

Govt. College for Girls, Ludhiana
Department of Psychology

BA I Semester 1

UNIT-I

**Introduction to Psychology and
Historical Background**

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What is Psychology?

- The term psychology comes from the Greek roots *psyche* meaning **soul** and *logos* meaning **science or study**
- So the term psychology literally means the study or science of **SOUL**



What is Psychology?

- Psychology is the science of human behavior and mental processes.
- Behavior is anything we do
 - overt actions and reactions
- Mental processes are our internal experiences
 - thoughts, feelings, memories...



Why study Psychology?

- Psychology helps us scientifically evaluate common beliefs and misconceptions about behavior and mental processes.



Definitions of Psychology

- **1. Psychology as a Science of Soul**

The term psychology is derived from two Greek words 'Psyche' and 'Logos', which mean 'soul' and 'science' respectively. So literally psychology means the **'science of soul'**.

Psychology as a Science of Soul

- In Greek mythology, the soul was personified by **Psyche**, a young woman who was loved by **Eros** (also called **Cupid**), the God of love who married Psyche but visited her only at night and insisted that she should never see his face. One night Psyche lit an oil lamp while Eros was asleep, she fell in love with him at first sight, and was so startled by his beauty that she spilt a drop of hot oil on his shoulders and awakened him, where upon Eros immediately abandoned her.

Psychology as a Science of Soul

- To win him back, **Psyche** had to endure many trials and dangers, and eventually she was transformed into a Goddess and joined him in heavenly bliss. Psyche is often depicted in works of art with butterfly wings or as a butterfly, because she symbolizes the human soul, suffering hardship and struggle in life but re-emerging after death in a new and better existence, like a caterpillar reborn as a butterfly.)

Psychology as a Science of Soul

- But this is not the acceptable definition of psychology because of the following reasons:
 - i) Soul is something which is mystical and speculative. It has no physical existence. It can neither be seen nor touched. It is not open to observation and experimentation.
 - ii) This definition makes psychology more of religion than science because soul is more of a theological concept.

Since the above mentioned definition of psychology is unscientific and hence it is discarded.

Psyche



Psychology as a science of mind

- Thereafter, instead of soul, some psychologists defined psychology as the **science of mind**. The term mind was considered better and it was substituted for the term soul.
- But again this was not the acceptable definition of psychology because mind as an object does not exist, what exist is only the brain.
- Moreover, we can know our own mind and not the mind of others. Like soul, the concept of mind too, is vague; it is also beyond the reach of scientific investigation.
- **So this definition was also rejected.**

Psychology as a science of consciousness

- Thereafter some psychologists like **Wilhelm Wundt** defined psychology as the **science of consciousness**.
- Consciousness refers to the present experiences of man- his thoughts, feelings and memories etc.
- But again this was not considered as an adequate definition of psychology because according to **Sigmund Freud**, consciousness forms a very negligible portion (only $1/10^{\text{th}}$) of our mind, the important segments of mind being sub-consciousness and unconsciousness which occupy $9/10^{\text{th}}$ of our mind.
- **So this definition was also rejected.**

Psychology as a science of behaviour

- To make psychology a positive science it was essential to do away with the concepts such as mind, soul or consciousness which are only at the level of assumptions.
- So later on psychology was defined as science of behaviour.
- Behaviour is anything a person or animal does that can be observed in some way.
- Behaviour unlike mind or thoughts or feelings can be observed, recorded and studied.
- Behaviour is an avenue through which internal mental events can also be studied.

Psychology as a science of behaviour

- In the context of the definition of psychology, it is often said that:
“First psychology lost its soul; then it lost its mind; then it lost its consciousness; it still has a behaviour of a kind” (Woodworth).

Psychology as a science of behaviour

- Thus most often Psychology has been defined as the scientific study of the behaviour of individuals and their mental processes.
- The term scientific means that psychological conclusions or facts be based on evidence collected according to the principles of the scientific method.
- Behaviour includes all of our outward or overt actions, such as talking, facial expressions, and movement.
- Mental processes refer to all the internal, covert activity of our minds, such as thinking, feeling, and remembering.

