

In modern day terms Psychology is the science that deals with mental process and behaviour. Modern Psychology is divided into several sub-disciplines, each based on differing models of behaviour and mental process. Perhaps the most significant of approaches are the biological, behavioural and psychodynamic.

Biology is defined as the study of life (from the Greek word *bios* meaning “life”, and *logos* meaning “study”). The biological approach attempts to relate behaviour to the workings and genetic makeup of the body. Greek physician Galen suggested that personality and temperament may be linked to the levels of body fluid such as blood and bile. It is assumed by those that study this approach that all human psychological behaviour has a biological cause, since it is the mind that resides within the brain, genetically modifying human behaviour with time to suit it’s environment.

Laboratory experimentation and observation of the brain, nervous system, endocrine system, neurochemistry and genes has contributed to an understanding of gender development, aggression, abnormality, memory, motivation and awareness. Biopsychology’s input has been applied mainly to therapy and localisation of function.

The very scientific biological approach lends itself to the nurture debate with effective practical applications such as the treatment of mental disorder however could be considered over simplistic and to encourage reductionism thus not adequately explaining how mind and body interact.

Empiricism, a philosophy that suggests knowledge comes via the senses from the environment, is a strong underlying factor in the behavioural approach; a movement started by John Watson in 1913 drawing on earlier classical and operant conditioning theories.

The behaviourist’s assumed that after birth the majority of observable behaviour is learned from the environment surrounding us, and that we are in essence made up of all our previous learning experiences.

Beliefs of universal learning law, convenience and quantitative difference, led the behaviourist’s to adopt very strict animal laboratory testing which would later go on to explain aspects of language acquisition, moral development, attraction and abnormality, aggression, prejudice, gender role identity etc. Practical applications

have included programmed learning and the treatment of those suffering behavioural disturbances. Animal training has benefited from operant conditioning and manipulation of behaviour within society suggested.

The very scientific behaviourist approach lends itself to the nurture debate, producing many effective practical applications using only a few simple principals. This however suffered criticism. There is a biologically qualitative difference between humans and animals; experiments demonstrated artificial not natural learning and results were bias due to evolution.

The term “psychodynamic” refers to any explanation that emphasises internal process of change and development. A psychodynamic approach is one that explains the dynamics of behaviour. The forces that motivate personality, development and adult behaviour were summarized in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory.

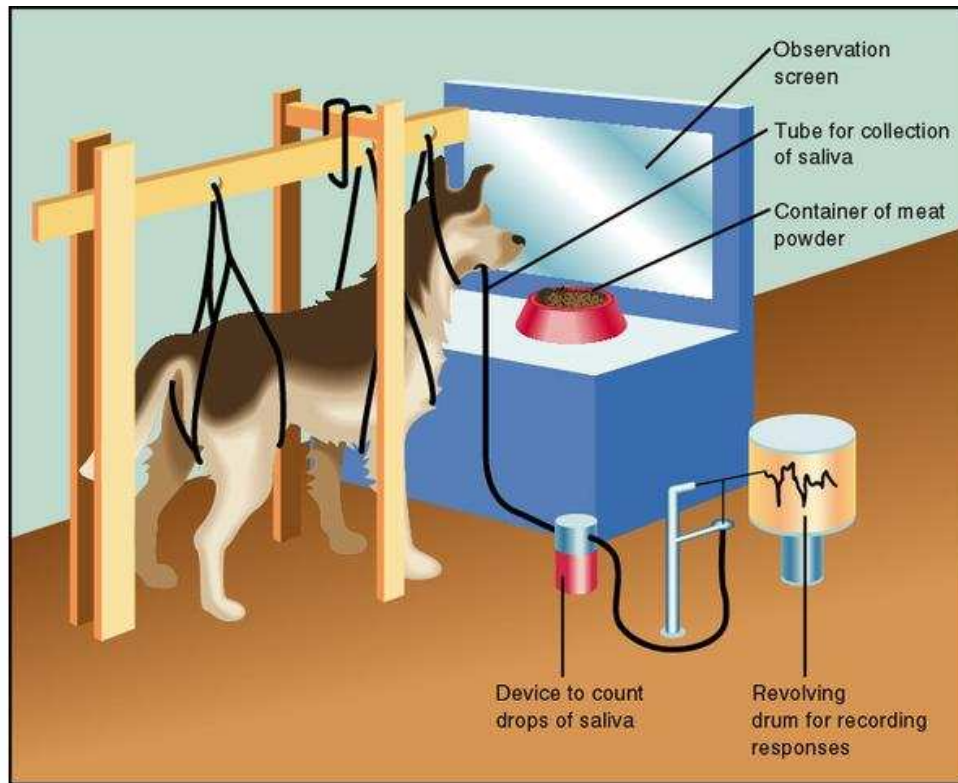
Key assumptions suggest that early experience interacts with innate drives, unconscious forces motivate much of our behaviour, and personality structures (id, ego and superego) and stages of development (oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital) are related to personality dynamics.

The methodology used within the psychodynamic approach focuses on observation in everyday human life and the collection of rich and detailed information from individuals.

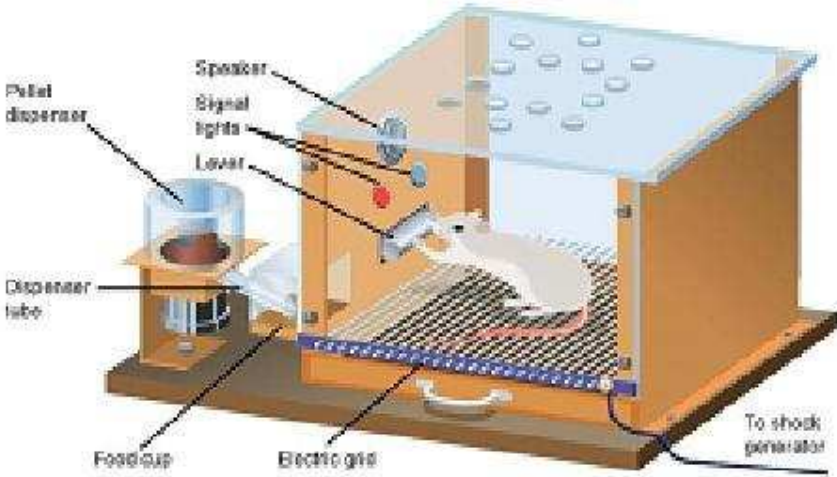
Freud’s theory was for its time revolutionary but his ideas have endured, helping psychology to be seen as a science. He put together the first systematic theory of personality but failed to indicate in detail how behaviour is determined. Certain testable parts of Freud’s theory have been found to be wrong.

The examination of the biological, behavioural and psychodynamic approach skim barely the tip of the Psychological iceberg, it is however evident that differing models of behaviour and mental process make up several sub-disciplines within the vast science.

A demonstration of classical conditioning used by Pavlov in his study of dogs.



A demonstration of operant conditioning used by Skinner in his study of positive reinforcement, partial reinforcement and immediate reinforcement.



Bibliography

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Three Approaches To Psychology

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