
UNIT 4 PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF MIND

Structure

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Structuralists' View of Mind
- 4.4 Gestalt School of Psychology and Mind
- 4.5 Mesmerism
- 4.6 Hypnotism
- 4.7 Disorders Induced in Normal Individuals
- 4.8 Influence of Breurer's Work on Psychogenic Aspects of Mental Illness
- 4.9 Sigmund Freud and His Concept of the Mind
- 4.10 Jung and His Concept of Mind
- 4.11 Views of American Psychologists
 - 4.11.1 Growth of Functionalism
- 4.12 Humanistic Psychology and Cognitive Psychology
- 4.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.14 Answer to Self Assessment Questions
- 4.15 Unit End Questions
- 4.16 References

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Psychology began as a study of mind or the 'psyche' and later it expanded to a study of behaviour. As behaviour is essentially determined by the mind, psychology was called the behavioural science. Mind has sub components of mood, thought and intellect as described in the previous chapter, and the behaviour depicts mood, thought and intellect. This unit will help you to understand the fact that, if mind is to be studied and understood, it has to be done by observing and understanding behaviour. To further simplify this, it is the study of behaviour, the interaction of 'self' with the environment. This interaction could be action or reaction of 'self' with 'non-self'. Thus, study of anything that is psychological would mean studying the interaction of the 'self' with the environment. This interaction would influence, alter, modify or interfere with the 'psyche/mind' with the purpose of correcting the functions or the dysfunctions of the mind. For example, by way of interaction, one can develop a problem in the mind. The same problem or any other problem can also be rectified by the process of corrective interaction. Psychotherapy means a more meaningful interaction which aims to solve problems.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

The last Unit of this block helps you in:

- Understanding the structuralists' view of mind;
- Understanding the contribution of Gestalt school of psychology in the concept of mind;

- Understanding Freud's view of mind;
- Understanding Jung's view of mind; and
- Understanding the humanistic psychologists and cognitive psychologists aspects of mind.

4.3 STRUCTURALISTS' VIEW OF MIND

The term 'psychology' has been created from the Greek term 'psyche' meaning soul/mind and logos meaning study. Psychology has changed its meaning and definitions from time to time, giving rise to different schools of psychology. In the first decade of 20th century, psychologists came to hold different views about nature of mind and the best ways to study it. Some of the initial schools of thought will be discussed in the next few sections.

The first psychological laboratory was established at the University of Leipzig by the German philosopher- psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920). Wilhelm Wundt was the first person who tried to explain psychology as a science.

The goal of the structuralists was to find the units or elements which make up the mind. They attempted to analyze and explain the conscious experience, particularly feelings and sensations. The structuralists attempted to give a scientific analysis of conscious experience by breaking it down into its specific compounds or structures. For example, they identified four basic sensations-warmth, cold, pain and pressure. Further, the sensation of wetness as combined experience of cold and smoothness. Consciousness was defined as the sum total of mental experiences. Main tool used was through introspection to determine the different components of consciousness. This school helped establish psychology as a separate science and contributed methods to experimental psychology. Wundt self-observed his own sensations and verbally reported the analysis of his own consciousness.

In summary, structural school of thought focuses on the elements of mind or the molecules of mind. It uses the methods of introspection, observation and experimentation. Their approach is basically towards the mental aspects of human experience.

4.4 GESTALT SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY AND MIND

Afterwards, the Gestalt school of psychology was founded by Max Wertheimer and his colleagues Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Kohler in 1912 in Germany. The German word Gestalt means form, pattern or configuration or shape. Gestalt psychology developed as a reaction against structuralism. Gestalt psychologists believed that human beings and other animals perceive the external world as an organised pattern, not as individual sensations. For example, a movie consists of thousands of individual still pictures, but we perceive what looks like smooth continuous movement. Gestalt psychology stresses on the relationship and interaction of the elements, when studying experience.

The Gestalt school explained that behaviour was based on basic laws formulated on the experience of perception. For example, learning was a special problem of perception. Problems were caused by disequilibrium in perception which motivated the organism to solve it and restore equilibrium. Solving problems restored perceptual equilibrium and relieved the stress of motivation. This was called the Zeigarnik effect. Subsequently the studies on hypnotism demonstrated the possibility of psychological influences on the mind.

4.5 MESMERISM

Mesmerism is a procedure that places people in a trance like mental state during which they become extremely suggestible. It was used to treat psychological disorders as far back as 1778, when an Austrian physician named Friedrich Anton Mesmer (1734–1815) established a clinic in Paris. His patients suffered from *hysterical disorders*, mysterious bodily ailments that had no apparent physical basis. A surprising number of patients seemed to be helped by this treatment, called **mesmerism**. Their pain, numbness, or paralysis disappeared. Several scientists believed that Mesmer was inducing a trance like state in his patients and that this state was causing their symptoms to disappear.

