



INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY HISTORY— LECTURE 3

Habib Ullah Qamar
Instructor
MSCS, MBA(HRM)



HISTORICAL ROOTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

- Throughout some twelve or so decades, psychology has led an active life, developing gradually into **a true science**. As part of evolution, it has produced a number of conceptual models, approaches, **theories**, interrelated ideas and concepts used to explain phenomena, that has guided the work being carried out.
- **Earlier views** of the philosophies and concepts were important because they gave the **outline** with the help of which modern ideas were developed and further formulated.
- “Psychology has a long past, but only **a short history**.” (Hermann Ebbinghaus, 1908)



HISTORICAL ROOTS OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY

- **Wilhelm Wundt** set the foundations of **modern psychology** in 1879, by establishing the first psychology laboratory in **Leipzig, Germany**.
- Man was always interested about human behavior, nature of consciousness, origin of “**madness**”, emotions and much more about other people’s nature.
- **Control and desirable** modification of behavior interested man; he always wanted to become powerful and be able to make others do what he wanted them to do.



WILHELM WUNDT

- Philosophers' thinking about **thinking** continued until the birth of psychology as we know it, on a December day in 1879, in a small, third-floor room at Germany's University of **Leipzig**.
- There, two young men were helping an **austere(serious)**, middle-aged professor, Wilhelm Wundt, create an experimental apparatus.
- Their machine measured the time lag between people's hearing a ball hit a platform and their pressing a telegraph key (Hunt, 1993).



WILHELM WUNDT

- Curiously, people responded in about **one-tenth of a second** when asked to press the key as soon as the sound occurred—and in about two tenths of a second when asked to press the key as soon as they were **consciously aware of perceiving the sound**. (To be aware of one's awareness takes a little longer.)
- Wundt was seeking to measure “atoms of the mind”—the fastest and simplest mental processes.
- Thus began what many consider psychology's first experiment, launching the first psychological laboratory, staffed by Wundt and psychology's first graduate students.



HISTORICAL ROOTS

- Today psychology is considered as the scientific study of human behavior and mental processes. But the case was always not so. Initially the **soul**; then **mind and conscious** experience, and lastly **observable behavior**.
- In 1590, Rudolf Goeckel used the term “psychology”. This word is the combination of two Greek words “**psyche**” and “**logos**”, the former means the “**soul**” and the **later** “broad knowledge”. Thus literally, psychology means the **science of soul**.
- Aristotle gave a very important place to **soul in human life**. Life has no meaning without soul. But he couldn't explain the relationship of the **soul to the body**.



HISTORICAL ROOTS

- Later on, the spiritual aspect was discarded altogether and substituted by a more comprehensive word “**mind**”.
- Psychology was also defined as the “**science of mind**”. But psychologists were never satisfied with this definition because mind was a unclear term that could not be defined in objective terms.
- Therefore the later psychologists switched their positions and began **investigations into behavior** that was an objective and **observable** phenomenon.
- So it should not be surprising for a student of psychology that definitions of psychology have varied considerably over the years according to the theoretical orientation of particular “schools”.



STRUCTURALISM

- Psychology has also been defined as the science of consciousness. **Structuralism**, an important early school of thought in psychology, considered psychology as the study of conscious experience. It was coined by **Edward Bradford**.
- In the words of Wilhelm Wundt, “psychology has to investigate that which we call internal processes or experiences--- i.e., our own sensations and feelings, our thoughts.



STRUCTURALISM

- This definition of psychology as a **science of consciousness** is now discarded and rejected on the following grounds:
- Modern day psychology does not believe in consciousness as it used to. Mental processes have substituted consciousness.
- Modern psychologists define it as a **science of behavior**, both of animals and humans. It was **Watson**, the founder of the behaviorist school of thought, who postulated this definition.



THEORIES TO REMEMBER

- **Structuralism** an early school of psychology that used **introspection** to explore the structural elements of the human mind.
- **Functionalism** a school of psychology that focused on how our mental and behavioral processes function—how they enable us to adapt, survive, and flourish.
- **William James and Mary Whiton Calkins James**, legendary teacher-writer, mentored Calkins, who became a pioneering memory researcher and the first woman to be president of the American Psychological Association.



THEORIES TO REMEMBER

- **Behaviorism** the view that psychology (1) should be an **objective science** that (2) studies behavior without reference to mental processes. Most research psychologists today agree with (1) but not with (2).
Humanistic psychology historically significant perspective that emphasized the **growth potential of healthy people** and the individual's potential for personal growth.
Cognitive neuroscience the interdisciplinary study of the **brain activity** linked with cognition (including perception, thinking, memory, and language).



THANK YOU VERY MUCH

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