

Introduction to Psychology

The history of psychology dates back to ancient times, for instance, in ~400BC Hippocrates looked at the link between body and personality, his theory being that body type determined the personality. In later years Aristotle (~350BC) focused on the relationship between the body and the soul, he thought that the soul gave life to the body.

Although the psychology we know today didn't really start to emerge until 1879, work such as Darwin's "The Origin of Species" theory of evolution through natural selection (1859) has had great influence on the world, so has Broca who discovered the first link between human functions and different parts of the brain (1861), Wernicke's theories (1874) also had similarities to Broca's findings. All of these theories contributed to what became known as the **Physiological Approach**, which is one of five approaches used today. The Physiological Approach focuses on the relationship between biological make up and our behaviour. In some ways you could say that the theories suggest behaviour is governed by the brain's ability to deal with different experiences.

As mentioned, the year 1879 basically marks the start of modern day psychology, when Wilhelm Wundt founded the first experimental psychology laboratory in Leipzig, Germany, in an attempt to study "the mind". The theories of Wundt were questioned and many new and different theories emerged soon after. Other theories formed what we know as the **Behaviourist Approach**. The Behaviourist Approach was influenced by the work of Ivan Pavlov (1906) although launched by J B Watson (1913). B F Skinner also contributed to the theory of this approach in later years with his work on "Operant Conditioning" (1938). This approach takes into consideration a person's environment and experiences, the theory being that our mind is a blank slate when we are born and eventualities throughout life shape our personalities. Behaviourist Psychologists look at how we react to different environmental factors.

Unlike the behaviourists, Rogers, introduced "Client Centred Therapy" (1951), his theories were the foundations of the **Humanistic Approach**, these theories imply that humans are not solely the product of their environment, and that people have the ability to determine their own destiny, and that an individual's behaviour is connected to his/her inner feelings and self-image.

Miller, Chomsky, Newall, Simon, Bruner, and Broadbent introduced the **Cognitive Approach** in 1956. This suggests that internal mental processes, such as memory, problem solving, language and perception are processed by the brain and that the results of this process affects a person's behaviour, for instance problem solving; a person can use his/her senses to establish what the problem is, the brain "processes" that information and gives thought on how to solve the problem, similar to how a computer works. This theory is quite different to the theories of Sigmund Freud (1900), whose work is probably the most influential in modern day psychology. He established the **Psychodynamic Approach**.

Freud used hypnosis and the study of dreams to develop his theories. They imply that thoughts and feelings affect a person's behaviour, without a person

really knowing. This is called "the Unconscious".

Freud believed that if it were possible to identify "unconscious" thoughts and feelings, and make a person aware of them, then it would be easier to offer help through therapy.