

History of Psychology

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The history of psychology as a scholarly study of the mind and behavior dates back to the Ancient Greeks. There is also evidence of psychological thought in ancient Egypt. Psychology was a branch of philosophy until 1879, when psychology developed as an independent scientific discipline in Germany and the United States. Psychology borders on various other fields including physiology, neuroscience, artificial intelligence, sociology, anthropology, as well as philosophy and other components of the humanities.

Overview

Philosophical interest in the mind and behavior dates back to the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Greece, China and India. Predating Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung by nearly 1000 years, psychotherapy was performed by Islamic physicians on those with mental illness in psychiatric hospitals built as early as the 8th century in Fez, Morocco.

Psychology as a self-conscious field of experimental study began in 1879, when Wilhelm Wundt founded the first laboratory dedicated exclusively to psychological research in Leipzig. Other important early contributors to the field include Hermann Ebbinghaus (a pioneer in the study of memory), William James (the American father of pragmatism), and Ivan Pavlov (who developed the procedures associated with classical conditioning).

Soon after the development of experimental psychology, various kinds of applied psychology appeared. G. Stanley Hall brought scientific pedagogy to the United States from Germany in the early 1880s. John Dewey's educational theory of the 1890s was another example. Also in the 1890s, Hugo Münsterberg began writing about the application of psychology to industry, law, and other fields. Lightner Witmer established the first psychological clinic in the 1890s. James McKeen Cattell adapted Francis Galton's anthropometric methods to generate the first program of mental testing in the 1890s. In Vienna, meanwhile, the psychiatrist Sigmund Freud developed an independent approach to the study of the mind called psychoanalysis, which has been widely influential.

The 20th century saw a reaction to Edward Titchener's critique of Wundt's empiricism. This contributed to the formulation of behaviorism by John B. Watson, which was popularized by B. F. Skinner. Behaviorism proposed limiting psychological study to that of overt behavior, because that could be quantified and easily measured. Behaviorists considered knowledge of the "mind" too metaphysical to achieve scientifically. The final decades of the 20th century saw the decline of behaviorism and the rise of cognitive science, an interdisciplinary approach to studying the human mind. Cognitive science again considers the "mind" as a subject for investigation, using the tools of evolutionary psychology, linguistics, computer science, philosophy, behaviorism, and neurobiology. This form of investigation has proposed that a wide understanding of the human mind is possible, and that such an understanding may be applied to other research domains, such as artificial

intelligence.

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