

# The theories of structuralism and functionalism philosophy essay



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This research paper will explain both theories of structuralism and functionalism by using the dualist prospective to explain the interactional pattern between both these theories with the mind and body. Furthermore there will be an explanation of how both structuralism and functionalism have impacted the practice of psychology in these modern times. Then there will be an explanation about how both these theories are needed to describe our conscious mind and how they interact with the body.

## **The Theories of Structuralism and Functionalism**

Since the begin of time, philosophers have been debating the issue of Structuralism and Functionalism theories for many years now and as of yet there is still no real consciences as to which theory is corrects, even in these modern times the debate still persist to this today. There are so many different viewpoints about these theories that you have to do your own research to find out which one is correct for your belief system. The process that will be used to explain both theories of Structuralism and Functionalism interaction with the mind and body will be the Dualism prospective.

Furthermore there will be an explanation of how both these theories have impacted the practice of psychology in these modern times. Then there will be an explanation about how both these theories are needed to describe our conscious mind and how they interact with the body.

## **Dualism Prospective**

This section will explain how the Dualism prospective will used to explain both theories of Structuralism and Functionalism and how they interactions with the mind and body.

According to Goodwin, (2009) dualism views the mind and the body as two distinct entities, and that one can and does exist alone. The centerpiece of the mind is the human ability to reason, while the body is in essence a machine. Humans combined the mechanical body with a mind that could reason. Descartes believed that the mind could have a direct influence on the body and the body could have a direct influence on the mind. This mind-body interaction is based on reflex response system. The reflex is an automatic stimulus-response reaction, and it provided a physiological model for Descartes' position on the mind-body question. Descartes explained reflexes by proposing the existence of thin wire like " filaments" that existed within the nerves and extended to the brain. When the senses are stimulated, according to Descartes, these filaments move, causing certain " pores" in the brain to be opened. This in turn results in the flow of energy that produces the reflex movement. This reflex action can also give rise to the movement of energy flow in the brain. This process leads the mind to deliberately making decisions to act (Goodwin, 2009).

The dualism process can be used to explain how the mind can interact with the body by using the reflex response to relay the messages to the different body parts. When you come to know each structural component within the brain, then you can understand the functional aspects of how the brain interacts with the rest of the body. The process can be used to gain a better understanding of all psychological and biological component of the human body, which is closed system. The mind and body influences each other on how they will react to any given situation that may arise within our social

environment. The mind and body are separate entities that work together to maintain the whole system.

## **Structuralism and Functionalism**

This section will explain Structuralism and Functionalism theories and how both these theories have impacted the practice of psychology.

### **Structuralism**

According to Goodwin, (2009) he pointing out that Structuralist's were more likely to ask the question " What is consciousness?" and the main goals for Structuralism psychology are to analyze human conscious experiences into its elemental units, then show how these units could be synthesized into mental processes. To achieve a complete analysis of the adult mind, the structuralist's used laboratory research to explain the mental processes so they could understand the workings of the brain and nervous system. The main elements of conscious experience, according to Titchener, are sensations and their affects. These sensations have the attributes of being different with the intensity, duration, and clarity of their affects, whereas images aren't as clear as sensations, because they lack clarity. Titchener viewed psychology as a pure laboratory science aimed at discovering the basic structure of human consciousness. Titchener was responsible for making psychology scientific for setting psychology up in the laboratory and reaching his conclusions through experiment under controlled conditions. Titchener's Structuralism was the beginning of experimental psychology with its systematic method of introspection (Goodwin, 2009).

## **Functionalism**

According to Angell, (1907) the functional psychology has three principal that form this theory. Functionalism is conceived as the psychology of mental operations instead of mental elements. Thus, the first principal is to discover “ how” and “ why” of consciousness. Functionalism deals with the problem of the mind by interceding between the environment and the needs of the organism. This process brings about the understanding of the fundamental psychology of consciousness within the mind. The second principal is to determine the process of consciousness and how they lend themselves to classification. Functionalism has been described as a psychophysical psychology that constantly recognizes and insists upon the essential significance of the mind-body relationship for an appreciation of mental life. Presently functional psychology has a broad, flexible and organic point of view in psychology (Angell, 1907).

According to Goodwin, (2009) he pointed out that functionalists were more concerned with the question “ What is consciousness for?” This led to study topics ranging from developmental to abnormal psychology and led them to be interested in individual differences and how psychology could be used to solve everyday problems. Functionalism became a leading aspect in educational and cognitive behavioral psychology, because of the studies of trial-and-error learning and the scientifically proposed learning that occurred through the creation of connections between situations and responses that were successful in learning process, which make up the Law of Effect. These connections were strengthened with repetition of the situations and responses, which made up the Law of Exercise. The educational practices

were influenced with S-R model with an S-O-R framework and emphasized motivational influences on behavior learning (Goodwin, 2009).

## **The Mind And Body**

This section will describe how both theories are needed to explain how our mind and body work together.

According to Angell, (1903) there can exist no theoretical distinctions between philosophy and psychology, when psychology is interpreted as both structural and functional in their processes. The distinction between philosophy and psychology is largely the outcome of the prevalent attempt to make psychological an investigative science after the manner of biological procedure that treats the mind as an organism from a structural and functional prospective. The implications are that structural and functional aspects of the mind and body are characteristics of two processes for the same purpose. Psychology can't, therefore, restrict ' itself to merely structural problems, but questions as to what the make-up the conscious mind and body. The operations that are performed, cannot answer the questions without showing how and why they are performed (Angell, 1903).

According to Matarazzo, (1987) William A. Hunt began his career studying psychology by combining Titchener's structuralism and Harvard's functionalism in the field of health psychology. When he mastered and used the structuralist's experimental method of introspection, and applying it to the study of human emotions (Matarazzo, 1987).

Conclusion

In conclusion the dualism process can be used to explain how the mind can interact with the body by using the reflex response to relay the messages to the different body parts. When you combined structural knowledge of the component within the brain, with the understanding of functional aspects of how the brain works and interacts with the rest of the body, then you can gain a better understanding of all psychological and biological component of the human body, which is closed system. The mind and body influences each other on how they will react to any given situation that may arise within our social environment. The mind and body are separate entities that work together to maintain the whole system.