

The

# Halo Effect

in Social Perception



# Sample MCQs for Psychology Entrances

Let's first see how this topic appears in the exam!

## Q.1

Assertion (A): The Halo Effect leads to consistent but inaccurate evaluations of individuals.

Reason (R): Because evaluators rely on multiple independent judgments rather than a single global impression.

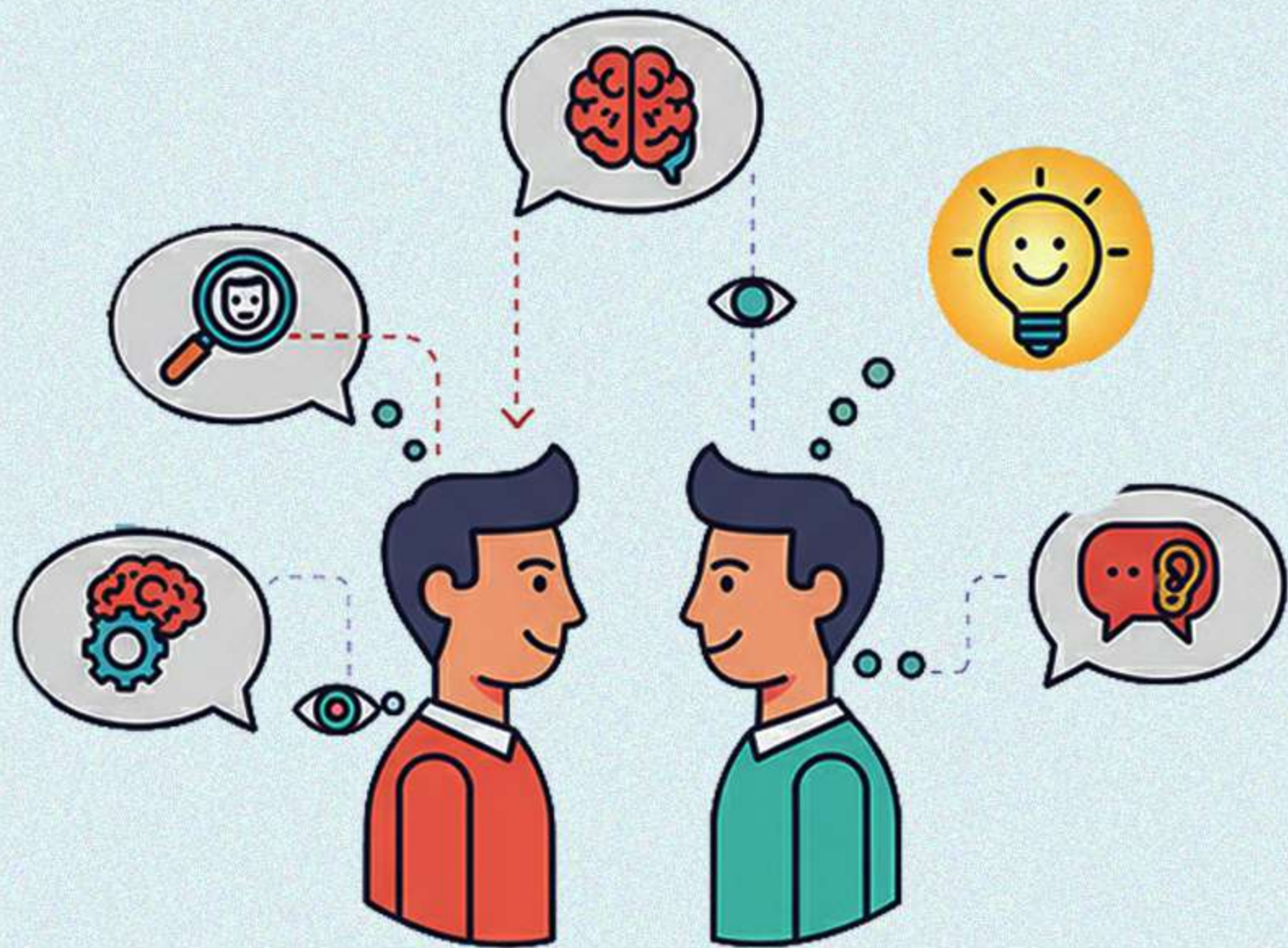
- A.** Both A and R are true, and R explains A
- B.** Both A and R are true, but R does not explain A
- C.** A is true, but R is false
- D.** A is false, but R is true

## Q.2

The Halo Effect is conceptually most similar to which of the following biases?

