

## Systems in Psychology

In the first decades of the 20th century, psychologists came out to hold quite different views about the nature of mind and the best ways to study it. About the same time, fundamental questions were raised about what should be studied in psychology: Should psychology be the study of mind, should it study behavior, or should both mind and behavior be included?

Different influential psychologists of the time held quite different views on the nature of mind and the proper subject matter for psychology. Schools of thought formed around these leaders as their students adopted their ideas. These schools of thought are known as the schools of psychology; they set the direction for much of the research on mind and behavior in the early years of this century.

**Structuralism:** Basic concepts, contribution of Wundt and Titchener -

This early school of psychology grew up around the ideas of Wilhelm Wundt

in Germany and was established at Cornell University in the United States by one of Wundt's student, Edward B. Titchener. The goal of the structuralists was to find the units, or elements, which make up the mind. They thought that as in chemistry, a first step in the study of the mind should be a description of the basic, or elementary, units of sensation, image, and emotion which compose it. For instance, the structuralists did experiments to find the elementary sensations — such as red, cold, sweet and fragrant, for example — which provide, they said, the basis for more complex mental experiences. The main

The main method used by the structuralists to discover these elementary units of mind was introspection. Subjects were trained to report as objectively as possible what they experienced in connection with a certain stimulus, disregarding the meanings they had come to associate with that stimulus. A subject might, for example,

be presented with a colored light, a tone, or an odour and asked to describe it as minutely as possible.

These experiments using introspection have give us a great deal of information about the kinds of sensations people have, but other psychologists of the time challenged the idea that the mind could be understood by finding its elements and the rules for combining them. Still others turned away from describing the structure of the mind to study how the mind functioned.