4.6 HYPNOTISM

It was not until years after Mesmer died that many researchers had the courage to investigate his procedure, later called hypnotism (from *hypnos*, the Greek word for “sleep”), and its effects on hysterical disorders. By the late nineteenth century, two competing views had emerged. Because hypnosis—a technique relying on the power of suggestion—was able to alleviate hysterical ailments, some scientists concluded that hysterical disorders were disorders of mind. In contrast, other scientists believed that hysterical disorders had subtle physiological causes. For example, Jean Charcot (1825–1893), Paris’s most eminent neurologist, argued that hysterical disorders were the result of degeneration in portions of the brain.

4.7 DISORDERS INDUCED IN NORMAL INDIVIDUALS

The experiments of two physicians practicing in the city of Nancy in France, Hippolyte-Marie Bernheim (1840–1919) and Ambroise-Auguste Liébaux (1823–1904) showed that hysterical disorders could actually be induced in otherwise normal subjects while they were under the influence of hypnosis. Thus, the physician could make normal people experience deafness, paralysis, blindness, or numbness by means of hypnotic suggestion—and could also remove these artificial symptoms by the same means. Thus, it was established that a mental process—hypnotic suggestion—could both cause and cure even a physical dysfunction. Leading scientists, including Charcot, finally embraced the idea that hysterical disorders were largely psychological in origin, and the psychogenic perspective rose in popularity.

Self Assessment Questions 1

State whether the following statements are true or false:

- 1) Mesmerism is a procedure that places people in a trancelike mental state during which they become extremely suggestible. ()
- 2) Hypnosis is a technique which does not relies on the power of suggestion. ()
- 3) Gestalt school of psychology was founded by William Wundt. ()
- 4) The term ‘psychology’ has been created from the Greek term ‘psyche’ meaning soul/mind and logos meaning study. ()
- 5) Hypnotism demonstrated the possibility of psychological influences on the mind. ()

4.8 INFLUENCE OF BREUER'S WORK ON PSYCHOGENIC ASPECTS OF MENTAL ILLNESS

Among those who studied the effects of hypnotism on hysterical disorders was Josef Breuer (1842–1925) of Vienna. Breuer discovered that his patients sometimes awoke free of hysterical symptoms after speaking candidly under hypnosis about the past upsetting events. During the 1890s Breuer was joined in his work by another Viennese physician, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939).

4.9 SIGMUND FREUD AND HIS CONCEPT OF THE MIND

Freud's work eventually led him to develop the theory of **psychoanalysis**, which is based on the principle that unconscious psychological processes are in the background of the normal as well as abnormal psychological functioning and behaviour. Freud also developed the technique of psychoanalysis, a form of discussion in which clinicians help troubled people gain insight into their unconscious psychological processes. He believed that such insight, even without hypnotic procedures, would help the patients overcome their psychological problems.

Although striving to use scientific methods in their investigations, these early researchers of mental functions adopted rather subjective approaches such as introspection, self-analysis, and self-report in their studies.

4.10 JUNG AND HIS CONCEPT OF MIND

Jung was Freud's student but later separated out due to differences in certain views. According to Jung, personality develops as a totality of all psychic processes, conscious and unconscious. It includes all thoughts, feelings and behaviours, and helps the individual to adapt to the social and physical environment. The term psyche also includes what is called 'soul'. The person is a whole right from the time of birth. It is not acquired later in life through experience or learning, but is already present at birth. The person strives throughout life to maintain its wholeness, and prevent splitting or dissociation into parts. It comprises of three major levels of consciousness: conscious, personal unconscious and the collective unconscious.

4.11 VIEWS OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGISTS

In America, William James had also engaged in the study of consciousness by combining the direct observation of behavior with the use of introspection to understand the underlying mental processes. His view was called "**naturalistic functionalism**", which sees consciousness or conscious mental life as a feature which has emerged via natural selection in creatures with a particular kind of biological organisation (e.g., "birds of same feather, flock together). James viewed consciousness as a function. He put forth the view that mental states are functional states/properties resulting from a complex interaction between us and the outside world. Therefore the mind is an emergent property of the physical brain, but is distinct from it. In other words this theory stated that the key to understanding the mind (intelligence) is to understand the logical operations performed by it, meaning the function it performs. For example, in a computer the software (mind) is, what is important. The computer does not depend on any particular

physical (Hardware) realisation. Similarly, the brain as a structure is largely irrelevant, and the mind is to the brain what software is to the hardware.

