**ASSOCIATIONISTS**

Associationist is a group of three English philosophers/psychologists of the 16th century. Associationists are given this name because they believed in the concept of association of ideas. They are very important in the history of psychology and their theories are known as Associationism.

**Thomas Hobbes**

One of the most important names in the context of Associationism is that of Thomas Hobbes. He was born on 5th April 1588 AD and died on 4th December 1679 in Wiltshire, England. Hobbes was a philosopher/psychologist and a writer who is known for his book “Leviathan” which was published in 1651. Hobbes is also known for his emphasis on materialism. Hobbes was educated at Oxford and worked as a tutor to the son of William Cavendish, later the Earl of Devonshire. His connections to the royal family gave him opportunities to travel and pursue his studies, but they also put him in the middle of the English Civil War. In 1640 political turmoil forced him to leave England for France, where he continued to associate with scholars and scientists of Europe, including Galileo and René Descartes.

As mentioned earlier, Hobbes is considered an important materialist thinker of the time. Materialism means, greater interest in material possessions rather than spiritual values. Materialist thinkers were of the view that matter is dynamic, which means that matter changes from one form to another. Hobbes put forward the view that all we see including humans are different forms of matter and the laws that govern matter are also applicable to animals and humans, therefore these laws can be discovered. He contented that animals and man are in fact different types of machines and their functions and operations can be studied, understood, explained and even predicted. This mechanical view of human beings was initially given by Rene Descartes. Hobbes went on to elaborate the idea given by Descartes by saying that all human feelings and emotions such as laughing, crying, feeling hungry could be understood and explained in terms of functions of the human machines. This means that there has to be an input into the human machine in order to get an output in the form of the above mentioned functions of the human machine. For example, when a person is subject to heavy stress, he may start crying. A person who has not eaten for a long time starts feeling hungry. Therefore, the human machine has to have some sort of an input in order to give the above mentioned responses as its functions or outputs. Hobbes concentrated on finding similarities between humans and machines and this idea of finding similarities between man and machines is called “mechanical materialism,” and Hobbes was one of its originators.

Hobbes was of the opinion that our thoughts and emotions are caused by the motion the external stimuli. As the variables of the external stimuli change, they impact the human body which results in emotions and thoughts.

He further proclaimed that motion in the brain creates thoughts. Then these thoughts get accumulated and get connected. This results in creating chains of thoughts or ideas leading to complex ideas. This is what has been termed as the association of ideas. Aristotle has also given his explanation of association of ideas which according to him is caused due to similarity, contiguity and contrast. Hobbes and two other associationists propounded this concept later that ideas tend to get associated.

Thomas Hobbes believed that knowledge can be acquired by observation through the sense organs. Therefore, he rejected the idea of introspection and agreed with Aristotle’s empiricism as a means of acquiring knowledge.

According to Hobbes three things create association:

* Habits
* Wishes
* Repetition

Habits result in association of ideas. Wishes create linkages in ideas. A person who wishes for something links many ideas with his wish which in turn results in association of ideas. Further, repetition of event also results in association of ideas. This is similar to Aristotle’s contiguity and similarity when two things happening close to each other or having similarity with each other result in association of ideas.

Because of his views of association of ideas he is called an Associationist by historians of psychology.

**John Locke**

Another important British Associationist was John Locke. He was born in 1632 AD and died in 1704 AD. Educated at Christ Church College, Oxford, he became (1660) a lecturer there in Greek, rhetoric, and philosophy. He studied medicine, and his acquaintance with scientific practice had a strong influence upon his philosophical thought and method. He is considered to be the founder of British Empiricism.

His major contribution in psychology came in the form of an Essay. In the Essay Concerning Human Understanding Locke examines the nature of the human mind and the process by which it knows the world. Repudiating the traditional doctrine of innate ideas, Locke believed that the mind is born blank and the world writes on it.

John Locke was of the view that ideas were not innate or inborn, but ideas were developed over the due course of time through experiences that an individual has. In other words he rejected the Platonian point of views of introspection and ideas being inborn. According to John Locke, the mind of a child at the time of his birth is like a clean slate. Locke called this clean slate a “tabula rasa.” This means that the mind is open to all external influences. The slate is blank and anything could be written upon the slate. Experiences throughout the life of the individual write on the slate. This is how ideas and thoughts are formed. Therefore, ideas are not inborn; it is the environment around the individual that shapes his or her imagination, feelings and thoughts.

