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Module 2: Approaches and History of Psychology

Lecture 3: Schools of Psychology

Schools of Psychology

- Wundt: First laboratory of Psychology in Leipzig, Germany in 1879; Leader of the first school of psychology (Structuralism)
- Migration to Leipzig
- Psychology grew either from the Leipzig lab or as different schools of thought outside Germany
- For several decades (1900 to 1930 approx.) psychology took shape through schools

Schools of Psychology

- Structuralism
- Functionalism
- Behaviorism
- Gestalt Psychology
- Psycho - analysis

Structuralism

- Wilhelm Wundt, Edward Bradford Titchener
- Wundt: Experience as the subject matter of psychology (experience dependent on an experiencing person)
- Structure of mind (analysis should be applied to psychological phenomena)

Structuralism contd...

- Structure of the mind
- An attempt to compartmentalize the mind into its basic parts – mental elements (sensations)
- Introspection: Trained observers objectively examined and verbally reported what was going on in their minds in response to controlled stimulation; objective attitude

Structuralism contd...

- Criticisms of structuralism due to reliance on introspection
- Not verifiable, retrospection and memory distortions, subjective, influence of observer's attitude, considerable laboratory training
- How to study conscious processes of children and mentally disturbed individuals?

Structuralism contd...

- Reliance on introspection as its main method led to criticism of structuralism
- Introspection as a limited method
- Failure to relate mind and action
- Narrow in approach

Functionalism

- American psychologist William James (psychologist, pragmatic philosophy)
- The study of mind as it functions in adapting the organism to its environment
- Functionalists were influenced by Charles Darwin's approach
- Opposed the reduction of mind to its components

Functionalism contd...

- Emphasized studying consciousness as an ongoing process (stream of consciousness)
- Mind as functional in adjustment - not a static entity
- Structuralism: What the mind is made of?
Functionalism: How it functions?
- Connection between mind and behavior
- Learning as adaptive process
- Regarded introspection as a limited method

Behaviorism

- Against structuralism and functionalism
- Main proponent: American psychologist Watson (began his career in psychology at Chicago University)
- Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike
- Opposed introspection --- emphasized objective experimental procedures

Behaviorism contd...

- No place for mental or cognitive concepts
- Subjective mental states cannot be the subject matter of psychology
- Major emphasis: Study of observable behavior such as actions, responses, performances
- Goal of psychology: To identify S-R relations

Behaviorism contd...

- Environmental influences as all important
- Major contribution to theory of learning
- Pavlov in Russia provided an interesting demonstration of the use of S-R analysis in his description of classical conditioning
- All behavior, no matter how complex, can be reduced to learned S-R units - Watson

Gestalt Psychology contd...

- Emphasis on whole, rather than parts
- Basic principle: The whole is more than the sum of its parts
- Gestalt psychology - theory of perception; principles are applicable to other domains
- Rejected the S-R approach
- Emphasized experimentation and observation

Psycho-analysis

- Synonymous with the name of Sigmund Freud
- Complex ideas about human personality and behavior
- Work on hysteria and clinical practice
- The unconscious, structure of personality, defense mechanisms, psycho-sexual stages of development

Psycho-analysis

- Unconscious mind consists of emotions, motivations, thoughts, and memories that are beyond conscious awareness
- Ego defense mechanisms - psychological strategies that are used unconsciously; protect from anxiety and conflicts
- According to Freud, psychological development in childhood occurs through psychosexual stages of development

- Structure of Personality: Id, Ego, Super-ego
- Id – Unconscious – Basic impulses such as sex and aggression, seeks immediate gratification, pleasure principle
- Super Ego – Mostly preconscious - Ideals and sense of morality, internalized from parents and society
- Ego – Mostly conscious, mediates between id impulses and moral principles and inhibitions of super ego, reality principle

Thank you