

EDU 102 History of Psychology

Dr. K. A. Korb
EDU 102
University of Jos

Ancient Greeks and Romans (around 4th century BC to about 200 AD)

- **Philosophy:** Study of the nature of knowledge, reality, and existence
 - Answers questions such as *What is knowledge?*
 - Methods include asking questions and using logic to answer the question
- The study of mind and behavior (psychology) was part of philosophy
 - Philosophers answered questions using logic only

Formal Beginning of Psychology: Structuralism

- Willhem Wundt established the first psychological laboratory in 1879
 - Considered the "Father of Psychology"
 - Goal: Investigate how behavior can be observed and analysed
- **Structuralism:** Perspective of analyzing the human mind by the simplest elements of consciousness
 - Studied the "building blocks" of the mind
 - Whole is a sum of the parts
 - **Introspection** was the primary method: Examining one's own mental and emotional processes
- Criticisms: People sometimes struggle to describe inner and mental experiences
 - Introspection is not really a scientific method
 - It is difficult to break the mind down into basic units

Reaction to Structuralism: Gestalt (Germany)

- Psychology should be viewed as organized, structured wholes
 - Focused on perception → how people put meaning to the environment
 - Believed that perception produces interpretations more meaningful than the individual building blocks
 - The sum is greater than the parts
- Max Wertheimer was the main Gestalt theorist (about 1910)



Reaction to Structuralism: Functionalism (USA)

- **Functionalism:** Human behavior and thoughts function to enable a person adapt, survive, and flourish
 - Studied the *function* of behavior to improving life
- William James was the founder of functionalism (about 1895)

Reactions to Functionalism: Behaviorism

- **Behaviorism:** Learning observable, overt behavior
- The leading behaviorism researcher was John B. Watson (1924)
 - Classical conditioning by Ivan Pavlov (1904)
 - Operant conditioning by B. F. Skinner (1953)
- Criticism: Human beings are more than just their behavior → they also have complex thought, motivational, and emotional processes

Reactions to Behaviorism: Cognitive Theories

- **Cognitive Theories:** Study of mental processes (Began in the 1950s)
 - Uses the computer as a metaphor for how people think
- Criticisms: Focuses on the internal mind only with very little attention to social or cultural processes

Reactions to Cognitive Theories: Constructivism

- **Constructivism:** Views learning as an active process that changes the learner
 - Emphasizes the social and cultural aspects of learning
 - Also emphasizes real-world applications of learning
- Became popular about the 1980s

Conclusion

- There are many different schools of thought in psychology
- Human beings are very complex
 - Each perspective takes a unique lens on human thought and behavior
 - Each perspective has strengths and weaknesses
 - No one perspective can explain human psychology
 - There are still many other perspectives that have yet to be discovered