Psychology is an academic and applied field involving the scientific study of mental processes and behavior. Psychology also refers to the application of such knowledge to various spheres of human activity, including problems of individuals' daily lives and the treatment of mental illness.

Psychology differs from the other social sciences — anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology — in seeking to explain the mental processes and behavior of individuals. Psychology differs from biology and neuroscience in that it is primarily concerned with the interaction of mental processes and behavior on a systemic level, as opposed to studying the biological or neural processes themselves. In contrast, the subfield of neuropsychology studies the actual neural processes and how they relate to the mental effects they subjectively produce. Biological psychology is the scientific study of the biological bases of behavior and mental states.

The word psychology comes from the ancient Greek ψυχή psyche ("soul," "mind") and -λογία, -ology, "study").

Psychotherapy

Main article: Psychotherapy

Freud's theories and research methods were controversial during his life and remain so today, but few dispute his far-reaching impact on psychologists and academics.

Most importantly, Freud popularized the "talking-cure"--the notion that a person could be treated simply by talking over his or her problems, which was almost unheard of in the 19th century. Even though many psychotherapists today partly or wholly reject the specifics of Freud's theories, this basic model of treatment stems largely from his work.

In addition, Freud's development of "unconscious" sources of behavior and his emphasis on motivational structures of the human mind have had a lasting impact on psychological theory and research. However, most of Freud's specific theories--like his stages of psychosexual development--and especially his methodology, have fallen out of favor in modern experimental psychology.

Some psychotherapists, however, still follow an approximately Freudian system of treatment. Many more have modified his approach, or joined one of the schools that branched from his original theories (see Neo-Freudian). Still others reject his theories entirely, although their practice may still reflect his influence.

Psychoanalysis today maintains the same ambivalent relationship with medicine and academia that Freud experienced during his life.

The Unconscious
It has often been claimed that the most significant contribution Freud made to Western thought was his argument for the existence of an unconscious mind. During the 19th century, the dominant trend in Western thought was positivism, which subscribed to the belief that people could ascertain real knowledge concerning themselves and their environment and judiciously exercise control over both. Freud, however, suggested that such declarations of free will are in fact delusions; that we are not entirely aware of what we think and often act for reasons that have little to do with our conscious thoughts. The concept of the unconscious as proposed by Freud was allegedly groundbreaking in that he proposed that awareness existed in layers and that there were thoughts occurring "below the surface." Nevertheless, as psychologist Jacques Van Rillaer, among others, pointed out, "contrary to what most people believe, the unconscious was not discovered by Freud. In 1890, when psychoanalysis was still unheard of, William James, in his monumental treatise on psychology, examined the way Schopenhauer, von Hartmann, Janet, Binet and others had used the term 'unconscious' and 'subconscious'".[1] Moreover, the historian of psychology Mark Altschule writes: "It is difficult - or perhaps impossible - to find a nineteenth century psychologist or medical psychologist who did not recognize unconscious cerebration as not only real but of the highest importance."[2]

Dreams, which he called the "royal road to the unconscious", provided the best access to our unconscious life and the best illustration of its "logic", which was different from the logic of conscious thought. Freud developed his first topology of the psyche in The Interpretation of Dreams (1899) in which he proposed the argument that the unconscious exists and described a method for gaining access to it. The preconscious was described as a layer between conscious and unconscious thought—that which we could access with a little effort. Thus for Freud, the ideals of the Enlightenment, positivism and rationalism, could be achieved through understanding, transforming, and mastering the unconscious, rather than through denying or repressing it.

Crucial to the operation of the unconscious is "repression." According to Freud, people often experience thoughts and feelings that are so painful that people cannot bear them. Such thoughts and feelings—and associated memories—could not, Freud argued, be banished from the mind, but could be banished from consciousness. Thus they come to constitute the unconscious. Although Freud later attempted to find patterns of repression among his patients in order to derive a general model of the mind, he also observed that individual patients repress different things. Moreover, Freud observed that the process of repression is itself a non-conscious act (in other words, it did not occur through people willing away certain thoughts or feelings). Freud supposed that what people repressed was in part determined by their unconscious. In other words, the unconscious was for Freud both a cause and effect of repression.

Later, Freud distinguished between three concepts of the unconscious: the descriptive unconscious, the dynamic unconscious, and the system unconscious. The descriptive unconscious referred to all those features of mental life of which we are not subjectively aware. The dynamic unconscious, a more specific construct, referred to mental process and contents which are defensively removed from consciousness as a result of conflictual forces or "dynamics". The system unconscious denoted the idea that when mental
processes are repressed, they become organized by principles different from those of the conscious mind, such as condensation and displacement.

Eventually, Freud abandoned the idea of the system unconscious, replacing it with the concept of the Ego, super-ego, and id (discussed below). Throughout his career, however, he retained the descriptive and dynamic conceptions of the unconscious.

