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What contributions has Titchener's structuralism made to psychology and what criticisms have been made of his work?

Edward Bradford Titchener was an English psychologist who adopted Wilhelm Wundt's psychology methods. He made modifications and claimed it as his possession, calling the new method structuralism. He migrated from England into the United States to teach at Cornell University. He was the author of several books called, *An Outline of Psychology* published in 1896, *Primer of Psychology* published in 1898, and the four volumes of *Experimental Psychology: A Manual of Laboratory Practice* published in 1901-1905. His most important contribution was to demonstrate that psychology could be cogent as an experimental science. He introduced structuralism as a theory, an experiment of conscious experience that can be comprehended by investigating the fundamental elements of thought and sensations. One of the studies he conducted, was the stimulus error. The stimulus error is the mental confusion that can occur during a mental process, when observing an object. Introspection is the activity of a person's self-observation. It is the procedure when an individual appraises the description of the elements of their conscious state than to inform the stimulus by its familiar name. Titchener's three elements of consciousness are sensations (elements of discernment), images (elements of thoughts), and affective (elements of emotions) states.

One of the criticisms towards Titchener's structuralism was made by Psychologist James Gibson. He admired and respected Titchener's methods but found it futile in his generation. Structuralism demised after the death of E.B. Titchener. It was argued that the whole of an experience, cannot be experienced as individual sensations, images or in affective states. It can only be experienced as a unified whole. Philosopher Auguste Comte bombarded Titchener's method of Introspection. He could not accept that the human mind had the ability of observing its own activities. He found it impossible for the human mind to observe and to be observed, at the same time. According to Sigmund Freud, part of mental functioning is unconscious, to which he obviously denied the purpose of investigating introspection. Another criticism was Titchener's strict order to avoid certain classes of words (so called meaning words). The use of words that did not have a scientific meaning to a structuralist. The author gives the example of "I see a table". To observe the table is what Titchener meant about stimulus error.

References

Schulz, Duane P. & Schulz Sydney Ellen. 2015. *History of Modern Psychology 11th Edition*. ISBN-13:978-1-111-82932-2.
Pps. 86 - 99.