Historical Background of Psychology

- “Psychology has a long past, but only a short history”, wrote one of the first experimental psychologists, **Hermann Ebbinghaus** (1908-1973).
- The science of psychology is a relatively new one but there is nothing new about man’s search for explanations of human behaviour.
- His attempts to understand himself and others and the world around him have a long and interesting history.

Historical Background of Psychology

- Until the nineteenth century psychology was a part of philosophy.
- It emerged as a branch of Greek philosophical thought.
- Ancient Greeks like modern psychologists wanted to know how people take in information through their senses, use information to solve problems, become motivated to act in a particular way, and undergo emotional or mood changes.
- But unlike modern psychologists, most of these scholars did not rely on empirical evidence.

Historical Background of Psychology

- **Aristotle**, who lived from 384-322 B.C., wrote about the relationship of the soul to the body and his teacher **Plato** (427-347 B.C.) felt that the soul could exist separately from the body, a view that has become known as '**Dualism**'.
- **Rene Descartes**, a 17th century French philosopher and mathematician, agreed with Plato and believed that pineal gland (a small organ located at the base of the brain) was the seat of the human soul.
- Another very significant point put forward by Descartes regarding the nature of human mind was his **Theory of Nativism or theory of innate ideas**. He undermined the role of learning in human behaviour.

Historical Background of Psychology

- Then came the long tradition of **British Empiricism** also called **British Associationism**.
- **John Locke (1632-1704)**, the empiricist while refuting Descartes stated that all contents of mind come from experience. The infants' mind, he said, is just like a piece of white paper on which experience writes (**'Tabula Rasa'** view of mind).
- He suggested **'association'** as the basic principle of learning.

Historical Background of Psychology

- At the time when physiology was growing into a science, some of the physiologists became interested in what were really psychological problems.
- **Johannes Muller (1801-1858), Hermann von Helmholtz, Max Weber and Gustav Fechner** made important contribution to the development of psychology as a science.

The Birth of Modern psychology

- Psychology as a formal science was born in the year **1879**, when **Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920)** established the first psychological laboratory at **Leipzig University in Germany**.
- Thus Wundt took the first step to bring objectivity and measurement to the concept of psychology and thus making psychology a science.
- Wundt defined psychology as the **study of consciousness** and his method of study was called **introspection**.

Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920)

Father of Psychology



Wilhelm Wundt established the first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig. Here he is shown (third from left) in the laboratory with his associates.

The Birth of Modern psychology

- Introspection involved the careful observation and analysis by specially trained people of their own mental experience under controlled conditions.
- Wundt attempted to analyze the conscious experience in terms of elements such as **sensations, images, and feelings** just matter is broken down into atoms.

The Birth of Modern psychology

- But Wundt's ideas were criticized, firstly because his definition of psychology as the science of consciousness was not acceptable to many and secondly he studied only simple sensory processes.
- And finally his method **introspection** was not an objective method of study.

Two Early Schools of Psychology: Structuralism and Functionalism

- Wundt's ideas were popularized in America in somewhat modified form by one of his students, **E.B. Titchener**.
- **Titchener's** brand of psychology became known as **Structuralism**.
- The goal of the structuralists was to find the units, or elements which make up the **structure of the mind** much as a chemist might analyze water into hydrogen and oxygen atoms.



Two Early Schools of Psychology: Structuralism and Functionalism

- The main method used by the structuralists to discover these elementary units of mind was **introspection**.
- But structuralism soon went the way of the dinosaurs. Many criticized its method introspection being too subjective.

Two Early Schools of Psychology: Structuralism and Functionalism

- Another early school of psychology was called **Functionalism**.
- One of its leaders was **William James (1842-1910)** who was an American philosopher and psychologist.
- Unlike Wundt and Titchener, **James** believed that trying to study consciousness was trying to study the wind. Instead, he wanted to know how an organism's behaviour helps it adapt to its environment.

