

The History of Psychology: The Ultimate Guide

The History of Psychology: The Ultimate Guide

The history of psychology begins in ancient Greece. The field has come a long way since then, and today it is considered a science with many different disciplines. This blog post will explore the early beginnings of psychology as well as its progression into the modern era. It will cover such topics as pre-psychology influences, the birth of psychology, psychoanalysis and Freud and Jung, behaviourism with Watson and Skinner, and cognitive therapy from Aaron Beck.

Before we begin ...

A few caveats need to be stated

1. Psychology is referred to as the discipline of studying human behaviour, mental phenomena, and psychological conditions.
2. Every effort has been made to cover the history of psychology thoroughly. However, this paper was written to give a broad overview and thus certain events were not covered or not extensively discussed in light of time.
4. Several impactful advances in the history of psychology were made at similar times. As these advances overlapped chronologically, they are presented in this paper in a manner that improves readability.

Now that that's been mentioned- sit back and prepare to have your mind blown by the rich history of psychology!

Pre-7th Century – Early Philosophical Influences

The Pre-Socratics (6th and 5th Century BCE)

626 BCE – 548 BCE: the Pre-Socratics (Thales, Anaximander) explore natural processes and theories of logic and reason.

469 BC – Circa 275 BC: Greek Philosophers would continue to explore concepts regarding the nature of the human mind and behaviour. (Plato, 400BCE; Aristotle, 350BCE).

They made several important contributions to the field including:

- The idea that the mind and body are separate entities
- That consciousness exists
- That there are different types of mental states such as perception, belief, desire, etc.
- That we acquire knowledge through our senses

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470BCE – 399BCE: Socrates himself famously used a form of questioning with his students to challenge conceptions and ideas – a process used today in psychology – Socratic Questioning.

387BC : Plato suggested the human brain is a control for mental processes.

335BCE: Aristotle suggested the heart in fact controls mental processes.

200 BCE: Patanjali was a sage in ancient India who contributed to the development of Yoga and meditation in India. His work theoretical also focused on understanding the workings of the human mind.

700CE to 1037 CE

864CE – Circa 925CE: Much later on Abū Bakr al-Rāzī (Rhazes) would make significant contributions to the field of psychology and medicine in general.

He would publish several influential pieces of literature including (translated titles) *'A General Book on Therapy'*, *'Doubts about Galen'*, and *'on Surgery'*.

Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980 – 1037)

980 – 1037: Ibn Sina (Avicenna) published *'Canon of Medicine'* – a highly influential work to the field of medicine.

However, it was in his publication of *'The Book of Healing'* (*Kitab al-shifa*) and *'The Book of Deliverance'* (*Kitab al-najat*) that Ibn would make his contribution to the field of psychology.

In these works he would outline his argument of the 'Flying Man', speaking to the existence of the soul and it's influence on material life.

He would further argue how perception influences the conscious and unconscious experience. Ibn's ideas would later go on to influence the thinking of Decartes and other contributors to the field.

15th to 19th Century

1571: The first recorded use of the word 'psychology' as we know it today was expressed in Marko Marulić's paper – '*Psichiologia de ratione animae humanae*', an essay regarding humanism.

Descartes

1641: Much later on, The French philosopher Rene Descartes, published his work '*Meditations on First Philosophy*' which popularised the dualism problem, questioning if the mind and the body are separate. If so, does the mind influence the body, or visa versa, or is the relationship bidirectional? This problem would plague psychology for centuries, and we will touch on dualism again before the 21st century.

Descartes also famously expressed 'cogito ergo sum' ('I think therefore I am') in reference to existence of oneself. This was a major step in the development of psychology as a science, as it meant that one could study their own psychological processes.

Descartes work would later influence the minds of Pavlov and other early contributors to the science of psychology. However during his time, these questions and ideas were still mainly philosophical and not yet identified as a separate field of thought from that of philosophy.

Philosophical Thought from Kant and Gall

1700s: Immanuel Kant, Franz Gall, and Franz Mesmer developed concepts that would later influence the early beginning of psychology. Specifically, Kant made progressions in the field of perception and further explored the concept of Dualism – expressing possible limitations with the concept.

