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NATURE OF REMEMBERING

Remembering is the most common experience that function daily in the life of a person. It makes available to the individual something he has learnt earlier. In his book “Memory(1885) General Psychologist Hermann Ebbinghaus presents it as a higher mental process, and proposed that we can learn the nature of remembering in laboratory as Wundt & Tichner have learnt the nature of conscious experience in laboratory.

Ebbinghaus done the first significant scientific study of remembering during the latter part of the 19th century. He done an experiment using himself as a subject and list of nonsense syllables as learning material. He learned the list of nonsense syllables by three methods- serial method, paired association method and prompting & anticipation method. Through his experiment he came on the conclusion that remembering is a passive process. It is a reproductive process also, because it is a Photostat copy of learnt behavior. He further state that it is a physiological process, because we store the learnt material as a memory trace in the brain. Thus according to Ebbinghaus

“Remembering is the effective reproduction of the past experiences.” The experiments of the Stern and Willian, Brown (1953), Melton(1963), supports the Ebbinghaus theory.

Later on the contribution of Ebbinghaus become the controversial point in the field of Psychology. Bartlett was the first person who came forward to criticize Ebbinghaus views. The following criticisms are made by him:-

(1).He criticized that Ebbinghaus used the nonsense syllable as learning material, which means no association. But experience of daily life refers that at the time of recall person associate it with meaningful words.

(2).He further criticized that according to Ebbinghaus, nonsense syllable stands equal meaning for every individual, but introspective reports of different persons go against it.

(3). In course of criticism Bartlett said that Ebbinghaus found quantities change in remembering but this change has come due to the fact that he used nonsense syllable as learning material. But if he would have used the meaningful materials into his study, he would have the result of chance both as a quantities and qualitative.

(4)He criticized that Ebbinghaus has used the method of complete mastery and retention test, Which are not used in day to day life. It is why he got the wrong result.

(5). Ebbinghaus used himself as subject and experimenter both, which is not proper for experiment. It is another criticism that goes against the view of Ebbinghaus.

In this way Bartlett criticized the views of Ebbinghaus and conducted a scientific study about the nature of remembering and came to the conclusion that remembering is not a passive process, but it is an active process. It is not a physiological process, but it is a Psychological process. He further said that remembering is not a reproductive process but it is a constructive and dynamic process. On the basis of objective study he further states that if an individual recognizes that learning of a task or a material is related to the attainment of his goal. He develops a favorable attitude towards learning that material and makes a great effort to learn and remember it. And if learning of that task or material is not related to the attainment of his goal. He develops an unfavorable attitude towards learning that material and becomes unable to remember it. He also pointed out that at the time of recall a person wanted to make it more effective and interesting for which he adds some things according to their interest. Thus, remembering is a constructive and dynamic process. According to Ebbinghaus, there is no qualitative difference in remembering. But Bartlett criticized it and said that it has qualitative differences also due to the personality of the individual.

In his experiment Bartlett used the pictures and stories as learning material and following three methods are used as methods of retention:-

(1). The first method to study memory is the serial reproductive method. In this method a story is told or read before a subject. That subject tells the story to another subject. The second tells it to a third person. It is seen that every recall has some differences. In the end the form of the original story is totally changed.

(2). Bartlett used the successive method as the second method to study the nature of remembering. In this method a story is told by a person to a subject. He is said to tell the story at many places. It is found that every trail has some difference in the story and in end the story is changed.

(3). Bartlett used the single reproduction method as the third method to study the nature of remembering. In this method a story is told in a group. Then all persons are told to recall the story one by one. It is seen that there are differences in telling the story in all subjects due to the memory.

Allport, Watson, Woodworth done several experiments in the field of memory and results of these support the view of Bartlett. Gestalt Psychologists appear and except it as the form of spatial dimension.

Thus we see that two opposite theories appear before us regarding the nature of remembering and we can explain it in a scientific manner through these views as –“Remembering is a passive as well as active process. It is a reproductive as well constructive and dynamic process. It is also physiological and psychological process.”

