

12-05-13 Notes

Does Psychology exist to undermine itself?

The Different Approaches

- No single approach accounts for everything
 - This might be a good thing
 - A single approach that accounted for everything would be unwieldy, confusing, incoherent, and incomplete
 - Alternative viewpoints keep us open-minded

The Different Approaches

- Because we can't account for everything about a whole person at the same time
 - Each approach focuses on a few key concerns and ignores everything else
 - The approaches pose different questions
 - Does the psychological approach offer a way to seek an answer to a question you feel is worthwhile?

The Different Approaches

- Maintaining an awareness of alternative approaches
 - Avoid arrogance
 - Understanding for evaluating alternative approaches
 - To deal with phenomena that do not fit your preferred approach
 - To have a chance to change your mind
 - To be able to integrate a few approaches

Ideas that kept popping up...

1) Consciousness and the unconscious--they exist and influence us.

- Freud—first to give widespread credence to idea that behavior caused by forces we can't always see
- Current research: Subliminal messages, eyewitness testimony
- Unconscious

Three aspects of the unconscious:

- **Biological**-- Aspects of *individual* unconscious that are part of human nature, plus our instincts and temperaments.
- **Social unconscious**--language, taboos, social habits, cultural influences. Also kind of like Freud's superego, other aspects of Jung's Collective unconscious
- **Personal unconscious**: our personal habits that are very familiar to us & don't need to be fully conscious any more. Also some aspects of preconscious.

Conscious

- most information going into our psyche is conscious—is that true? Maybe conscious, or could be conscious
- able to experience reality, to make choices.
- What is it?

2) Temperament/Genetics

- Some things are just who we are—genetically (and physically) determined, but ain't gonna change
- Some things are mostly who we are

- the built-in part of our personality or character
- E.g., gender, temperament. May be expressed differently according to our environment.
- we mostly are what we are our whole lives
 - Idea started with Jung, developed by Eysenck

2) Temperament/Genetics (cont.)

commonly accepted currently that there are at least two dimensions of personality established before birth:

- **Neuroticism/emotional stability:** continuum of how emotionally reactive you are.
- **extraversion-introversion:** continuum of how sociable you are.

2) Temperament/Genetics (cont.)

Other traits may also have genetic component

- **Conscientiousness:** anal much?
- **Agreeableness:** let's all get along, warmth
- **Openness:** culture, intellect, willingness to learn
- **Psychoticism:** (Eysenck) not craziness, more like being low on agreeableness and low on conscientiousness
- **Impulsivity:** no think, only do
- **sensation seeking:** (Zuckerman) need for stimulation from various sources

3) Environment

- genetics can't explain everything about personality
- we inherit tendencies or dispositions to be or behave in particular ways. Both learning and environment modify these dispositions

Environment: modifies our inherent tendencies

- Adler--family environment: things such as birth order and whether we have siblings.

3) Environment

Also need to consider parents:

- one or both parents present or absent, married, quality of that marriage, etc.
- parents' personalities
- parents' actions

3) Environment

Horney, Hayes and many others point to importance of culture in shaping personality.

For example:

- male-dominated vs. female dominated culture
- country you grow up in (and where you grow up in the country)
- the time period in which you are raised (zeitgeist)
 - Raised during war or peace?
 - Financial good times or bad?
 - Dominant religion?

4) Learning

--including three types:

Basic learning: includes

- **latent learning:** learning that happens without us consciously trying to learn,

or without direct feedback from the environment

- **conditioning**, both operant and classical: direct feedback or shaping by the environment

4) Learning

Social learning: includes

- **vicarious learning:** seeing what consequences other people get for what they do
- **Imitation/modeling):** conscious or unconscious
- **verbal learning:** learning from words, either in books or from others/other source

5) Motivation

- **biological motivations:** what we need to survive
 - Basic survival
 - Pleasure and pain
- **social motivations:** what we need from others
- **higher motivations:** what we need from the universe
 - self-enhancement: be all you can be!
 - Self-transcendence: meaning outside the self

6) Balance

among the various aspects of personality, among the various influences on the self.

E.g., Freud: all life's crises are best resolved at some midpoint between two extremes

Erikson: need autonomy, but we also need a little shame and doubt to keep us in check.

Others:

1. harsh/negative feedback from the world vs. positive/encouraging
2. rationality vs. emotion
3. light vs. shadow in terms of motivations
4. masculine vs. feminine
5. individuality vs. social interest-if serve only self, no one will like you, if serve only others, lose identity

7) Do something meaningful with your life

Theorist after theorist:

Good adjustment/happiness/contentment is the result of finding balance, deemphasizing material wealth in favor of connecting with others and finding a purpose in life