Mesmer would later popularise the use of 'hypnosis' and 'magnetism' to address mental illness.

Franz Gall founded the field of 'phrenology' and arguably began the separation of psychology as its own discipline, away from neurology and physiology of the time.

The 19th Century

James, Wundt & The Birth of Psychology – 1879

During the 1800s, a surge in new concepts pushed psychology into a science in its own right.

1850 – John Stuart Mill proposed the idea of 'mental chemistry' suggesting that mental mechanics result in 'interaction effects'. E.g. $A + B = ABC$.

1859 – Charles Darwin Publishes on the Origin of Species. The content of which influences the theory and work of Skinner, Watson, Freud, Jung, Pavlov, and several other key psychologists.

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1879 – Wilhelm Wundt founded the very first psychology laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany that contemporary psychology was born.



This event is widely considered to be the birth of psychology as a scientific discipline. Wundt believed that psychology should be an experimental science, and his laboratory was dedicated to the study of conscious experience.

1880 – Pierre Broca and Carl Wernicke discover the areas of the human brain responsible for speech production and comprehension.

Wundt's Students

Wundt's students were then responsible for setting up psychological laboratories all over Europe, and soon enough, psychology was being taught at universities around the world.

1886 – One of which was Vladimir Bekhterev, a doctoral student of Wundt's that founded the first experimental psychology laboratory in Russia.

He would later create the first Russian journal on nervous diseases and theorised that various parts of the brain had a specific function and progress the field of functionalism.

Bekhterev would later win the Baire Prize for discovering the hippocampus's role in memory in 1900.

1892: Another of Wundt's, Edward Titchener, would bring Structuralism to America by teaching its concepts at Cornell University. Establishing psychology outside of Europe at this point had not been as significant.

1896: Titchener would write one of the most influential psychology textbooks ever published, called *'An Outline of Psychology'*. In this book, he proposed that there were three main elements to consciousness; images, sensations, and feelings.

1888 – Sir Francis Galton would rediscover correlation (initially discovered by [Auguste Bravais](#) in 1846) and would invent the regression toward the mean.

1879 – 1910: The Wave of Structuralism & Functionalism

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Structuralism was the first school of thought in psychology and looked at consciousness as made up of different elements.

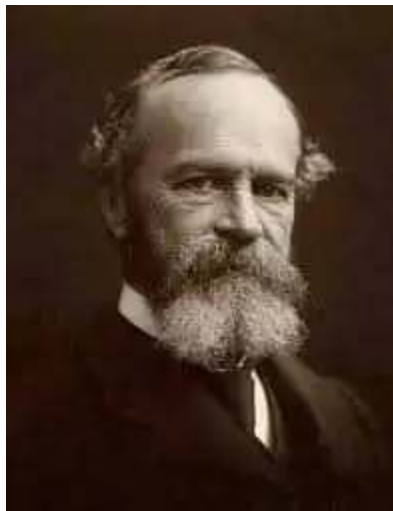
The goal of structuralists was to map the elements of consciousness through a process called introspection – or self-analysis. Structuralists believed that by understanding these elements, one could understand the workings of the the human brain as a whole.

However, structuralism began to decline in the early 1900s due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it was difficult to study consciousness objectively because it was such an internal experience. Secondly, people's reports of their conscious experiences often differed from one another – making it hard to draw conclusions.

Functionalism and William James

Functionalism was the second school of thought in psychology and focused on the function of consciousness.

The most famous functionalist was American Psychologist William James, considered to be the father of American Psychology. James would further describe the relationship between consciousness and the body, proposing that they were two separate but interacting systems.



American Psychology, Stanley Hall and the APA (1887)

Prior to James, much of the theoretical and experiential developments in psychology had taken place in Europe. However, William James would help spark American psychology and kin.

1883: William James would find the first psychology laboratory in America at Johns Hopkins University. This psychological clinic developed experimental psychology theory and contributed to establishing American psychology at the time, beyond Johns Hopkins University alone.

1887: The American Psychological Association (APA) was founded. The first president of the APA was G. American Psychologist Stanley Hall, a student of both William James and Wilhelm Wundt.