According to Locke, we learn by two ways:

* Sensations
* And reflection

Sensation is the acknowledgement of the stimuli by the body. For example if a person touches something hot, the body feels the hotness of the object and as a result person learns to avoid the hot object. This is learning through sensations, where a stimulus or may be stimuli induce the learning process to take place. On the other hand, reflection means the interpretation of the stimuli by the body. The individual interprets the stimuli according to his own perception. Therefore two persons may differ in their reflection i.e. the interpretation of the stimuli.

In Locke’s views, sensations create ideas, but reasoning connects those ideas together and these connections or associations are the source of knowledge. When the sensations are interpreted, a reason for it is sought. This reason results in creating knowledge for the person. For example, the sensation of feeling something as hot may be interpreted by the person as the hot object being dangerous. Therefore, the person may reach the conclusion that hot objects are dangerous, the reason being that they hurt the body.

John Locke was also a political philosopher. He therefore contented that for the society to move forward, prosper and develop, it is essential to gather knowledge. Knowledge can be acquired through the process of sensation, reasoning and association of ideas. John Locke supported the Aristotelian view point of learning by empiricism rather than introspection. His method encouraged learning by observation. Because of his support for the theory of association of ideas, he is also considered as an associationist.

**ASSOCIATIONISTS**

**David Hume**

The third British Associationist was David Hume who was born in 1711 AD and died in 1776 AD. He was a philosopher and a historian. Educated at Edinburgh, Scotland he lived in France, where he finished his first philosophical work, A Treatise of Human Nature.

David Hume followed the Lockean viewpoint in saying that senses and observation are the true sources of knowledge and knowledge cannot be gained by looking into the mind. On the other hand Hume denied the existence of material world. The world is what the senses perceive it to be. For example, Hume was of the view that when a person sees a table lying in a room, the table exists because his sense of vision can detect it, but if the person goes away from the room the table does not exist anymore for him. Therefore, the existence of a material world is just a perception of the senses.

According to Hume, human mind tends to establish a cause and effect relationship. This means that if one event follows another, the first event is considered to be the cause and the second event is the effect. In other words, the apparent sequence of events in the external world is in fact the sequence of perceptions in the mind. From this statement Hume argued that our expectation that the future will be like the past has no basis in reason; it is purely a matter of belief. For example when we expect the sun to rise every morning, it is a belief based on the past experience.

Hume believed that the purpose of knowledge is to facilitate life. This is known as the Utilitarian approach according to which knowledge must serve life and it must have a purpose. Later James adopted a similar approach in purporting the idea of Pragmatism which means that everything has to have a practical application and reason.

Hume also distinguished between violent passions and calm passions. Violent passions for example

are love and hate while calm passions are aesthetic and moral feelings.

**FRENCH REVOLUTION**

One of the greatest revolutions in the history of mankind is the French Revolution that took place in France in 1789. Throughout the 18th century, resentment increased in France against the nobles and the clergy, who lived lives of idleness and luxury. They paid no taxes at all while the peasants had to pay taxes to the church, to their local lord as well as the government. By the late 1780s the cost of the wars against England had left France bankrupt but except for the peasants still no one paid taxes. The result was a violent revolt against the government marking the end of monarchy and feudalism in France. It was one of the most important events in the history of mankind because it changed the outlook of man. It set an example for Europe and the rest of the world to follow. It had its impact on all the future developments of mankind, and ultimately the development of all disciplines including philosophy/psychology.

**Denis Diderot**

One of the important philosopher/psychologist of the era was Denis Diderot. He was French, born in 1713 AD and died in 1784 AD. Following the prevailing materialist point of view proposing that matter is dynamic and the movement of particles creates sensations and feelings in a body. It was similar to the viewpoint given by Thomas Hobbes. He postulated that thought and memory are the functions of the brain and man and animals possess memory. He was a follower of the Aristotelian tradition, believing that knowledge is gathered by observation.

Diderot said that knowledge and power come from observation and experimentation. He further proclaimed that the purpose of knowledge was not just to know the truth but it was to increase the power of man. Knowledge gave man the ability to understand things better and develop the power to judge things.

