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

Wilhelm Wundt established structuralism, but Edward B. Titchener, a self-proclaimed follower and student of Wundt, expanded on his ideas. While Wundt focused on the organization of mental processes, Titchener was more focused more on the elements themselves. Titchener believed psychology was to discover the nature of elementary conscious experiences, and from there understand its structure. While a lot of Titchner's and Wundt's theories have been either debunked or not as closely followed, some of the things they theorized are still being used today.

Titchner's method of introspection is one of his biggest contributions. He proposed an experimental approach to introspection, where his subjects would be given stimuli and they would proceed to tell him long observations of what they experienced; the experiment would have been following the scientific method. The subjects were trained to not commit a stimulus error, where the subject confuses the mental process with the object they are observing, as in, they had to describe the elements, but not name the stimulus by another name.

There were criticisms of introspection. Immanuel Kant believed that introspection was not a true representation of what the mind does because when we are actively doing it, it's not the same as what the mind normally does; because we don't normally introspect during the conscious experience, actively introspecting is interfering with the conscious experience. Another problem with introspection is if they had to be trained to do it properly, like how Titchener's subjects were, then they would have an observational bias. Specifically to Titchener, his definition for introspection is quite broad, and, he himself, had trouble defining what it meant. There was also the trouble of having an introspective language. Wundt and Titchener were both doing experiments on it, but they never had a cohesive language together that would be universal to these types of experiments. Some critics also believed that what Titchener called introspection was really retrospection due to the fact that there was a time delay between actually observing the stimulus and reporting.

Other arguments of Titchener's methods included how structuralists tried to change the definition of psychology, and how they tried to analyze and break down conscious processes into smaller elements. In the later years of Titchener's life, the field of psychology had expanded further, but the structuralist definition of psychology stayed stagnant, as structuralists and Titchener were too limited in their view of what counted as psychology. Other psychologists argued that when we take in stimuli, we don't break them down, nor do we think of them other than their unified whole.