

Gestalt revolt



Gestalt Revolt The paper discusses the importance of Gestalt psychology nowadays, refers to its background and correlates it with Functionalist, Structuralist and Behaviorist Schools. In spite of considerable criticism, Gestalt psychology made an efficient contribution to the world's Psychology. The ideas of newly developed Gestalt psychology differed from the accepted and approved ideas of functionalist and structuralist psychologies. The Fathers of Gestalt Psychology, by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Wertheimer and Koffha were Germans. This nation is too deterministic and maximalist. Thus, psychological considerations of the school were based on a holistic approach, i. e. experience analysis by means of configuration of the whole pattern (Embree). The whole is greater than the sum of its parts, - this is the main principle for Gestalt psychology. Functionalists made emphasis on experience analysis of an individual on the basis of his attitude to the learning process, because in such a way an individual is getting accustomed for the environment. Structuralists claimed that not the whole, but an element is crucial for the mind's structure. Their favorite method, introspection, is in contradiction with the methods implied by Gestalt psychologists (Kohler). Thus, Gestalt psychology occurred in 20s in Germany and it was a new vision of psychological analysis. Germans started invading America and attracting the American psychologists. In Germany this school has substituted structuralism and in America it started its struggle against behaviorism, which was very popular those days. Thus, popularity of Behaviorism impeded Gestalt psychology from expansion in America. Gestalt psychologists started protesting against behaviorism. The main criticisms of behaviorism made by Gestaltists were reductionist and atomist nature of Behaviorism; artificial associations implied in Behaviorism (S-R) prevented

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natural development of mental processes (Kohler). Moreover, Behaviorists discarded consciousness from their field of study and their experiments were mainly conducted on animals, which was not acceptable for Gestaltists. As far as we can see, the basic concepts of Gestalt psychology are focused on reality of a current process and not on imagined processes. Gestalt therapy answers to the question “ What is it?” and not “ What should it be?” Thus, behaviorist principles were not supported by Gestaltists because of their experimental nature. Thus, in accordance with Gestalt psychology it is better to be aware, to perceive and to feel and not to interpret or reconsider previous experiences. Gestalt psychologists communicate with their patients and in the process of dialogues patients have a chance to realize what they are actually doing. A process is much more important than content for Gestalt psychologists. Therefore, a phenomenological approach of Gestalt psychology was widely approved and accepted in Europe and finally in America. In spite of a great criticism, this school of psychology suggests a new vision of communication between a client and a psychologist, which helps individual’s analysis in the current process and the current state.

Works cited 1. Embree, Lester. Merleau-Ponty’s Examination of Gestalt Psychology. Available from: 2. Kohler, Wolfgang. Gestalt Psychology Today. Available from: