

# History and origin of psychology theories



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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the history of psychology, the pioneering theorists in psychology and philosophy and their relevant theories to date. Scholars and clinicians should familiarize themselves with psychology's history and the historians to appropriately appreciate where its ideas and contents derive. When studying its innovators, we are able to observe where the more modern philosophers develop their ideas from. Viewing how theories cultivate and change over time only propels psychology and allows for future theorists to be able to propose their notions as well (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

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The History of Psychology:

Origin of Theories

Understanding the history of psychology allows for a greater understanding of the modern psychology we learn and practice. There is a sophistication to knowing the historical orientation of psychology in order to be considered an expert in one's own right. An individual may develop a distorted perspective of the present due to not having distinguished the old facts with new facts. One studying psychology may be unable evaluate the importance of modern movements and methodologies within the field without knowing its origins. Considering the historical perspective of ideas permits students, researchers

and learner to more abundantly appreciate contemporary psychology (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

The reawakening of ideas after they have been originally discovered has been apparent in the history of science. For instance, various concepts were proposed throughout the history of psychology such as the impressions of evolution, unconscious motivations, and conditioned responses. Hergenhahn and Henley (2013) remind us how overtime, scientific ideas were propositioned, rejected, and even re-proposed before being appreciated and allowed to be evaluated by the critics. Furthermore, latent scientific ideas can also be uncovered while studying the history of psychology as well a historic idea that has not reached the surface. Many of these prolific ideas are waiting to reemerge, within the modern world and to be acknowledged in more receptive circumstances.

#### Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle

Socrates studied examples of things in order to better understand general concepts. Doing so is similar to a modern day psychologist in which we study individuals, behaviors, and interactions to make more complex deductions. In order to know something, one must understand its essence, according to Socrates. Beyond knowing what is, one must know why it is - the essence of things. Obtaining knowledge is the ultimate goal of life and essence represents knowledge. The relationship between knowledge and morality was harmonious to Socrates, depicting the inner struggles within people. His idea behind the meaning of being human and what struggles arises with

human existence, paved the way for theories of psychology such as existentialism (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

Plato's theory of the three-part soul commenced the illustration of human conflict. It is quite evident where Freud derived his theory of the sex and death drive, as Plato integrated components of the soul with the rational element. An essential part of human life is meeting the needs of the body's appetite where hunger, thirst, and sex drives us every day. What also makes up human nature with these drives are emotional states. When the suppression of the bodily needs is made, a person can obtain true knowledge by aligning their focus on introspection. The rational element of the soul requires a large amount of energy to subdue these forces. When it benefits us, this component then inhibits these requests for immediate gratification. Freeing the soul from the control of the flesh as one is not governed by irrational emotions or impulsivities, but long term goals and moral (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

Aristotle paved the way for empiricism, which marked the ascent of experimental science. He recognized using our senses to advance our knowledge with the use of rationalization. In order to obtain rational knowledge, one must use their senses, thus allowing for the active mind to attain such information.

Aristotle's theory of memory and recall advanced psychology as he preceded Plato's theory by emphasizing the involvement of sense perception. The experiences involved in memory and recall entail the evocation of what was once experienced and using mental vigor to search for what one has already

experienced. Aristotle's laws of association influenced mental association, as they were also to be known as the origin of learning theory (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

### Internal Locus of Control

Hergenhahn and Henley (2013) highlighted Augustine's copious writings, *The City of God*, exemplifying two worlds which man could choose from. A world of man where earthly distractions live or the city of God where religion is the concentration. The shift of locus of control of human behavior was contributory by Augustine, as he illustrated how humans have the free will to shift power from outside of the individual to inside. Personal responsibility becomes meaningful when a person can accept free will, as their choices decide if they feel good or bad about themselves. This is based on either being praised or blamed for their chosen behaviors. Through confession, people need not feel guilty forever for choosing world's delights over good, as they can be forgiven for disclosure of the sin.

Humans have the freedom to choose between the two worlds. Although God speaks through the soul of people, evil remains to exist as humans continue to choose its world. Internal senses postulate awareness of truth, moral right, error, and personal obligation which helps individuals appraise their experiences. Guilt manifests when one diverges from the internal sense either through acting it out or contemplating to do so. Such illustrates the control of behaviors from an internal source rather than external source. Augustine's theorized that in place of administered reinforcers or punishers

to control behaviors, personal feelings or integrity do so (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

### Mind-Body Interaction

Amongst the physical body, Descartes discovered of the abilities of conscious thought, freedom of choice, and rationality which lie within the nonphysical mind (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013). The dualist' discovery determined the nonmaterial mind held power over the physical body, " I think, therefore I am", which pervaded the body as a whole. Cartesian dualism pronounces the mind as a nonmaterial, nonphysical entity, as it does not function like the body, which occupies the physical principles of the world. The closeness of the mind and body is illustrated by how our cognitive experiences are enhanced by the sensations we feel which would expound how our physical sensations are felt. According to Descartes, humans would not be conceivable if not for the attachment of the mind and body.

Hergenhahn and Henley (2013) describe behavior psychology's greatest influence could be said to be due to the ideas of Descartes. Behavior psychology and stimulus-response can be understood by his mechanistic analysis of reflexive behavior. Modern empiricism and modern sensationalism propelled philosophy and psychology through Descartes' concepts of the mind-body interaction. Through his studies of the animal body and the human body, Descartes parturated physiological psychology and comparative psychology. Not only so, the study of the conscious mind was made possible by the phenomenologists' notions on the conflict between irrational and rational behaviors.