[edit] Psychosexual development

Main article: Psychosexual development

Freud also believed that the libido developed in individuals by changing its object, a process designed by the concept of sublimation. He argued that humans are born "polymorphously perverse", meaning that any number of objects could be a source of pleasure. He further argued that, as humans develop, they become fixated on different and specific objects through their stages of development—first in the oral stage (exemplified by an infant's pleasure in nursing), then in the anal stage (exemplified by a toddler's pleasure in emptying his or her bowels), then in the phallic stage. Freud argued that children then passed through a stage in which they fixated on the mother as a sexual object (known as the Oedipus Complex) but that the child eventually overcame and repressed this desire because of its taboo nature. (The lesser known Electra complex refers to such a fixation upon the father.) The repressive or dormant latency stage of psychosexual development preceded the sexually mature genital stage of psychosexual development.

Freud hoped to prove that his model was universally valid and thus turned to ancient mythology and contemporary ethnography for comparative material. Freud named his new theory the Oedipus complex after the famous Greek tragedy Oedipus Rex by Sophocles. “I found in myself a constant love for my mother, and jealousy of my father. I now consider this to be a universal event in childhood,” Freud said. Freud sought to anchor this pattern of development in the dynamics of the mind. Each stage is a progression into adult sexual maturity, characterized by a strong ego and the ability to delay gratification (cf. Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality). He used the Oedipus conflict to point out how much he believed that people desire incest and must repress that desire. The Oedipus conflict was described as a state of psychosexual development and awareness. He also turned to anthropological studies of totemism and argued that totemism reflected a ritualized enactment of a tribal Oedipal conflict.

Freud originally posited childhood sexual abuse as a general explanation for the origin of neuroses, but he abandoned this so-called "seduction theory" as insufficiently explanatory, noting that he had found many cases in which apparent memories of childhood sexual abuse were based more on imagination than on real events. During the late 1890s Freud, who never abandoned his belief in the sexual etiology of neuroses, began to emphasize fantasies built around the Oedipus complex as the primary cause of hysteria and other neurotic symptoms. Despite this change in his explanatory model, Freud always recognized that some neurotics had been sexually abused by their fathers,
and was quite explicit about discussing several patients that he knew to have been abused. (Gay, 1988, p.95)

Freud's way of interpretation has been called phallocentric by many contemporary thinkers. This is because, for Freud, the unconscious always desires the phallus (penis). Males are afraid of castration - losing their phallus or masculinity to another male. Females always desire to have a phallus - an unfulfillable desire. Thus boys resent their father (fear of castration) and girls desire theirs. For Freud, desire is always defined in the negative term of lack - you always desire what you don't have or what you are not, and it is very unlikely that you will fulfill this desire. Thus his psychoanalysis treatment is meant to teach the patient to cope with his unsatisfiable desires.

[edit] Ego, super-ego, and id

Main article: Ego, super-ego, and id

In his later work, Freud proposed that the psyche was divided into three parts: Ego, super-ego, and id. Freud discussed this structural model of the mind in the 1920 essay Beyond the Pleasure Principle, and fully elaborated it in The Ego and The Id (1923), where he developed it as an alternative to his previous topographic schema (conscious, unconscious, preconscious).

[edit] Defense Mechanisms

According to Freud, the defense mechanisms are the method by which the ego can solve the conflicts between the super-ego and the id. The use of defense mechanisms may attenuate the conflict between the id and super-ego, but their overuse or reuse rather than confrontation can lead to either anxiety or guilt which may result in psychological disorders such as depression. His daughter Anna Freud had done the most significant work on this field, yet she credited Sigmund with defense mechanisms, as he began the work. The defense mechanisms include: denial, reaction formation, displacement, repression/suppression (the proper term), projection, intellectualisation, rationalisation, compensation, sublimation and regressive emotionality.

- **Denial** occurs when someone fends off awareness of an unpleasant truth or of a reality that is a threat to the ego. For example, a student may have received a bad grade on a report card but tells himself that grades don't matter. (Some early writers argued for a striking parallel between Freudian denial and Nietzsche's ideas of reessentiment and the revaluation of values that he attributed to "herd" or "slave" morality.)

- **Reaction formation** takes place when a person takes the opposite approach consciously compared to what that person wants unconsciously. For example, someone may engage in violence against another race because, that person claims, the members of the race are inferior, when unconsciously it is that very person who feels inferior.
Displacement takes place when someone redirects emotion from a "dangerous" object to a "safe" one, such as punching a pillow when one is angry at a friend.

Repression occurs when an experience is so painful (such as war trauma) that it is unconsciously forced from consciousness, while suppression is a conscious effort to do the same.

Psychological projection occurs when a person "projects" his or her own undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires, feelings — basically parts of oneself — onto someone or something else. An example of this would be to say that Alice doesn't like Bob, but rather than to admit she doesn't like Bob, she will project her sentiment onto Bob, saying that Bob doesn't like her.

Intellectualisation involves removing one's self, emotionally, from a stressful event. Intellectualisation is often accomplished through rationalisation rather than accepting reality; one may explain it in a way to remove one's self.