Two Early Schools of Psychology: Structuralism and Functionalism

- In brief, as the name of the school implies, these early psychologists studied the functions of mind and behaviour.
- The functionalists were inspired in part by the evolutionary theories of British naturalist **Charles Darwin (1809-1882)**.

Gestalt Psychology: The Whole is greater than the sum of its parts

- German psychologist **Max Wertheimer (1880-1943)**, like William James also objected to the structuralist point of view and along with his colleagues **Kurt Koffka (1886-1943)** and **Wolfgang Kohler (1887-1967)** said that mind is not made up of simple elements rather it should be thought of as resulting from the whole pattern of sensory activities and the relationship and organization within this pattern.

Gestalt Psychology: The Whole is greater than the sum of its parts

- In other words, according to Gestalt psychologists, the mind is best understood in terms of the ways elements are organized as a whole, entire event. Hence the famous quote, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts”.

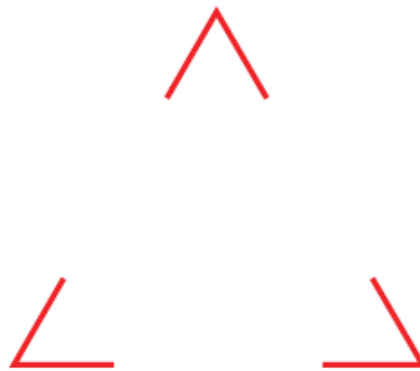


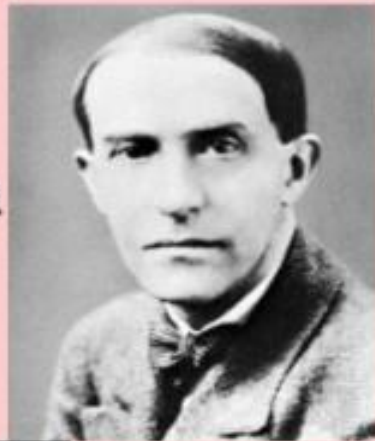
Figure 1.4 A Gestalt Image. When we look at the three angles of an equilateral triangle, we see a single large triangle rather than three small angles.

Gestalt Psychology: The Whole is greater than the sum of its parts

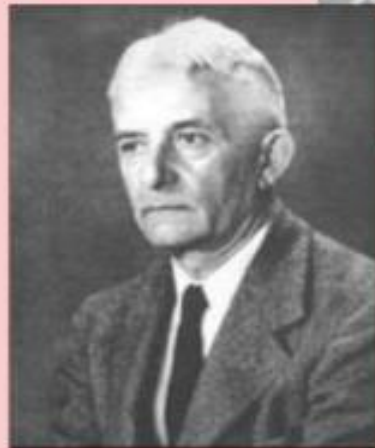
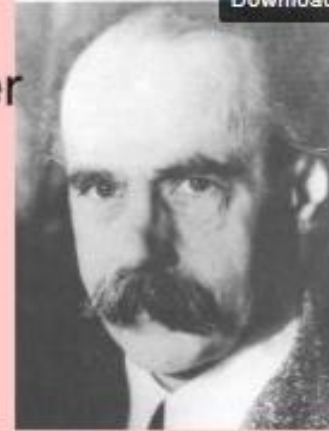
GESTALT PSYCHOLOGISTS

Download

Kurt Koffka



Max Wertheimer



Wolfgang Köhler



Kurt Lewin

Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis

- This school of thought was founded by **Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)**.
- Freud was a **neurologist** by training. As he listened to his patients's reports of depression, nervousness, paralysis and obsessive habits, he became convinced that many of their symptoms did not have bodily causes but mental ones.
- Freud developed a theory of behaviour and mind which said that much of what we do and think results from unconscious urges, or drives, which seek expression in behaviour and thoughts.



Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis

- Both his theory and his methods of treating people with emotional problems became known as **psychoanalysis**.
- Freud argued that our most important impulses and motives are sexual and aggressive in nature.
- Because these primitive urges are threatening, we push them out of consciousness, deep into our **unconscious mind**. We are not aware of these impulses and motives.
- Unconscious thoughts find expression in **dreams, slips of the tongue or pen, apparent accidents, and even in jokes**.

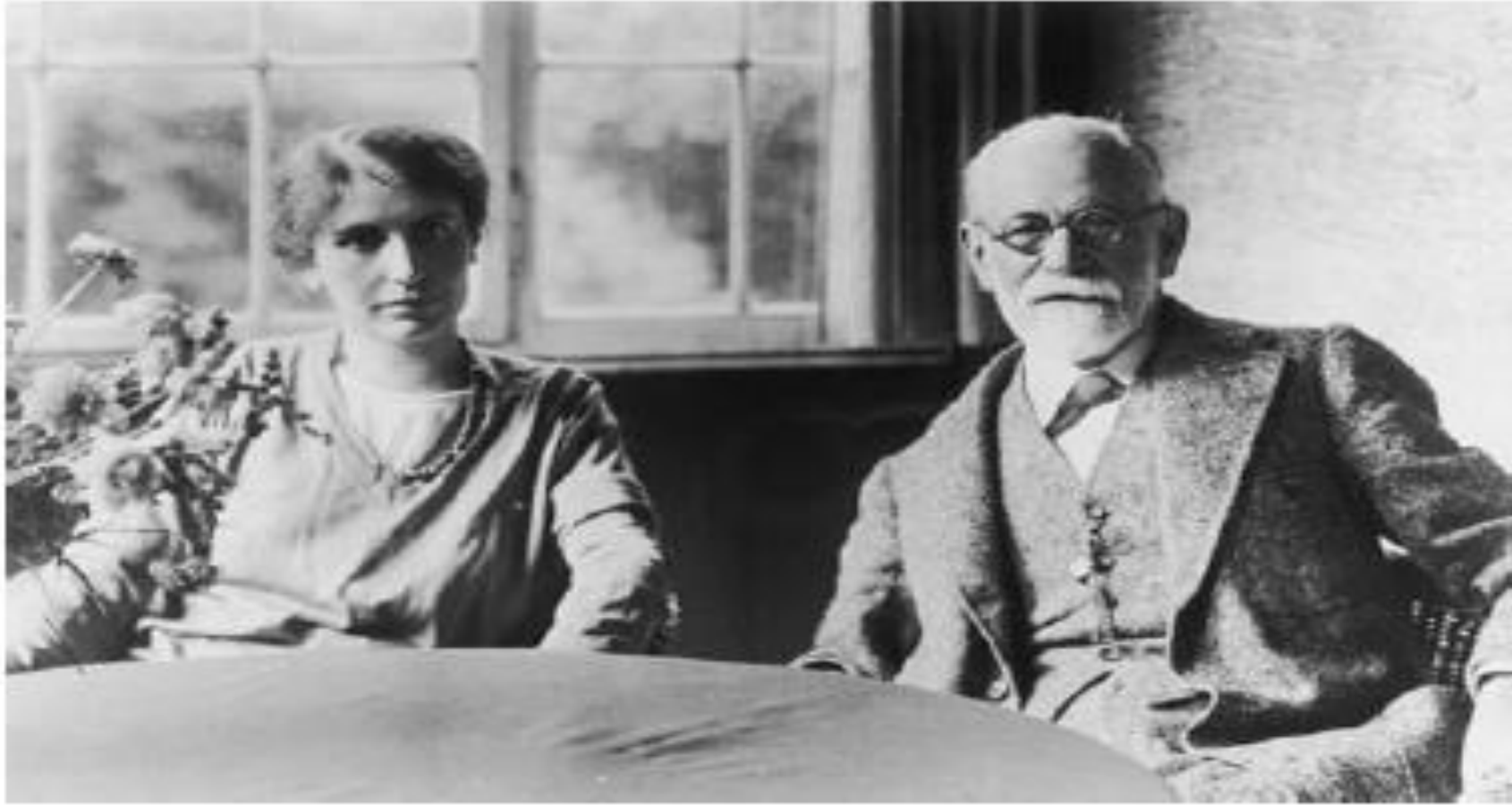


Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis

- Virtually all behaviour is meaningful, no matter how trivial (less important) it may seem.
- While a behaviourist is concerned with observable acts, a psychoanalyst tries to dig below the surface of a person's behaviour to uncover the roots of personality.