## Locke, Berkeley, and Hume

Locke proposed materials of reason and knowledge are founded from experience as it descends itself through internal operations of the mind or external sensible objects. We perceive each as well as reflect on the perceptions, provisioning our understanding and thinking processes. Sensation and reflection are where ideas derive as we are direction stimulated, through senses, or earlier sensory stimulation fragments are reflected. Locke believed perception, thinking, knowing and other operations of the mind can create ideas and can be rearranged, thus birthing new ideas. Sensory stimulation receives and stores ideas, as sensation is the birthplace of all ideas. When the ideas are endowed within the mind, mental operations then work to transform them through reflection. This discovery emphasized human interactions with the real world create ideas.

Secondary qualities, otherwise, perceptions, are everything that exists. Berkeley agreed with Locke on the notion of an external existence. Berkeley's religious influence grounded his belief of God creating the external reality through His perception. The permanence of what we know as external reality is because of God. We all perceive this as the same. Any such variance in this reality is simply God fluctuating "the laws of nature". To accurately perceive external reality, we perceive through sensations, though these ideas commence in God's mind. We continue to experience these ideas which share the resemblance of those in God's mind (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

To experience is to mentally experience while the careful observation of one's experiences related to each other and behaviors is to experiment. Hergenhahn and Henley (2013) assert uniting empirical philosophy with Newtonian science while creating a science of human nature was Hume's ambition. The philosopher's intention was to meticulously observe, followed by preparing careful generalizations from the observations made. Influencing what we know as a scientific experiment, Hume would make inductions by testing out hypotheses against experiences. Hume also agreed that experiences are derived from the mind. Internal and external events produce human perception as the physical reality is experienced by such. The physical world is unable to be directly known though it is existing in all rationale.

### Herbart's Philosophical and Psychological Theories

While accordingly to Herbart, psychology could never be an experimental science, mental elements could be mathematically regarded, hence as a science. The mind is a cohesive whole which could not be separated; thus, psychology would not be considered a science. The subject would need to be divided when studying or experimenting in experimentation. Herbart's ideas were perceived as sense impressions similar to empiricism. Ideas comprise of force and energy, theorizing psychic mechanisms, as ideas could attract or repel other ideas. Compatibility of ideas is what terms attraction between similar ideas. A creation of more complex ideas arises, while energy is used to resist those in contradiction. This process occurs in an attempt to avoid conflict, while ideas compete to manifest in consciousness. Today's structure of the mind is influenced by Herbart's notion that ideas are experienced



consciously, or they are simply not given conscious expression. Ideas that do not reach consciousness are not forgotten or abolished but could lie at the unconscious level (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

Hergenhahn and Henley (2013) elaborate on Herbart's theory of all ideas experienced desire to become clear and intense ideas are clear. Ideas vary in intensity and force. Those that are at the conscious level are "bright and clear". Dark and obscure ideas are unconscious. Ideas strive for self-preservation as intense and clear conscious expression, but they also come into conflict with dissimilar ideas whose ambition is also aimed towards conscious expression. The elements of the mind are at a constant battle to reach conscious expression, also known as the modern notion of resistance.

Existentialism and Romanticism Distinguishing themselves from the philosophies of the Enlightenment era, romanticism and existentialism sought to reveal that there was more to human nature than rational thoughts and ideas. That humans are comprised of emotions, instincts, intuitions, and the ability to choose one's own meaning in life. Romantic philosopher Rousseau said

theorized when studying the person in total, one can discover what humans are like (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013). Rousseau's contention was humans ought to be allowed to express their free will in order to reach their full potential. Comparably, existentialists considered the choices humans make in life revealed by subjective interpretations to be the greatest aspects of a person.

Similarly, existentialism accentuated a person's uniqueness, their freedom to make choices in life, while highlighting human existence. Each agreed when guiding one's conduct, one should attend their feelings and personal experiences to lead them. Self-preservation, a will to survive, accounts for most human behavior, which are also irrational behaviors. To satisfy this force, we must meet our basic needs, eating, sleeping, drinking, etc. Unsatisfied needs cause pain which in turn we work to replace with satisfaction. A continuous cycle occurs, of unmet needs necessitating to be satisfied and the momentary experience of pleasure lasting only until another unmet need arises. Schopenhauer continues by elaborating on human desires being irrational and ought to be suppressed. By means of poetry, art, music, and theatre, humans can submerge themselves in "not need-related" activities; therefore, relieving us from innate forces (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

Conversely, Nietzsche believed by gaining control over irrational impulses humans could live a healthier, inspired life. Individuals should not repress innate instincts, but they should be given expression. All instincts must be satisfied in order to fulfil the will to power. Human's desire of will to power is revealed by acting how one feels, not self-preservation. Primitive nature creates new experiences for humans which can expand a person's potential (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

### Fechner's Contributions to Psychology

The relationship between physical and psychology events marks the study of psychophysics. Fechner's creation of psychophysics was founded on

studying the relationship between stimuli and sensations. Fechner's theorized bodily and the mental aspects lie within the same fundamental reality. He revealed a systematic relationship could be demonstrated between the physical body and mental experiences. His insight involved a physical stimulus being systematically varied and the recordings of the changes of sensations experienced. Fechner's discovery marked the birth of psychophysics. Experimental psychology was propelled by Fechner's book *Elements of Psychophysics*. He successfully generated a mathematical formula, supporting his insight. In order for sensations to rise, physical stimulus must also rise at a greater magnitude. Such innovation also applied to human values, not merely stimuli, thus unifying psychology and science (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

Fechner's innovations demonstrated how one could experimentally study the mental events of others, furthering the scientific foundation of psychology. Various processes to explore the mind-body relationship were formed such as the methods of limits, the method of constant stimuli, and the method of adjustment. Each of these are commonly used today in numerical cognition, pharmacology, and public finance (Hergenhahn & Henley, 2013).

## References

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