

The personality traits
and specific
individuals
characteristics inborn



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Human is the most complicated living creature and it is not unfoundedly called a „ rational being“. The origins of human behaviour and development of individual for each traits and characteristics are extremely striking and inquiring topic to investigate. But the interest in developing this matter is not present in modern times distinctively. Researches concerning this area were present even in the antiquity. Aristotle developed a theory explaining the phenomenon of human development. He concluded that there are three factors present: physis which stands for human nature and individual as a biological organism, ethos, that is a habit or custom that is influenced by social life and logos which is understood as reason and person’s mind, which can work despite the customs and their nature if there is a statement that confirms the need of a change. The main statement of Aristotle’s theory was that you have to be born as a human being carrying appropriate features of body and soul, but some characteristics are not depended on birth because they can be altered through different habits. Due to the Greek philosopher, human is the only creature capable of being shaped by reason, because it is the only creature that owns one. But despite all of the dependencies and dominance of one criteria over another, all three factors need to be harmonized in order to obtain a satisfactory and correct end result, which is understood under proper characteristics.

2. modernisation of the Aristotle’s theory on human development

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3. defining personality and possible factors shaping it; introducing theories compared in the main body

– personality – in my opinion: a set of characteristic and individual for each creature features determining behaviour, it can be shaped by a number of various factors, beginning from genetics, going through nurture, social interactions, culture or education up to even social status. In my essay I will investigate different theories concerning the development of human behaviour and try to detect which one best describes this phenomenon., it

– There are different types of theories concerning the development of personality, for instance: psychodynamic theories (Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney) – focused on the unconcious, behavioral theories (B. F. Skinner, Albert Bandura) – analysing interactions between individuals and the environment.

d) – The discussion concerning whether the major significance on the human development should be assigned to nature or nurture is eternal and most probably will gain new followers of both of the opposing statements for many more years.

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II. MAIN BODY

1. inborn reflexes (in the context of social interactions)

a) inborn reflexes and brain plasticity

This is very obvious and natural for everyone that a newborn is “ automatically” capable of fulfilling certain tasks like sucking or handling the sygnalisation of various needs (for exaple by reaching something and

crying). But since certain inborn reflexes are present, is it possible that the infant is already “equipped” with a “ready” personality that has to be gradually developed later on?

- brain plasticity ?

b) “Can you hear me mother?” - a study by H. F. Harlow investigating love in infant monkeys

In this culture, it is commonly known and psychologically confirmed by, for instance John Bowlby (a British psychologist and psychiatrist, 1907-1990) in his attachment theory, that “the emotional experiences we have in our early years will have an important effect on our adult behaviour and experience”[1]and moreover, that “mothers are a crucial part of a child’s development and that many of the problems of later life can be tracked by inadequate mothering”[2]. Attachment is defined as “a strong emotional tie between two people”[3]and is very often related to defining behaviour of infants, who are characterized by feeling a very strong need of being close to an adult, most preferably parent. Harry Harlow and associates, wanting to reduce infant mortality in animals, conducted an experiment testing love in infant monkeys. The research started from separating monkeys from their mothers and social contact at birth, when set in the cage, animals “developed self-injurious compulsive patterns”[4]. When put together, experiment subjects were unable to engage in any social structure, and completely unable to mate. Later there were numerous experiments testing the “important factors in the development of affectional bonds and ‘normal’ social behaviour”[5]. When isolated monkeys demonstrated bonding to

nappy pads on the floor, a very similar to the one displayed by human infants and involving a favourite teddy bear, Harlow started investigating another aspect - "the importance of nursing and body contact in the development of attachment". They composed two surrogate mothers (referred to as 'models') - one was composed of 'bare wire frame with a wooden head and a crude face' and the other one was covered by 'terry cloth' and presented 'more monkey-like face'. Eight newborn monkeys were involved in this experiment, each in an individual cage and with equal access to both 'mothers'. Half of them received milk from one model, and the other half from the second one. When the amount of milk drunk by monkeys and weight gain, no differences were displayed. In the further stage of the experiment, monkeys were exposed to various stressful situations, and, irrespective of the 'feeding mother' assigned, each monkey sought security contacting the cloth model. This shows that the monkey infants displayed inborn reflexes, such as hunger, and were able to cope with that by obtaining food from their models assigned, but despite the mother chose for them, little monkeys preferred the frame covered with a pleasant and cozy material, since the interactions they engaged into could probably create the impression of protection and care[6]. This could probably be a result of their search need for physical contact providing them with the feeling of being safe and defended. The cloth models could make the impression of being covered with fur, like the infants themselves, which could probably make them easier to physically interact with creatures similar to them.