4.11.1 Growth of Functionalism

Functionalism formed as a reaction to the structuralism and was heavily influenced by the work of William James and the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin. Functionalists sought to explain the mental processes in a more systematic and accurate manner. Rather than focusing on the elements of consciousness, functionalists focused on the purpose of consciousness and behaviour. Functionalism also emphasised individual differences, which had a profound impact on education. William James later had a good bit to say about mind and consciousness — along with where the latter in particular came from both in humans and other animals. Basically, his view was that consciousness enhanced fitness. As humans, we think about the events we experience; we make decisions; we make things; we change things — in each case enhancing our chances of survival by allowing us to adapt. In James’s view, thus, consciousness is essential for survival. Without it, we would instead be like plants.

This trend of using subjective methods to study consciousness and unconsciousness was abruptly interrupted during the early twentieth century with the emergence of an American school of psychology called behaviourism. To behaviourists, such as John Watson and B.F. Skinner, the understanding of behaviour could be developed through observations and experimental conditionings without reference to such abstract concepts as consciousness. They even denied the existence of mind and attributed belief in the very existence of consciousness to ancient superstitions and magic (Watson, 1913). By reducing subjective mental phenomena to objective processes that could be studied with the limited available tools of science in the 1920s to 1950s, the behaviourist approach held back the study and understanding of the nature of mind for several decades.

<p>Self Assessment Questions 2</p> <p>Fill in the Blanks:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) According to the understanding of behaviour could be developed through observations and experimental conditionings. 2) The person strives throughout life to maintain the wholeness of 3) Freud’s work eventually led him to develop the theory of 4) William James had also engaged in the study of 5) Functionalists focused on the..... and

4.12 HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY AND COGNITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Humanistic psychology and cognitive psychology replaced radical behaviourism in the 1950s and became the main focus of interest to study the psychological arena. The use of introspection, however, was still considered a non-mainstream

scientific approach. All the above approaches to study mind or psyche have been elaborated in the next unit under (Schools of Psychology).

Since the mid-1970s, with the rapid progress of cognitive neuroscience and advancement of medical technology, investigations of the brain and mental functions became the major focus in the study of human mind, and mental functions were equated with neural processes and brain structures, instead of behavioural dispositions. Many types of causal relationships between the mind and brain have been discovered by cognitive neuroscientists. This includes specific correlations between particular neural activities and mental activities in such ways that the occurrence or cessation of the former is linked to the occurrence or cessation of the latter.

4.13 LET US SUM UP

The beauty of the evolution of psychology as a science is that it began with an assumption of having an underlying biological basis and evolved through various stages, and finally came to a stage of understanding and showing evidence for a biological basis currently.

To start with, psyche was thought to have a biological basis, but after the advent of psychoanalytical views, the shift was towards the non-biological causes of problem behaviour. Thereafter, the behavioural school also stressed strongly on the psychological mechanisms, and little on the biological ones. After the invention of drugs which were able to control psychotic behaviour and mood disturbances, the trend was to understand it from point of view of a biological basis for mood and thought. The understanding and description of the Alzheimer's disease made way for understanding intellect as having an organic basis. Simultaneously, the enormous development of technology in leaps and bounds has dramatically changed the understanding of human behaviour.

Neuroimaging techniques, especially functional imaging of the central nervous system has made a big impact. The entity of neuroscience, which has developed after this technology, has made it possible to study the functioning of the neurons in the brain. Currently, science has further developed and the new entity of cognitive neuroscience has changed the understanding of behaviour even more. Now, there is evidence to show that psychotherapeutic process has the ability to revert back structural pathology to normalcy. The concept of neuro regeneration, neuroplasticity and molecular psychology, have come into existence. All these concepts contribute towards understanding psychological processes as having a biological basis. Importantly that biology can alter psychological process, will include a third dimension of sociological aspects. Culture is found to play an important role in defining normal and healthy behaviour. Therefore, the bio-psycho-social model has come into existence. Recently another dimension of spiritual aspects of behaviour has been introduced. Most of the psychological processes are also understood through spiritual basis. The ethological processes, pathology, relief and treatment are based on the bio-psychosocial and spiritual models. Therefore, all the schools of psychology are interlinked, imminent, and interdependent on one another. Thus, psyche, the mind or the mental functioning is to be understood by considering all, biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual aspects of an individual.

4.14 ANSWER TO SELF ASESMENT QUESTIONS

Self Assessment Questions 1

- 1) True
- 2) False
- 3) False
- 4) True
- 5) True

Self Assessment Questions 2

- 1) Behaviourists
- 2) Psyche
- 3) Psychoanalysis
- 4) Consciousness
- 5) Purpose of consciousness and behaviour

4.15 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Write briefly on introspective methods used to understand mind.
- 2) Explain the psychoanalytic view of mind.
- 3) Explain the humanistic view of mind.
- 4) Explain the view of behaviourists on mind.
- 5) Explain the Contribution of mesmerism in understanding the psychological basis of mind.
- 6) What is hypnotism?

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