It is only through observation and experimentation that man’s thoughts and his conditions can be changed. Innate or inborn thoughts could not change the living conditions of man. By experimenting man can discover new techniques to make his life easy and comfortable. Therefore, his conditions could become better. This was later proved in the industrial revolution when research and development resulted in discoveries such as the steam engine which changed the history of man.

**Auguste Comte**

Another important thinker/philosopher/psychologist of the period was Auguste Comte, a French philosopher. He was born in 1789 AD, died in 1875 AD. He was educated in Paris and is considered as the founder of the school of philosophy known as positivism Comte is also considered as the first Sociologist. He made the first contributions to what we now call the subject of Sociology laying its foundations. Sociology is the study of large groups of people. He sees the intellectual development of man covered by what is called the Law of the Three Stages—first, in which events were largely attributed to supernatural forces; second, in which natural phenomena are thought to result from ideas; and third, in which phenomena are explained by observation, hypotheses, and experimentation.

One of the important ideas of Comte was that, that there is no difference in the chemical elements of trees, animals and man. This implied that the laws that govern trees and animals are also applicable to man; animals and trees need certain elements from the nature to survive. Similarly man also needs certain essential elements from the nature. In other words, man is also an organism that may be controlled and manipulated like trees or animals.

Unlike David Hume who gave the idea of cause and effect relationship, Comte taught that we should not be too concerned about cause and effect relationships. He purported that we should gather information and then try to formulate connections between different pieces of information or facts gathered. He also said that scientists should avoid moral or ideological judgments which make their study biased. They should focus and concentrate only on gathering facts and collecting information. Collection of information is the only method by which we can understand, control and predict events.

Comte proposed that man’s mind passed through three stages of growth and development:

* First stage

This was when man explained and understood events by referring to the super natural, gods and spirits. This meant that some supernatural forces or powers make things happen. This was the most primitive stage of development. As the bases of phenomenon were not found, a general explanation of attributing them to the supernatural was used.

* Second stage

This stage was when man explained events in mechanical terms. It was when man realized that nature and man have their own mechanical laws, which are responsible for events. The discovery of the laws being the basis of man and natural phenomenon was the stage when man inclined towards empiricism and gaining of knowledge by observation and through the senses.

* Third stage

The third stage was the recent stage. It was when man understood and explained events in a deterministic way. Determinism is to explain events in terms of a cause and effect relationship. This meant that when two events occur, one after the other, the first event would be the cause of the second event. This cause and effect relationship was also given by David Hume.

Comte was primarily a social reformer. His goal was a society in which individuals and nations could live in harmony and comfort. His system for achieving such a society is presented in his book, “the Course of Positive Philosophy.” In this work Comte analyzes the relation of social evolution and the stages of science. It is in this book that he gave the three stages of development of man’s mind.

The sciences themselves are classified on the basis of increasing complexity and decreasing generality of application in the ascending order: mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and sociology. Each science depends at least in part on the science preceding it; hence all contribute to “sociology” a term that Comte himself originated. These are the major contributions of Auguste Comte.

**GERMAN CONTRIBUTION**

**Wilhelm Liebniz**

The first German philosopher/psychologist in the present context was Wilhelm Leibniz. He was born in 1646AD and he died in 1716 AD.

One of the most important contributions of Wilhelm Liebniz is that the universe including human beings is made up of atoms. His theory was based on the preexisting belief of atoms forming the matter. Liebniz called these particles or atom as **Monads**.

Liebniz further proposed that Monads are spiritual in nature and they are permanent and indestructible. They have their own stages of growth and development. Liebniz said that objects are made up of lowest monads, animals of higher monads than objects and man is made of the highest monads of them all. We are born with these, and they develop with the passage of time.

Another contribution of Wilhelm Liebniz is that he proposed that the soul and the body exist and operate parallel to each other. This means that the body and the soul operate in the humans at the same time and complement each other in their functions. This view of parallelism of soul and body is termed as **psycho-physical parallelism**.

**Immanuel Kant**

Another great German philosopher/psychologist was Immanuel Kant who was born in 1724 AD and died in 1804 AD.