- In fact, the psychoanalyst is an **archeologist of the mind.**



Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalysis



Sigmund Freud with his daughter Anna.

Freud's Structural or Iceberg Model of Mind

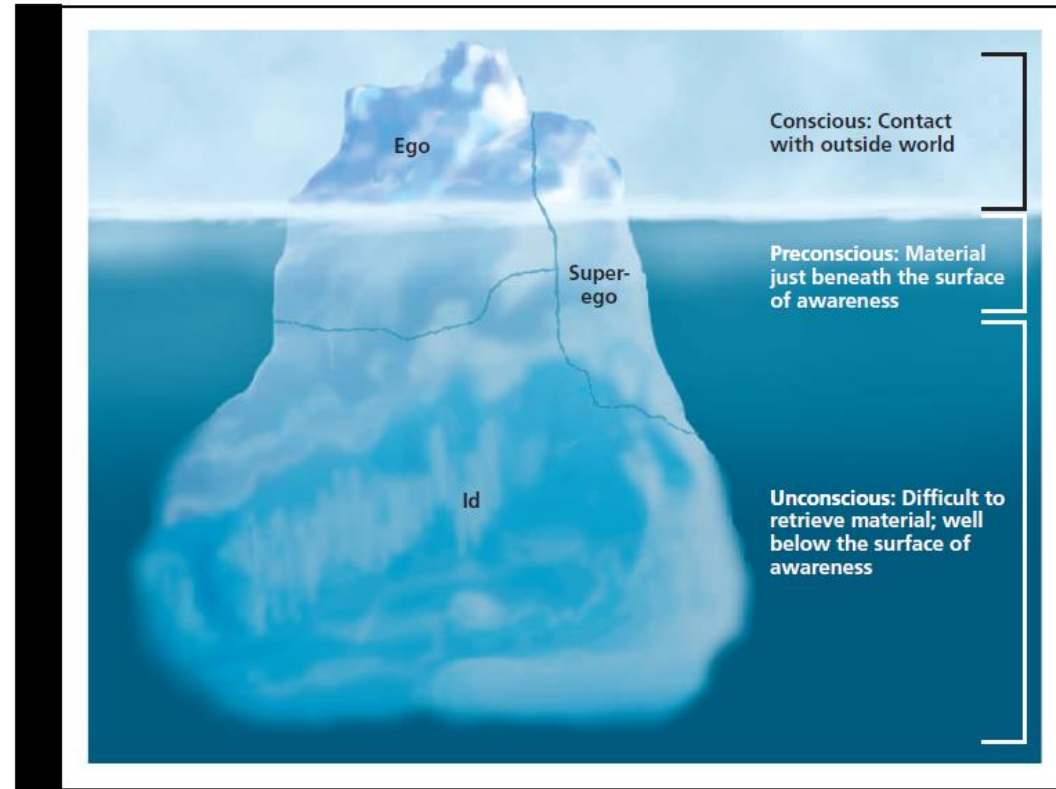


Figure 13.1 Freud's Conception of the Personality

This iceberg represents the three levels of the mind. The part of the iceberg visible above the surface is the conscious mind. Just below the surface is the preconscious mind, everything that is not yet part of the conscious mind. Hidden deep below the surface is the unconscious mind, feelings, memories, thoughts, and urges that cannot be easily brought into consciousness. While two of the three parts of the personality (ego and superego) exist at all three levels of awareness, the id is completely in the unconscious mind.