- A. Actor–Observer Bias
- B. Primacy Effect in Impression Formation
- C. Cognitive Dissonance
- D. Self-Serving Bias

Go through the post and try to solve it on your own.  
If you can't, the last slide has the answer.

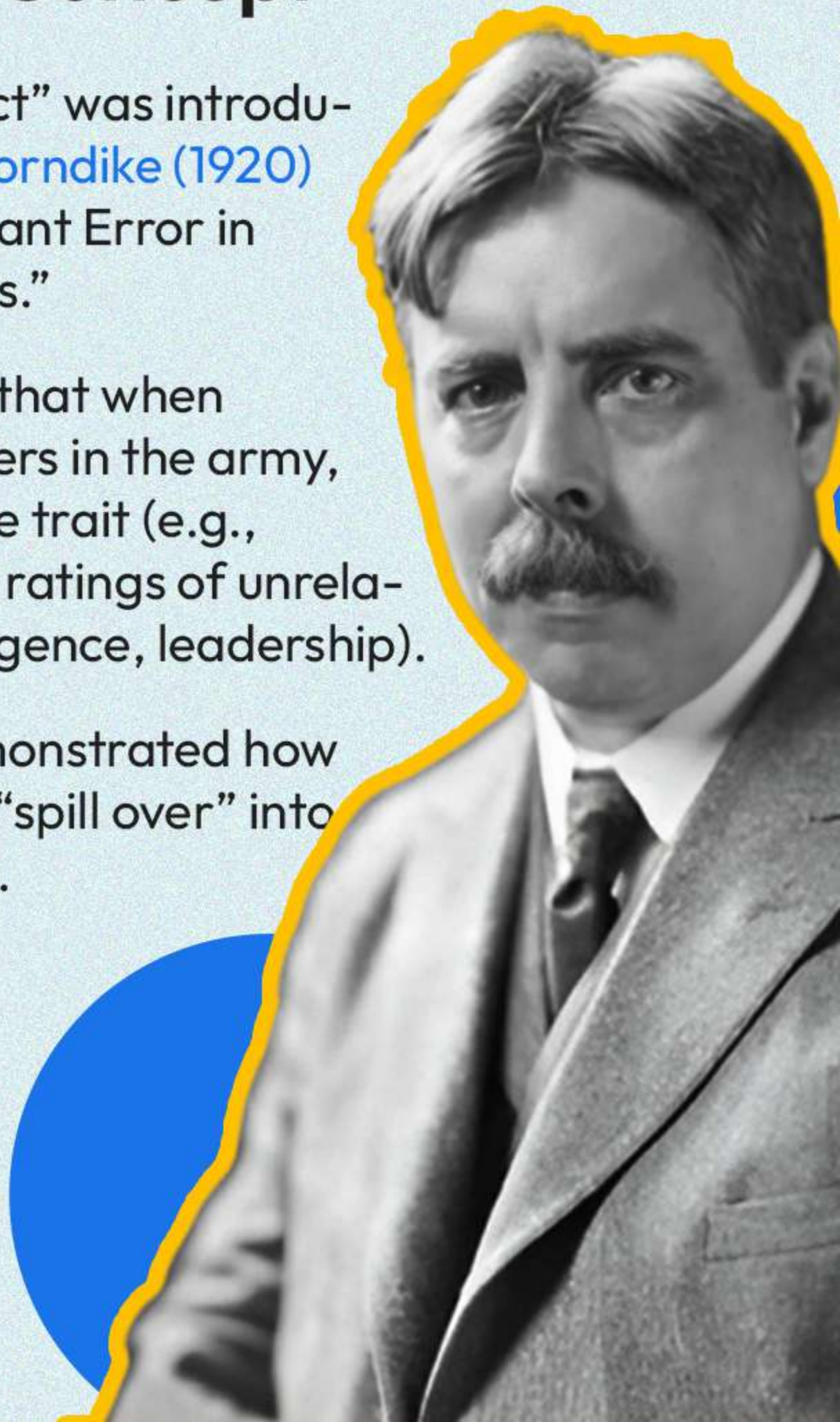


## What is the Halo Effect?

- The Halo Effect is a type of cognitive bias where our overall impression of a person influences how we judge their specific traits.
- For instance, if someone is attractive or confident, we may also assume they are intelligent or kind, even without evidence.
- This shows how first impressions can distort objective evaluation, a key concept in [social cognition](#).

# Origin of the Concept

- The term “Halo Effect” was introduced by [Edward L. Thorndike \(1920\)](#) in his paper “A Constant Error in Psychological Ratings.”
- Thorndike observed that when superiors rated soldiers in the army, their judgment of one trait (e.g., physique) influenced ratings of unrelated traits (e.g., intelligence, leadership).
- This experiment demonstrated how general impressions “spill over” into unrelated judgments.



