

## Approaches to psychology

### Behaviourist and cognitive approaches

BIOLOGISTS AND PSYCHOLOGISTS have approached the study of animal behaviour from different perspectives. These differences can be attributed in part to differences in the nature of the questions they ask. The goal of biologists--typically, zoologists and behavioural ecologists--is to understand how animal behaviour contributes to survival and reproductive success. The behaviours of primary interest have been those that are genetically predisposed or those that are typical of the species. One would expect the behaviour of different species to have varied as they evolved in different environments and under different evolutionary pressures. Thus, the goal of research would be to look for patterns or correlations between environmental pressures and evolved behaviour.

Psychologists, on the other hand, have tended to approach the study of animal behaviour primarily from the perspective of the flexibility of the individual animal. The greater part of naturally occurring behaviour in most animals, especially for those that live in relatively predictable environments, appears to be predisposed (see Boice, 1973), and it is released by external events (e.g., hormones that are produced in response to seasonal variations in sunlight or temperature). But animals have also evolved to adjust their behaviour to environmental variability by reacting to behavioural consequences, and it is this behavioural plasticity that is of primary interest to psychologists. The focus of psychologists on behavioural plasticity can be traced to the remarkable flexibility of human behaviour and the attempt to model that behaviour in other organisms. However, psychologists differ among themselves in how best to model flexible behaviour.

### Psychoanalytic approach

#### Humanistic approach

Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emphasizes the study of the whole person. Humanistic psychologists look at human behaviour not only through the eyes of the observer, but through the eyes of the person doing the behaving. Humanistic psychologists believe that an individual's behaviour is connected to his inner feelings and self-image.

Unlike the behaviourists, humanistic psychologists believe that humans aren't solely the product of their environment. Rather humanistic psychologists study human meanings, understandings, and experiences involved in growing, teaching, and learning. They emphasize characteristics that are shared by all human beings such as love, grief, caring, and self-worth.

Humanistic psychologists study how people are influenced by their self-perceptions and the personal meanings attached to their experiences. Humanistic psychologists are not primarily concerned with instinctual drives, responses to external stimuli, or past experiences. Rather, they consider conscious choices, responses to internal needs, and current circumstances to be important in shaping human behaviour.

### **Summary:**

Humanistic psychologists believe that:

- An individual's behaviour is primarily determined by his perception of the world around him.
- Individuals are not solely the product of their environment.
- Individuals are internally directed and motivated to fulfil their human potential.