John B. Watson and Behaviourism

- **John b. Watson (1879-1958)** rejected mind and consciousness as the subject matter of psychology because they were beyond the reach of objective observation and measurement and insisted that psychology be restricted to the study of behaviour- the observable activities of people and animals.
- Behaviourism's insistence on precision and objectivity has done much to make psychology a science.

John B. Watson and Behaviourism

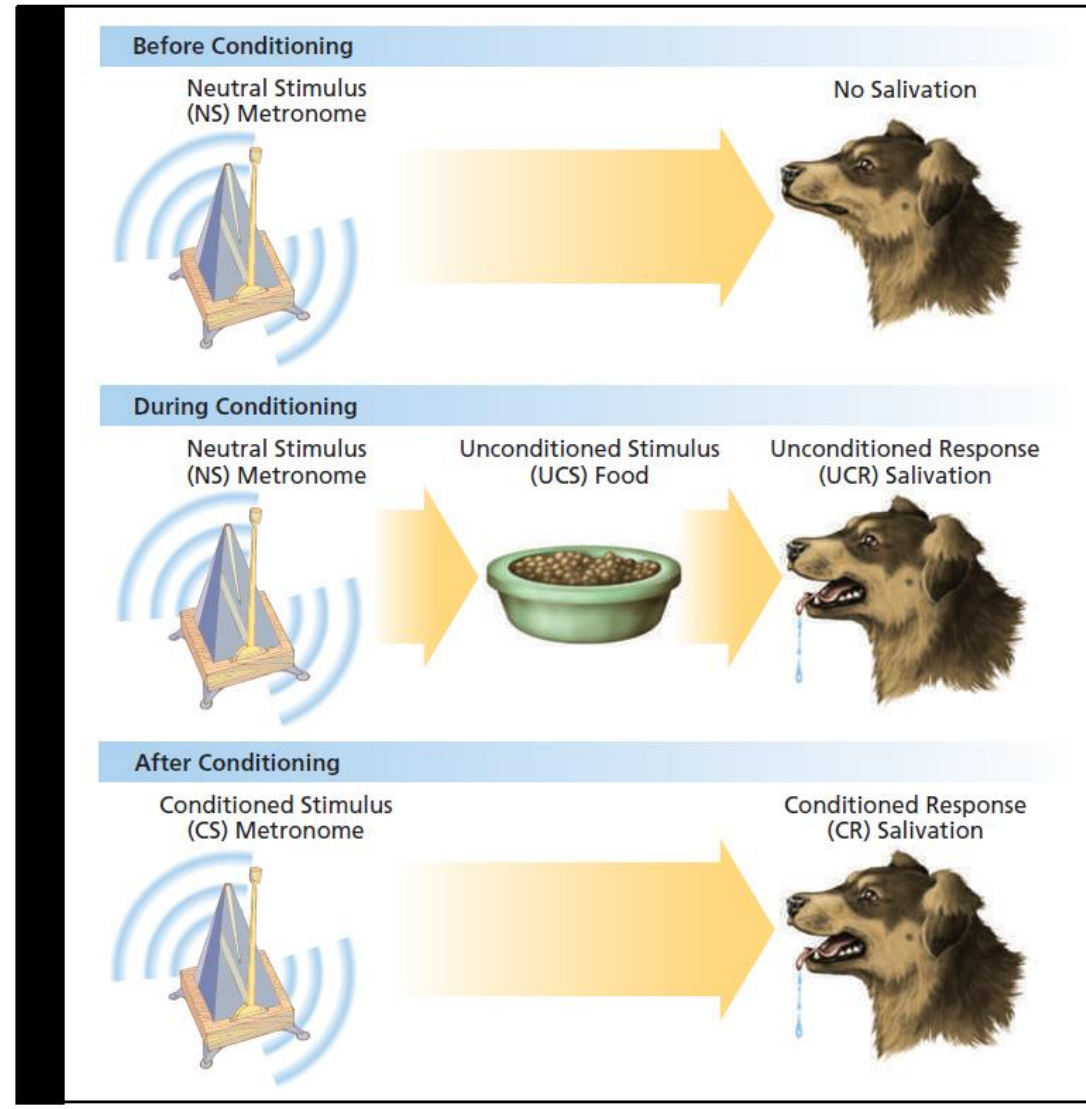
- Three other important characteristics of **Behaviourism** are:
 1. Its emphasis on **conditioned response** (a learned response to a stimulus) as the elements, or building blocks of behaviour. Watson argued that complex human and animal behaviour is made up almost entirely of conditioned responses.
 2. It denied the existence of inborn or innate behavioural tendencies.
 3. Its focus on **animal behaviour**. Watson believed that we can learn much about our own behaviour from the study of what animals do.

