

History of Psychology

Test on Chapters 1, 2 and 3

1. What are the academic disciplines that psychology was built upon?

Psychology was built upon the ancient discipline of philosophy. Early philosophers closely examined humanity in both general and specific ways. Eventually a shift occurred when the methodologies of other fields of science were applied to philosophy causing rise to further questions and reasonings. This led to formal investigations which gave birth to the field of psychology as a separate discipline.

2. Define the term *Zeitgeist* and name 3 factors that are a part of it?

Zeitgeist is a moment in time when the tone of a society, both civilizing and creative, can be identified. Three distinct factors of a Zeitgeist are political, social and economic components of a culture. These three elements helped to influence the field of psychology as a social science.

3. Define *determinism* and *empiricism*

Determinism is the idea that each present and future act is caused by a previous occurrence which means future outcomes can be anticipated based on the past as the universe is marked by order and regularity. Empiricism is defined as the method by which all learning is acquired, through experience and the interpretation of sensations.

4. What are the differences between John Locke and Rene Descartes in terms of how they believed humans gained knowledge?

John Locke believed that humans gained knowledge by coming into this world as a blank slate and after experiences reflect upon them leading to erudition. Descartes believed that humans do have some innate knowledge, but can only know with all certainty by observing nature, studying experiences and then be proven scientifically.

5. Define the *Spirit of Mechanism* and explain why it is important?

The “Spirit Of Mechanism” was the belief that everything in the universe operated like a machine, such as a clock. This was important because during the 1800s scientists presumed that all of nature and humankind could be understood by simply studying the laws of chemistry and physics.

6. What was unique about the way that James Mill viewed the human mind and what was his goal?

James Mill viewed the human mind as a thing that is initially void and in need of external input. He affirmed that one ought always to study and leave room for no distractions in order to be knowledgeable and to increase learning so as to be useful to society.

7. What was the significance of David Kinnebrook's mistake?

David Kinnebrook was the assistant to Rev. Nevil Maskelyne, a royal astronomer in the 1700s. Kinnebrook was accused of consistently making errors in his astronomical measurements and was subsequently fired. It was later discovered by Wilhelm Wundt that a scientist's calculation would vary depending on whether his focus was initially on the particular star he was observing or the grid lines used to measure the star. His mistake revealed that an individual can only perform one mental activity at any given moment.

8. Why were the early developments in physiology important to the field of psychology?

The early developments in physiology were very important to the field of psychology as scientists became more focused on the brain. As they determined to map the various regions, they unearthed the functions of various sections of the mind and its control on the actions of humans. There were three specific ways in which this was ascertained: extirpation, electrical stimulation and by the clinical method.

9. What was extirpation and of what value was it to psychology at that time?

Extirpation was the method researchers would use on a laboratory animal to devastate or discard the area of the brain being studied. This enabled them to determine which part of the brain was responsible for certain functions.

10. Why did so many of the early developments in psychology happen in Germany?

Many of the early developments in psychology took place in Germany because many other European countries did not consider the study of biology a science, only chemistry and physics. In particular, England and France did not regard the topic of the brain as a study which might be quantified. Conversely, German scientists readily utilized all the tools of science to study a myriad of human mental conditions.

11. What was Herman Helmholtz's major contribution to psychology?

In the field of psychology, Helmholtz was instrumental in the development of the experimental approach to topics which would later become relevant in the field of psychology. Specifically, his interest in nerve impulses which was considered revolutionary at the time, is now established as scientific law. He theorized and later backed with empirical evidence that impulses between nerve and muscle were not instantaneous as was the popular belief in his day. This later led to the understanding that thoughts also had intervals between the mind and the actual motion. His goal was to have his research solve real world problems.

12. What is the two-point threshold?

Ernst Weber, a German anatomy and physiology professor from the 1880s, is credited with the concept of “two-point threshold.” This occurs when two specific stimuli may be identified by a test subject in a laboratory setting.

13. What is the just noticeable difference?

The “just noticeable difference” was discovered when a difference can be detected by two separate weighted stimuli by a test subject in a lab.

14. What two ways did Fechner propose for measuring sensation?

Gustav Fechner, a philosopher among other things, postulated in his paper on psychophysics that both the mind and body are inextricably connected and are dependent on each other. He firmly believed that sensations were experienced in response to stimuli and that both were governed by certain principles which could be discovered and quantified in a scientific manner.

15. According to Fechner, what does a change in sensation depend on?

According to Fechner, sensations are experienced in response to stimuli and are governed by specific principles which could be discovered and quantified in a scientific manner. He concluded that the mind and body are connected and are dependent on each other.