Later it was proven, that when monkeys were raised by the cloth mother for 5 months and then separated from each other for 18, which makes an

almost 4 times longer amount of time, they still showed the same level of attachment when reunited. It was also observed, that even if monkeys were raised by the cloth mother, but were not experiencing any social interactions with other individuals, they were incapable of forming any socially healthy relations in further life, while monkeys that were able to play with another 3 monkeys for an hour a day, displayed no difference in social behaviour from monkeys raised in the natural situation by their birth mothers. Those studies lead to a very interesting conclusion, that “ social contact, and not contact comfort, or even mothering” are the “ crucial ingredient for the healthy psychological development”[7]. Furthermore, “ scientists believe that early exposure to diverse environmental influences creates the unique neural architecture of each individual, in line with the demands of the environment”[8].

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2. inborn instincts and drives, psychodynamic theory

a) Sigmund Freud’s theory

Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939), one of the most famous and recognizable, but also controversial, figures in psychological and psychiatric history, was called “ the father of psychoanalysis”. Main idea of Freud’s psychoanalytical theory was that it should be obtained through a detailed interview of the psychopathological patient. He refers to the experience gathered during childhood concerning this period of being the most influential for further development, which very much relates to the attachment theory proposed by John Bowlby.

Freud developed three separate personality systems: id, ego and super-ego.

i) ID, EGO, SUPER-EGO

id: instincts, the primary system, contains the whole hereditary and inborn psychic „ equipment” (including the drives), it stays relates to the physiological processes which are the source of its energy, Freud called it “ the true mental reality” because it represents the inner world of subjective experiences; id cannot ‘ tolerate’ painful states of tension, it reduced the tension due to the ‘ pleasure rule’; it fights those bad feeling in two ways: using the inner reflexes or a primary process (wish-fulfillment process) which works throug imagining pleasure objects that reduce the bad tension.

[9]Freud also believed, that dreams are disguised fulfillments of unconcious wishes

ego, superego

ii) different development stages in Freud’s theory: the most important period for the development of personality is the time between birth and 5th year of age, he stated that when a child is 5 years old, itd personality is well shaped, “ child is the father of human”

identification

iii) psychosexual development phases:[10]

oral phase

anal phase

phallic phase

latency phase

genital phase

b) Karen Horney – criticism of Freud's theory, switching the focus from urges to culture

Horney aimed at eliminating the limitations of Freud's theories, she considered them too much focused on biological and mechanistic aspects and influenced by the mentality of his period. Karen claimed, that Freud was very restrained and that his theories are biased because he tended to consider his culture as one that is present all over the world. She stated that there are many more factors beyond the genetics and drives that influence the development of behaviour. She criticised his very little emphasis on mutual social interactions. She switched the Freudian focus on urges to the focus on culture. Due to Horney, concerns about security as well as psychic and personal alienation are the main forces influencing the development of personality.

- another arguments against Freud

- Karen Horney's theory – main statements

3. newborn as a “ blank page”, analysis of social influences on personal development, behavioral theories

a) Bandura's social learning theory

- humans learn behaviour by watching others and imitating them

(observational learning)

- involves: attention, retention, motor reproduction and motivation

(influenced by: consistency, identification with the model,

rewards/punishment - vicarious reinforcement, and liking the model)

- " Bobo" doll study

b) B. F. Skinner's theory

- the basis of understanding personality is to acknowledge the development of behaviour considering human as a creature continually interacting with environment

c) John B. Watson's theory

- Watson is the creator of the term " behaviorism", a theory which assumes that " behavior is observable and can be correlated with other observable events"[11], which means that there exist events that precede and follow behaviour, the aim of the theory is to explain the relationship between " antecedent conditions (stimuli), behavior (responses), and consequences (reward, punishment, or neutral effect)"

- " The Tale of Little Albert" - case study (J. B. Watson and R. Rayner) - conditioned emotional reactions; demonstration of application of behaviorist theory to humans (referring to the classical conditioning by Ivan Pavlov)

Researchers intentionally caused their subject (at the beginning of the study - a 9 months old infant) to become distressed

Albert's behaviour does not suggest that emotional responses to stimuli can be learned

d) Vygotsky

- children acquire knowledge through social environment and culture

- culture: teaches what and how to think

- child's development based on interactions within the society and cultural tools (both the tool typical for a particular culture like computers, and the implicit and explicit rules observed within one)

- knowledge: transferred through imitation, instructions, collaborative learning

e) influence of poverty on further life development

- poverty may influence the education or society that surrounds a child, but those factors can shape the personality of a person, children experiencing very low social status and life standards may undergo impaired brain development and cognitive functioning due to very high levels of stress hormones

- poverty can also highly influence person's level of self-esteem

f) other factors

- education, relations with peers, influence of mass media, influence of advertisement,

III. CONCLUSION

William Stern's convergence theory

The argument concerning whether the person is shaped by nature or nurture can last infinitely. In my opinion the most reasonable solution is a merger of those two major factors considered. William Stern proposed in 1938 a convergence theory:

main statements of the theory:

at each moment, the development is influenced by inborn, hereditary, and environmental factors, where all of them are cooperating

while genes name the borders of developmental possibilities, the environment accomplishes them

other concluding arguments: