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Psychology Notes Competitive Exams Schools of Thought Part 6

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Criticisms of Behaviorism

- Many critics argue that behaviorism is a one-dimensional approach to understanding human behavior and that behavioral theories do not account for free will and internal influences such as moods, thoughts and feelings.
- Behaviorism does not account for other types of learning, especially learning that occurs without the use of reinforcement and punishment.
- People and animals are able to adapt their behavior when new information is introduced, even if a previous behavior pattern has been established through reinforcement.

Strengths of Behaviorism

- Behaviorism is based upon observable behaviors, so it is easier to quantify and collect data and information when conducting research.
 - Effective therapeutic techniques such as intensive behavioral intervention, behavior analysis, token economies and discrete trial training are all rooted in behaviorism. These approaches are often very useful in changing maladaptive or harmful behaviors in both children and adults.

Final Thoughts

- While behaviorism is not as dominant today as it was during the middle of the 20th - century, it still remains an influential force in psychology. Outside of psychology, animal trainers, parents, teachers and many others make use of basic behavioral principles to help teach new behaviors and discourage unwanted ones.

Humanistic Psychology

The “Third Force” In Psychology

During the 1950s, humanistic psychology began as a reaction to psychoanalysis and behaviorism, which dominated psychology at the time. Psychoanalysis was focused on understanding the unconscious motivations that drive behavior while behaviorism studied the conditioning processes that produce behavior. Humanist thinkers felt that

both psychoanalysis and behaviorism were too pessimistic, either focusing on the most tragic of emotions or failing to take into account the role of personal choice. Humanistic psychology was instead focused on each individual's potential and stressed the importance of growth and self-actualization. The fundamental belief of humanistic psychology is that people are innately good and that mental and social problems result from deviations from this natural tendency.

During the late 1950s, Abraham Maslow and other psychologists held meetings to discuss the development of a professional organization devoted to a more humanist approach to psychology. They agreed that topics such as self-actualization, creativity and individuality and related topics were the central theme of this new approach. In 1961, they officially established the American Association for Humanistic Psychology. In 1962, Abraham Maslow published *Toward a Psychology of Being*, in which he described humanistic psychology as the "third force" in psychology. The first and second forces were behaviorism and psychoanalysis respectively.

However, it is not necessary to think of these three schools of thought as competing elements. Each branch has contributed to our understanding of the human mind and behavior. Humanistic psychology added yet another dimension that takes a more holistic view of the individual.

Major Thinkers in Humanistic Psychology

- Abraham Maslow
- Carl Rogers
- Rollo May
- Erich Fromm

Important Events in Humanistic Psychology

- 1943 - Abraham Maslow described his hierarchy of needs in 'A Theory of Human Motivation' published in *Psychological Review*. 1951- Carl Rogers published *Client-Centered Therapy*, which described his humanistic, client-directed approach to therapy.
- 1961 - The American Association for Humanistic Psychology is formed and the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology* was established.
- 1962 - American Association for Humanistic Psychology was formed.
- 1971 - Humanistic psychology becomes an APA division.

Criticisms of Humanistic Psychology

- Humanistic psychology is often seen as too subjective; the importance of individual experience makes it difficult to objectively study and measure humanistic phenomena.

How can we objectively tell if someone is self-actualized? The answer, of course, is that we cannot. We can only rely upon the individual's own assessment of their experience.

- Another major criticism is that observations are unverifiable; there is no accurate way to measure or quantify these qualities.

Strong Points of Humanistic Psychology

- One of the major strengths of humanistic psychology is that it emphasizes the role of the individual. This school of psychology gives people more credit in controlling and determining their state of mental health.
- It also takes environmental influences into account. Rather than focusing solely on our internal thoughts and desires, humanistic psychology also credits the environment's influence on our experiences.
- Humanistic psychology continues to influence therapy, education, healthcare and other areas.
- Humanistic psychology helped remove some of the stigma attached to therapy and made it more acceptable for normal, healthy individuals to explore their abilities and potential through therapy.

Humanistic Psychology Today

- Today, the concepts central to humanistic psychology can be seen in many other areas including other branches of psychology, education, therapy, political movements and other areas.
- For example, transpersonal psychology and positive psychology both draw heavily on humanist influences.
- The goals of humanistic psychology remain as relevant today as they were in the 1940s and 1950s.
- As Maureen O' Hara, former president of the Association of Humanistic Psychology, explained, "As the world's people demand freedom and self-determination, it is urgent that we learn how diverse communities of empowered individuals, with freedom to construct their own stories and identities, might live together in mutual peace. Perhaps it is not a vain hope that life in such communities might lead to the advance in human consciousness beyond anything we have yet experienced."

Cognitive Psychology

What Is Cognitive Psychology?

The term "cognitive psychology" was first used in 1967 by American psychologist

Ulric Neisser in his book *Cognitive Psychology*. According to Neisser, cognition

involves "all processes by which the sensory input is transformed, reduced, elaborated,

stored, recovered, and used. ”

Given such a sweeping definition, it is apparent that cognition is involved in everything a human being might possibly do; that every psychological phenomenon is a cognitive phenomenon. ”

- Cognitive psychology is the branch of psychology that studies mental processes including how people think, perceive, remember and learn.
- The core focus of cognitive psychology is on how people acquire, process and store information.
- There are numerous practical applications for cognitive research, such as improving memory, increasing decision-making accuracy and structuring educational curricula to enhance learning.
- Until the 1950s, behaviorism was the dominant school of thought in psychology. Between 1950 and 1970, the tide began to shift against behavioral psychology to focus on topics such as attention, memory and problem-solving.
- Often referred to as the cognitive revolution, this period generated considerable research including processing models, cognitive research methods and the first use of the term “cognitive psychology.”
- It is concerned with these processes even when they operate in the absence of relevant stimulation, as in images and hallucinations.

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