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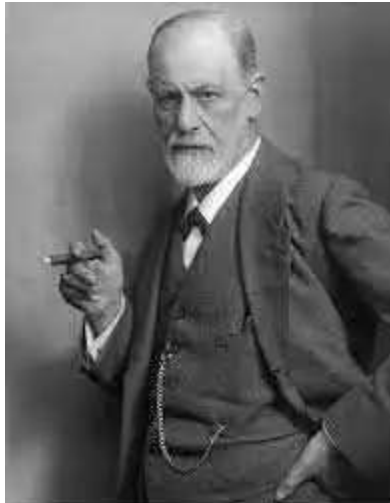
As president of the APA, Stanley Hall would help organize the first international congress of psychology in 1887 and would also found the first American journal devoted to psychology; *The American Journal of Psychology*.

1890: James would publish one of the most influential books on psychology, *'The Principles of Psychology'*. In his book, William James would explore topics such as; the stream of consciousness, emotions, habit formation, and religious experiences.

Both Structuralism and Functionalism would go on to be two of the most influential psychological theories of the early 1900s. But it was Sigmund Freud's theory of psychoanalysis that would have the most significant impact on psychology history as we know it.

The 20th Century

Freud, Jung & Psychoanalysis



Sigmund Freud is considered the father of psychoanalysis, and his work had a significant impact on psychological science and the history of psychology as a whole.

Initially a physician by training, Freud spent years working on neurology and the study of 'nervous disorders'.

1876: Sigmund Freud would dissect hundreds of eels attempt to locate the male reproductive organs. Unfortunately, the study was inconclusive, possibly influencing Freud's motivation to start reaching in another field – psychoanalysis.

1900: Sigmund Freud publishes *'The Interpretation of Dreams'* which posited that much of human behaviour was driven by unconscious desires and motivations, unable to be accessed by the conscious mind. As such, he developed techniques such as free association and dream analysis to explore these hidden desires. He also believed that early childhood experiences were a major source of these hidden desires, and he developed the concept of the Oedipus complex to explain this.

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Sigmund Freud would also develop his theory of the Id, Ego and Superego. The Id is the primitive, instinctual part of the mind that is driven by pleasure and hunger. The Ego is the rational part of the mind that deals with reality and tries to satisfy the demands of the Id. The Super-ego is the moral part of the mind that represents the conscience. It's responsible for telling the Ego what is right and wrong and balancing unconscious versus conscious motivations.

His literary work continued with: 'The Psychopathology of Everyday Life (1904) 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle' (1920), 'The Ego and the Id' (1923).

While Freud's work was groundbreaking, it was also highly controversial. His theory of psychoanalysis was met with a great deal of criticism from both the scientific community and the general public. Certain individuals would see eye-to-eye with Freud, however, including Swiss psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler, Austrian ophthalmologist, Alfred Adler, Austrian Psychoanalyst Melanie Klein, and Austrian Psychoanalyst and daughter of Sigmund Freud himself, Anna Freud.

Anna Freud & Melaine Klein

Anna contributed heavily to the field of psychoanalysis. However, she placed an emphasis on children specifically and placed more of an emphasis on the 'ego'.

She would teach 'child psychoanalysis' at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Training Institute in the 1920s. She continued to impact the history of psychology by writing a number of important books on the topic. These included; 'The Ego and the Mechanism of Defence' (1936) and 'Introduction to the Technique of Child Analysis' (1927).

Melanie Klien continued to expand on the theory of the Id and Superego, by developing her theory of the Eros and Thanatos pulsations. She would later create 'object relations theory', a theory still utilised in contemporary psychology today. The term "object" refers to the potential embodiment of fear, desire, envy or other comparable emotions. The object and the subject are separated, allowing for a more simplistic approach to addressing the deprived areas of need when used in the clinical setting.



Intelligence Testing (and a break from psychoanalysis)

1905: At this point, its easy to assume that psychoanalysis was dominating the history of psychology. However, other psychological disciplines were full steam ahead in psychological research and experimental psychology. One such impactful moment in the history of psychology in 1905 was the development of the first intellectual quotient (IQ) test, the Stanford Binet.