Ivan Pavlov's Experiment on Dog



Dr. Ivan Pavlov and students working in his laboratory. Pavlov, a Russian physiologist, was the first to study and write about the basic principles of classical conditioning.

Ivan Pavlov's Experiment on Dog



B.F. Skinner's Experiment on Rat



Figure 5.7 A Typical Skinner Box

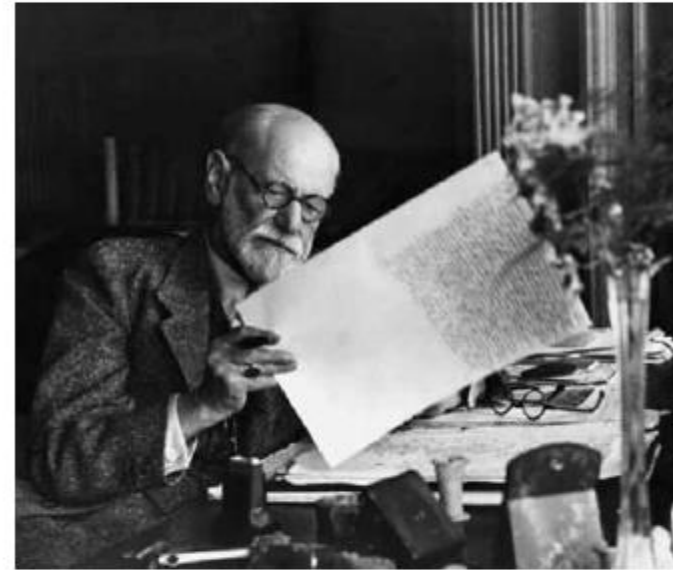
This rat is learning to press the bar in the wall of the cage in order to get food (delivered a

William James, John B. Watson and Sigmund Freud

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William James, John B. Watson, and Sigmund Freud were key figures in the early history of psychology. James developed the approach known as functionalism, Watson was the founder of behaviorism, and Freud originated the theory and method of psychoanalysis.

Humanistic Psychology

- **Abraham Maslow** (1908-1970), along with **Carl Rogers** and other theorists developed an approach called **humanistic psychology or Humanism**.
- Humanistic viewpoint is sometimes referred to as the “**third force**” in psychology after psychoanalysis and behaviourism. Unlike either psychoanalysts or behaviourists, humanists emphasize **free will**.



Humanistic Psychology

- Our behaviour, they say, is not completely determined by either the immediate environment

(Behaviourism) or our past experiences (Psychoanalysis); we are able to make choices and control our own destinies.

For humanists, psychology's primary mission is to help people express themselves creatively, understand themselves, and achieve their full potential.



Humanistic Psychology



Carl Rogers believed that individuals have an innate tendency to move toward growth, maturity, and positive change. He referred to this as the actualizing tendency.

Conclusion

- The above mentioned viewpoints or schools of psychology have become a part of the general stream of psychology.
- Nowadays psychologists have a rich variety of viewpoints to choose from for describing and understanding behaviour.