Rationalization involves constructing a logical justification for a decision that was originally arrived at through a different mental process. For example, Jim may have bought a tape player to listen to self-help tapes, but he tells his friends he bought it so that he can listen to classic rock mixes for fear of his actual reason being rejected.

Compensation occurs when someone takes up one behaviour because one cannot accomplish another behaviour. For example, the second born child may clown around to get attention since the older child is already an accomplished scholar.

Sublimation is the channeling of impulses to socially accepted behaviours. For instance, the use of a dark, gloomy poem to describe life by such poets as Emily Dickinson.

Behaviorism is an approach to psychology based on the proposition that behaviour can be studied and explained scientifically without recourse to internal mental states. A similar approach to political science may be found in Behavioralism.

The behaviorist school of thought ran concurrent with the psychoanalysis movement in psychology in the 20th century. Its main influences were Ivan Pavlov, who investigated classical conditioning, John B. Watson who rejected introspective methods and sought to restrict psychology to experimental methods, and B.F. Skinner who conducted research on operant conditioning.

Humanistic psychology is a school of psychology that emerged in the 1950s in reaction to both behaviorism and psychoanalysis. It is explicitly concerned with the human dimension of psychology and the human context for the development of psychological theory. These matters are often summarized by the five postulates of Humanistic Psychology given by James Bugental (1964), mainly that:

1. Human beings cannot be reduced to components.
2. Human beings have in them a uniquely human context.
3. Human consciousness includes an awareness of oneself in the context of other people.
4. Human beings have choices and responsibilities.
5. Human beings are intentional, they seek meaning, value and creativity.

The development of the field

The humanistic approach has its roots in existentialist thought (see Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Sartre). It is also sometimes understood within the concept of the three different forces of psychology; behaviorism, psychoanalysis and humanism. Behaviorism grew out of Ivan Pavlov's work with the conditioned reflex, and laid the foundations for academic psychology in the United States associated with the names of John B. Watson and B.F. Skinner. This school was later called the science of behavior. Abraham Maslow later gave behaviorism the name "the first force". The "second force" came out of Freud's research of psychoanalysis, and the psychologies of Alfred Adler, Erik Erikson, Carl Jung, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Otto Rank, Melanie Klein, Harry Stack Sullivan, and others. These theorists focused on the depth of the human psyche, which they stressed, must be combined with those of the conscious mind in order to produce a healthy human personality.

In the late 1950's, psychologists concerned with advancing a more holistic vision of psychology convened two meetings in Detroit, Michigan. These psychologists, including Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Clark Moustakas, were interested in founding a professional association dedicated to a psychology that focused on uniquely human issues, such as the self, self-actualization, health, hope, love, creativity, nature, being, becoming, individuality, and meaning- in short, the understanding of what it means to be human.

These preliminary meetings eventually led to other developments, which culminated in the description of humanistic psychology as a recognizable "third force" in psychology (along with behaviorism and psychoanalysis). Significant developments included the launch of the Journal of Humanistic Psychology in 1961 and the formation of the Association for Humanistic Psychology (AHP) in 1963. Subsequently, graduate programs in humanistic psychology at institutions of higher learning grew in number and enrollment. In 1971, humanistic psychology as a field was recognized by the American Psychological Association (APA) and granted its own division (Division 32) within the APA. Division 32 publishes its own academic journal called The Humanistic Psychologist (Aanstoos, Serlin & Greening, 2000).

Developmental psychology, also known as Human Development, is the scientific study of progressive psychological changes that occur in human beings as they age. Originally concerned with infants and children, and later other periods of great change such as adolescence and aging, it now encompasses the entire life span. This field examines change across a broad range of topics including motor skills and other psycho-physiological processes, problem solving abilities, conceptual understanding, acquisition of language, moral understanding, and identity formation.

Developmental psychologists investigate key questions, such as whether children are qualitatively different from adults or simply lack the experience that adults draw upon.
Other issues that they deal with is the question of whether development occurs through the gradual accumulation of knowledge or through shifts from one stage of thinking to another; or if children are born with innate knowledge or figure things out through experience; and whether development is driven by the social context or by something inside each child.

Developmental psychology informs several applied fields, including: educational psychology, child psychopathology and developmental forensics. Developmental psychology complements several other basic research fields in psychology including social psychology, cognitive psychology, cognitive development, and comparative psychology.

**Theory**

Many theoretical perspectives attempt to explain development, among the most prominent are: Jean Piaget's Stage Theory, Lev Vygotsky's Social Contextualism (and its heir, the Ecological Systems Theory of Urie Bronfenbrenner), and especially the information processing framework employed by cognitive psychology.

Historical theories continue to provide a basis for additional research, among them are Erik Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development and John B. Watson's and B. F. Skinner's Behaviorism. Many other theories are prominent for their contributions to particular aspects of development. For example, Attachment theory describes kinds of interpersonal relationships and Lawrence Kohlberg describes stages in moral reasoning.
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