fleck (1896-1961), author of *Genèse et développement d'un fait scientifique* (1935), which influenced Thomas Samuel Kuhn's conception of the history of science, constructivist epistemology, and various fields of research such as the sociology of

science, the sociology of scientific knowledge, science studies and the social construction of technologies.

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