

Week 8

Test 6, 7, and 8

Chapter 6

Functional psychology or functionalism refers to a psychological school of thought that was a direct outgrowth of Darwinian thinking which focuses attention on the utility and purpose of behavior that has been modified over years of human experience. Functionalists studied the mind as a conglomerate or accumulation of functions and processes that lead to practical consequences in the real world. Functionalism is concerned with how the mind functions or how it is used by an organism to adapt to its environment. Functionalism was a deliberate protest against Wundt's experimental psychology and Titchener's structural psychology, both of which were seen as too restrictive. These early schools of thoughts could not answer the questions the functionalists were asking: What does the mind do? And how does it do it? The functionalists became interested in the potential applications of psychology to everyday problems of how people function in and adapt to different environments. The rapid development of applied psychology in the United States was probably the most important legacy of the functionalist movement. The foundation of the functional psychology movement included the works of Darwin, Galton, and early students of animal behavior. Not until psychologists brought the new science to the United States would mental functions, individual differences, and laboratory rats attain prominence in psychology. Charles Darwin's theory of evolution had a profound effect in the study of the behavior of animals. He believed continuity existed between all mental and physical aspects of humans and animals because humans were believed to be derived from animals by the continuous evolutionary developmental process. Scientists were learning that living forms can no longer be seen as constant, as unchanged since the beginning of time, but rather must be viewed as subject to modification and change. Darwinian's theory led biologists to regard each anatomical structure as a functioning or utilitarian element in a total living system. The groundwork for a new movement, functional psychology developed.

Chapter 7

Those associated with the founding of functionalism had no intention of starting a new school of thought. They were reacting against the restrictions and limitations of Wundt's version of psychology and Titchener's structuralism. Functionalism did incorporate many of the characteristics of a school of thought, but that was not the goal of the leaders. They wanted to modify what existed not to replace it. Functionalism was never as rigid or as formally differentiated a systematic position as Titchener's structuralism. Several functional psychologies coexisted, and although they differed somewhat, all shared the common goal of studying the functions of consciousness. The functionalists became interested in how psychology could be applied to everyday problems of how people function in different environments. The rapid development in the United States is the single most important legacy of the functionalist movement. Paradoxically, the formalization of this protest movement was imposed on it by the founder of structuralism: E.B. Titchener. He pointed out the differences between structural functional psychology and argued that structuralism was the only proper study for psychology. By setting up functionalism as an opponent, and giving it a formal name, Titchener unwittingly gave it an identity and a status it might otherwise not have attained. He named it and thrust the

movement into more than anyone else to get the term functionalism into psychological currency. Two psychologists who contributed directly to the founding of the functionalist school of thought were John Dewey and James Rowland Angell. Dewey applied psychology to educational and philosophical problems, providing another example of the practical orientation of many functional psychologists. Angell molded the functionalist movement into a working school of thought. He made the psychology department the major training ground for functional psychologists. Robert Woodworth did not belong formally to the functionalist school. He disliked the constraints imposed by membership in any school of thought. He suggested the subject matter for psychology must be both consciousness and behavior. He introduced into functionalism a dynamic psychology that elaborated on the teachings of Dewey and James.

Chapter 8

Evolutionary doctrine and the functional psychology derived in the United States toward the end of the nineteenth century. Wundt's psychology and Titchener's structuralism could not survive in their original form in the American intellectual climate, the American Zeitgeist, and so they evolved into functionalism. They did not favor practical kinds of psychology; and they did not deal with the mind in use and their work could not be applied to everyday demands and problems. While some American psychologists, James-Angell-Dewey, were developing the functionalist approach in academic laboratories, others were applying it in settings outside the universities. This move toward practical psychology was occurring at the same time functionalism was being founded as a separate school of thought. The applied psychologists took their psychology into the real world and in doing so they changed the nature of American psychology even more radically than had functionalism academic founders. It substantially remade Wundt's form of psychology into functional psychology and extended it far beyond the experimental laboratory. The functionalist spirit of American psychology was well represented in the life and work of James Mc Keen Cattell, who promoted a practical, test-oriented approach to the study of mental processes. Lightner Witmer was instrumental in developing clinical psychology and was one of those pioneers of the functionalist approach to psychology. He believed that the new science should be used to help people solve problems rather than merely studying the contents of their mind. Never know we have it here right YepThe people, ideas, and events on the functionalist school of thought compelled American psychology to move far beyond the confines of Wundt's Leipzig laboratory. All the forces came together to bring forth the active, assertive, engaging, and influential psychology that has changed our lives.