Kant was against introspection and believed that observation and empiricism can lead to knowledge. The important contribution of Kant in this regard is that he proposed that the human mind is active and it rearranges and catalogues information gathered by observation. This means that whenever an individual observes something, he stores the information in his mind. The mind performs the function of the storage house and also arranges the information for the individual. This may result in easy retrieval of the information and the information being associated with other pieces of information that are in the same category. Therefore, this combination of information results in formulation of ideas etc.

Kant proposed that the mind has an innate capacity to see unity in what is observed. This means that mind relates every observation and information to some other information and this is what was termed as unity. It finds different observations as similar because of the previously stored information.

Further, Kant proposed that mind has the capacity to give meaning to sensations and observation. The sensations received by the body are conveyed to the mind. Then the mind is responsible for interpreting these sensations and deciding how the person and the body have to react. Similarly for observation, the mind acquires all the information and tries to draw conclusions out of it. Therefore, the mind performs the function of an interpreter.

Kant’s ideas are a mixture of Liebnisian and Lockean views. Liebniz proposed that in the sense both mind and body operate at the same time. Liebniz had proposed the concept of psycho-physical parallelism. On the other hand Kant’s views were similar to Locke in terms that according to Kant there was not material existence of the mind and its operations. Kant further proposed that psychology could not become a science, since science deals in matter and mind is not material.

**Friedrich Hegel**

Another name belonging to the German epoch was that of Friedrich Hegel who was born in 1770AD and died in 1831AD.

Hegel taught that there is no conflict between mind or wisdom and nature or matter. He further proclaimed that there is a logical flow in nature, which can be discovered by logic and wisdom. This means that all the phenomenon of nature can be described in logical terms. It may have a cause and effect relationship or may otherwise be explained using simple methods of observational reasoning.

He postulated the view of Absolute idea. **Absolute idea** is the absolute truth and it is non-material. Hegel put forward the idea that objects and events can not be studied separately. This idea had the implication in his theory that if we want to study a person we must look into his family life, his political and religious ideas, his economic conditions etc. It is one of the most important features of Hegel’s viewpoint. Hegel correctly and implicitly stated that the behavior of a person, his attitude and his actions are influenced by his environment. The kind of environment from which a person belongs to has to determine his own behavior. For example an individual living in a joint family system would have different attitude from one living in a separate family. He also purported that economic, political and social environment also influence the person, which can be understood by looking at the French revolution. The French peasants felt that they were being oppressed by the clergy men and the rulers. This made them revolt against both the church and the monarch.

Hegel proposed that objects and events affect each other and in turn get affected. Similarly human thought affects objects, and objects affect human thoughts. This means that humans tend to use their thoughts for the improvement or to make best use of the objects. On the other hand natural phenomenon related to the objects influence human minds and make humans develop new ideas and thoughts. In other words this conflict between objects and human thought leads to change, growth and development.

Hegel also proposed a theory of development of man’s thought which states that development takes place in three stages. This theory is also based on the idea of the conflict between objects and thoughts. The three stages of development of thought are:

* The first stage is when man discovers some phenomenon. He tries to explain the phenomenon according to his own information. In other words, man discovers, generates an idea and calls it a thesis. This thesis is the basis of the thought or idea.
* Later when the idea has been proposed in the form of a thesis, further observation and interpretation results in the formation of its opposite or contradictory idea. This opposite or contradictory idea is called the anti-thesis
* Finally the two conflicting or contradictory ideas are merged together to from a new idea which is known as synthesis. This generates the explanation of the phenomenon.

In other words, there is first an explanation of the phenomenon. This explanation is then negated by another explanation. When both these explanations are combined it results in a final explanation which is called a **synthesis**.

As a whole these three steps by the development of a synthesis lead to growth and development. The synthesis ultimately also becomes a thesis and is then negated in the same manner as the original thesis. This process of negation of the synthesis as a thesis is called the **negation of negation**. It continues forever. Therefore, according to Hegel contradiction is basic mover of the entire universe, including man and ideas.

Old ideas generate new ideas, those are negated and new ideas are formed. This means that there are no permanent ideas in this world. Hegel also taught that we should look at the universe and see the logical connections between objects and ideas. These logical connections would explain various phenomenons. This process is called the **dialectical process**. The dialectical process means that by looking at two things, i.e. the object and the ideas we can draw conclusions about them. These were the contribution of Friedrich Hegel.