

# Kurt Goldstein: The Architect of Holistic Neuropsychology

Authored by  
**mohammad looti**

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Kurt Goldstein (November 6, 1878 - September 19, 1965) was a German Jewish neurologist and psychiatrist who was a pioneer in modern neuropsychology. He created a holistic theory of the organism based on Gestalt theory which deeply influenced the development of Gestalt therapy. His most important book in German *Der Aufbau des Organismus* (1934) has been published again in English: *The Organism* (1995) with an introduction by Oliver Sacks. Goldstein was co-editor of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

## Biography

Kurt Goldstein was born in Katowice, Germany in 1878 into a large Jewish family. After his initial education at the gymnasium, he briefly studied philosophy at the University of Heidelberg before moving to the University of Breslau where he studied medicine. At Breslau, Goldstein served as a laboratory assistant to Ludwig Edinger and studied under Carl Wernicke. Goldstein ran a small neurology clinic, and after Edinger's death, assumed the role of professor of neurology.

Following World War I, Goldstein took advantage of the large number of traumatic brain injuries at the clinic and established The Institute for Research into the Consequences of Brain Injuries. It was here that he developed his theory of brain-mind relationships.

In 1930, Goldstein accepted a position at the University of Berlin. In 1933, the Nazis came to power and Goldstein was arrested and imprisoned in a basement. After a week, he was released on the condition that he would agree to leave the country immediately and never return.

For the next year, he lived in Amsterdam, supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, and wrote his master opus, *The Organism*.

Goldstein emigrated to the USA in 1935 and became a citizen of the US in 1940. His wife Eva Rothmann was the daughter of Berlin neuroanatomist Max Rothmann.