# Positive vs. Negative Halo

The effect can work both ways:

## Positive Halo (Halo Effect):

A single good trait leads to an overall favourable evaluation.

**Example:** If someone is attractive, we may assume they're also intelligent or friendly.



## Negative Halo (Horn Effect):

One negative trait leads to a generally poor evaluation.

**Example:** If a person seems rude once, we might assume they're unfriendly overall.



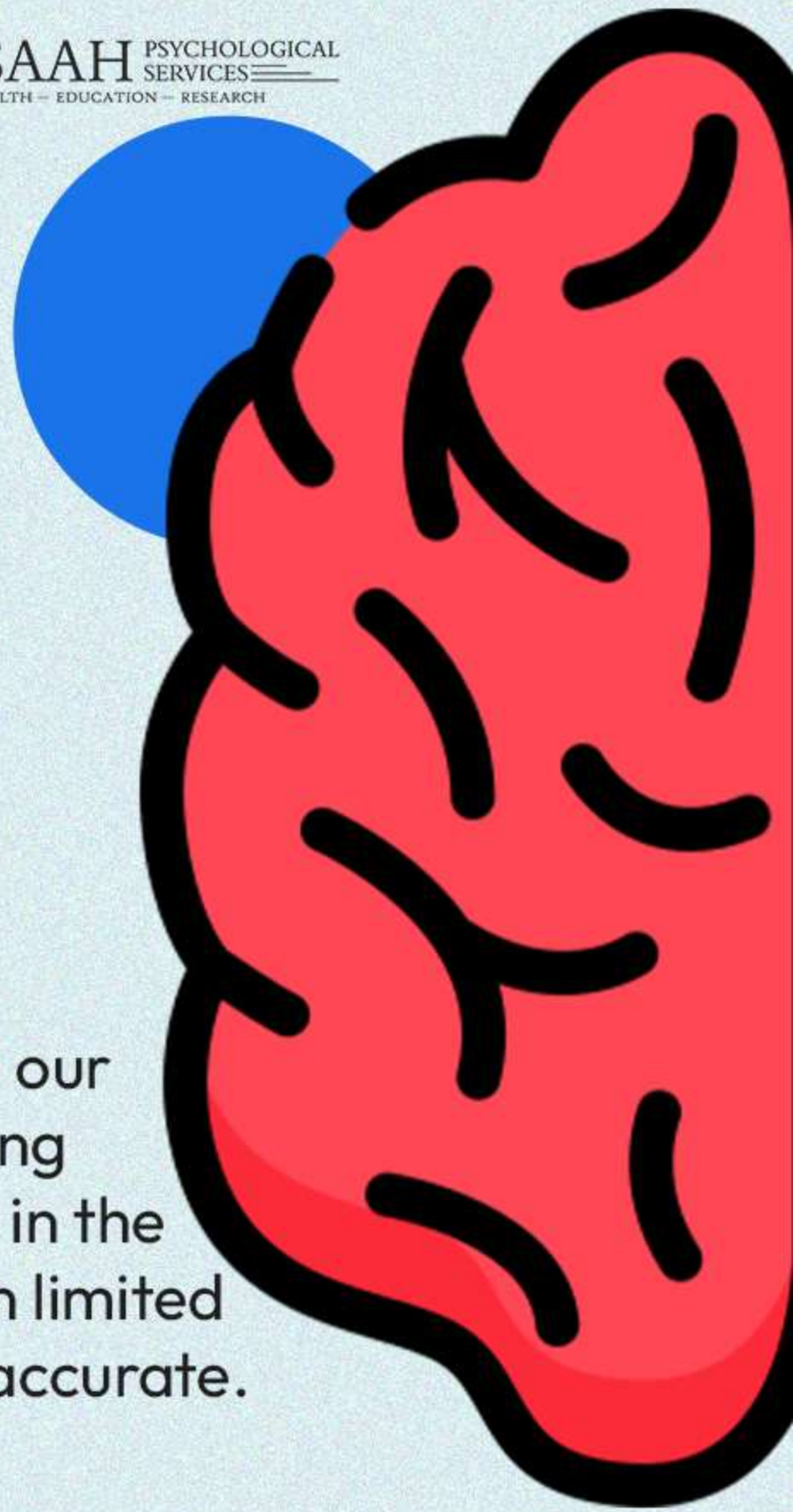
Both are forms of cognitive bias and affect objectivity in perception and decision-making.

