

Psychology 4910 - Ideas for Answers for Study Questions

2. How does knowledge about human psychology influence our views about morality. What type of relationship should there be between ethics and psychology? How does knowledge of human psychology help us to decide what is the best way to live our lives? What is eudamonia and how does psychology help us attain it?

2. Greeks

- Socrates' notion of *eudaemonia* – human flourishing in a well governed society in which people were taught how to act properly. Bad behavior due to ignorance

Plato's - three types of soul - rational, spirited, desiring (Compare Freud's super ego, ego, id)

- battle between desires (id, desiring soul), motivation to do the socially correct thing (ego, spirited soul), & higher level understanding of abstract moral principles (super ego, rational soul)

→ importance of reason & education in teaching people the right way to behave

→ people with desiring souls must not be rulers but must be ruled by those with rational souls.

→ people with spirited souls would do the socially appropriate thing - must be educated properly

→ only most highly educated – those with rational souls – could be rulers and make the important decisions in society

3. Middle Ages

Peter Abelard - person's intention determined seriousness of sin - Intention to harm more serious

than accidental harm arising from good intentions → free will

St. Bonaventure Soul = essence of the person (Quite different from Plato's view).

- soul could have knowledge of material world - empiricist;

- knowledge of spiritual world - (abstract ideas) - depended on divine illumination (Plato's

Simile of the sun) - know God through introspection

- notion of free will as separate from intellect.

St. Thomas Aquinas - Aristotelian

- intellectual appetite or will - seeks general good → abstract moral principles.

Notion of Free Will - people choose how they behave - foundation of morality

- early middle ages (before 1000) - motivations seen as external to humans - angels and demons

- later middle ages - notion of free will

Dante - sinners consciously & deliberately sinned, refused to admit that they had done wrong.

4. Descartes & the Scientific Revolution

- job of the soul to make decisions and think (free will)
- notion of eternal soul essential to morality, people judged & sent to heaven or hell depending
 - on their acts during their lives. Soul had to be essence of the person, memory for their actions

5. Enlightenment

- skepticism - if we don't have an immortal soul & there is no God, why should we be moral creatures?
- How can we truly know the world when our minds just contain a representation (image or sensation) of the world?

David Hume - morality depends on habit & emotion moreso than on reason. We approve or disapprove of acts → emotions let us know what is moral behavior. Hints at some type of build-in conscience

Compare Reid & Scottish school - God made humans who have innate capacity to know him & his world. - innate moral capacity → trust our conscience.

6. Nineteenth Century

Charles Darwin - Theory of Evolution: humans are beasts & share animal emotions.

Romanticism. - notion that humans are naturally good, kind, loving etc & society makes us evil. “Noble Savage” idea. Rousseau & later Margaret Mead.

Thomas Hobbes - saw humans as violent, greedy etc (Plato's desiring souls) who needed strong government

9. Psychology of Adaptation, Progressivism, Behaviourism

- importance of training people to fit into modern world, behaviour control (Watson, Skinner)
- empiricist view of human beings → importance of education and training
 - vs. William James - importance of free will.

Applied & Clinical Psychology - Maslow & Rogers - importance of free will, knowing oneself & growing and developing (actualizing).

5. What do we mean by “mind”? Is the mind a real thing, and if so, what type of real thing is it? Or is “mind” a social construct like hysteria or the Greek gods? Is it possible to have a scientific explanation of “mind”? Trace the development of ideas about what the mind is and how to explain it from the time of the Greeks to the present day.

Plato – three types of souls

Aristotle, Ibn Sina, Thomas Aquinas- ideas about the mind rather similar to current ideas, based on observation of human beings but not experimentation

- discussed perception, memory & recall, imagination & creativity, active vs passive mind,

binding problem.

- some attempt to relate activities of the mind to areas of the brain.

Descartes - separated immaterial soul (which thought, made decisions, had knowledge)

from mechanical body (which processed sensory information). Problem with assigning mental functions to the body - against Christian theology.

Freud - super ego, ego, id. Mind is battleground between base animal desires, and reason.

- energy goes into suppressing unacceptable thoughts, which emerge in dreams.

(Analogy with

a water dam holding back the water.)

- repressed sexuality → neuroses

- not aware of our true motivations → need for therapy in order to understand ourselves

British Empiricists, Behaviourists

- Locke, Hume, Hartley, J. Mill, J. S. Mill (& Descartes) - representation of external world in our brain (images & ideas and distinct from sensations).

- learning & memory involves acquiring and reactivating associations. (No concept of retrieval.)

- mind as machine in which associations (determined by previous learning) mechanically

determined train of thought or behaviour.

Psychology of Consciousness – could study the elements of mind (sensations & mental images), how they became associated & the different kinds of associations

Psychology of Adaptation – mind seen as mechanism that evolved to help humans survive –could therefore be studied scientifically

- John Dewey thought that mind was a social construction

Behaviourism – no need to study the mind or ...

- mind seen as something like a telephone switch board that merely hooked up stimuli and responses.

Cognitive Revolution

- mind as software, information processing; brain as hardware.
 - minds not material objects but real.
 - info. processing models account for goal-directed nature of behaviour (purposiveness)
 - internal representations → mental images, propositions
 - internal operations → comparing, making decisions, setting goals, evaluating etc.
 - free will ???
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- PDP (neural network) models → relate mind processes to brain processes
 - learning (change is strength of associations between ideas or between stimuli & responses) analogous to change in synaptic growth in neurons.

Humanistic Psychology – emphasis on free will, self knowledge, self determination.
(This comes from Chapter 14 which we did not cover this year.)