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W.C. Allee, H.W. Nissen, M.F. Nimkoff. A Re-examination of the Concept of Instinct. Psychol. Rev., 60, (5) 1953, p.287-297. p.288

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More recently, in 1951, N. Tinbergen, in his book entitled The Study of Instinct, gives his definition only after he is more than halfway through the book. Even then, the definition is offered almost apologetically in loose association with his admittedly somewhat imprecise discussion of neurophysiological relationships. His statement is (p.112): "I will tentatively define an instinct as a hierarchically organized nervous mechanism which is susceptible to certain priming, releasing, and directing impulses, of internal as well as of external origin, and which responds to these impulses by coordinated movements that contribute to the maintenance of the individual and the species."

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Does man have any instincts? The early psychologists William James, William McDougall, and E.L. Thorndike, drew up long lists of instincts. James said man had more instincts than any other animal. His list included sucking, crying, locomotion, curiosity, shyness, cleanliness, pugnacity, fear of dark places, acquisitiveness, love, jealousy.

About 1924 the reaction set in with the publication of Instinct by L.L. Bernard, a sociologist, who showed how confused was the use of the term. Covering some 400 authors, he disclosed that about six thousand urges had been called instinctive. These were of two kinds, those of a general nature like sex and social behavior, and those that were more specific like "an instinct for the piano" and "an instinct to avoid eating the apples of one's own



orchard." From our perspective today, Bernard's analysis seems like a caricature. Instinct in human psychology was buried, and Knight Dunlap and John B. Watson added their nails to the coffin with their accent on conditioning and learning.

The tendency in recent years has been to reserve the term instinct to the lower animals. Man's nervous system is not as imperious in dictating behavior because it is more complex than that of other animals and is less fully coordinated at birth. For instance, it takes a human being longer to learn to walk than it does an ape. This complexity and plasticity of the human organism makes possible more and richer learning. So, in the case of human beings, we drop the term instincts and speak of organic drives, which are more general. There are also drives of a purely social origin which have been termed wishes or motives. Most of man's behavior is learned, whereas most of a bird's behavior is not learned.