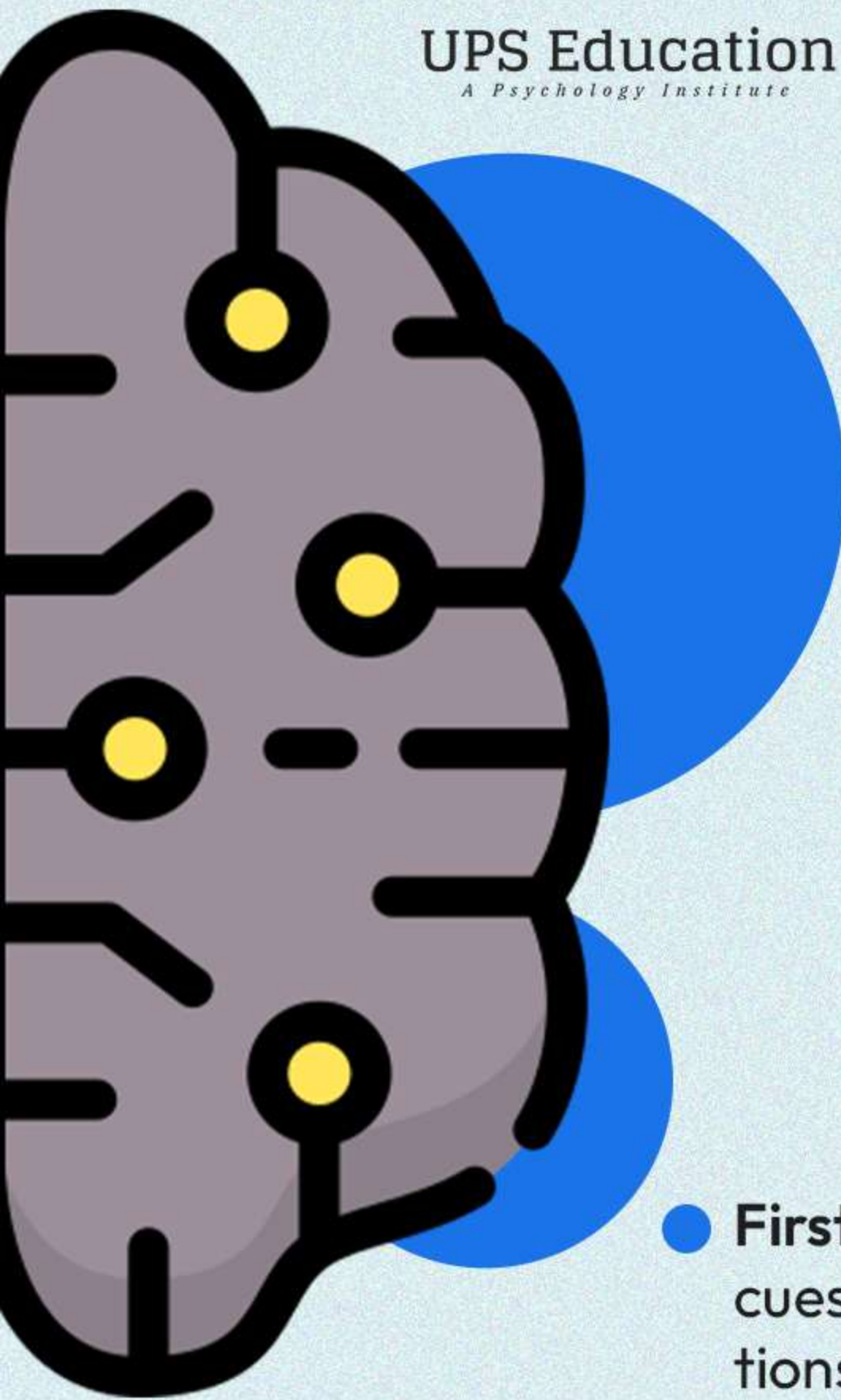
## Why It Happens

The Halo Effect occurs because our brains simplify information during social perception. We tend to fill in the blanks about someone based on limited cues; it's faster, but not always accurate.

### Psychological Reasons:

- **Cognitive Efficiency:** Our minds use heuristics (mental shortcuts) to make quick judgments.
- **Affective Influence:** Positive emotions about one trait spread to others (“If I like one thing about them, I like everything”).





- **First Impression Power:** Early cues dominate later evaluations; a process called the primacy effect.
- **Social Cognition:** Helps us navigate complex social interactions quickly, even if it sacrifices objectivity.

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The correct answers are:

**Q.1** C) A is true, but R is false

**Q.2** B) Primacy Effect in Impression Formation