The Stanford binet was developed by Binet and his assistant, Theodore Simon. The aim of the test was to identify children who may require special educational treatment. The Stanford-Binet is still in use today and has been revised several times since its inception.

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The Stanford Binet would go on to be revised and improved multiple times. However, the general idea of intelligence testing has remained a staple in psychological research and has become an academic discipline in its own right.

Now back to psychoanalysis...

Eugen Bleuler & Alfred Adler

Freud established that Psychoanalytic theory focuses on the unconscious mind, and Alfred Adler like Freud, was also interested in the human unconscious.

Adler believed that the ego was driven by a '*compensation principle*'. Which suggested individuals would compensate for their feelings of inferiority by overachieving – often leading to success later in life. Adler also proposed the concept of the '*inferiority complex*' – a sense of inadequacy in relation to others, which Adler believed this was a major motivator in human behaviour.

Adler's literary work included the 'Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler' (1911), 'Problems of Neurosis' (1929) and 'Understanding Human Nature' (1927), all of which were critical in establishing psychology at the time.

At a similar time, Eugen Bleuler was busy in his work on schizophrenia. Bleuler's work in the physical and biological sciences would influence his work in clinical psychology.

However, he also had an interest in psychoanalysis and would go on to have a major influence on the field. In 1911 he published the book '*Dementia Praecox or the Group of Schizophrenias*'.

Bleuler's contribution to the history of psychology would continue, as he coined the terms '*schizophrenia*', '*schizoid*', and '*autism*' as mental disorders.

Bleuler would also continue to work closely with Freud on the theory of the unconscious, and share correspondence regarding the development of psychiatry and psychological phenomenon. Bleuler and Freud would not only share ideas, but also share the teaching of another young psychiatrist at the time, Carl Gustav Jung.

Carl Gustav Jung

Jung was already contributing to the history of psychology in his own right in the early 20th century. During this time however he developed a meaningful relationship with Freud, initially agreeing with many of Freud's ideas of the unconscious and dream analysis.

However, Jung also believed that other important factors influenced human behaviour, and began to express disagreement with Freud's thinking as time went on.

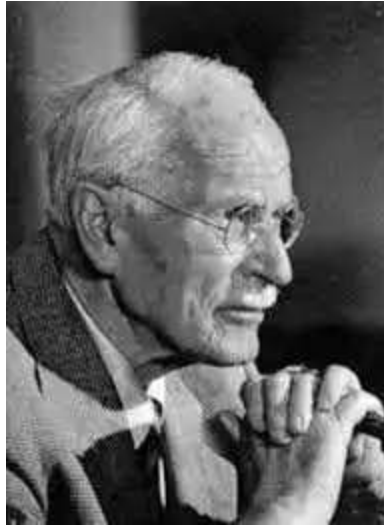
Jung most notably disagreed with the idea that all human behaviour is driven by sexuality and Freud's theory of sexual development (a controversial opinion of Freud's at the time).

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Jung instead believed that there was a collective unconscious – a shared pool of knowledge and experience that all humans possess.

Whilst Jung's medical training displayed his awareness of more physiological psychology theory, He also believed in the power of symbolism and developed the concepts of introverted and extroverted personality types. As the psychoanalytic theory perspective dominated clinical psychology at the time, Jung's theory was contrast to typical thought.

These differences in theoretical opinions would contribute to the eventual downfall of the relationship between Freud and Jung.



Owing to these differences – Jung went on to develop his own theory of psychoanalysis, which he called '*analytical psychology*'. In this new school of thought, he created the concept of the collective unconscious, referring to the shared memories and experiences of all humans. Jung also theorised the concept of the archetype (12 in total), – suggesting there are certain Universal symbols and images that exist in all cultures.

While Freud and Jung's theories of psychoanalysis were highly controversial and were difficult to measure using the scientific method – suggesting they had a significant impact on the field of psychology would be an understatement. Psychoanalysis would leave its mark on the history of psychology and go on to be one of the most influential psychological theories of the 20th century

Vygotsky, Piaget, & Developmental Psychology

Whilst the Psychoanalysts were theorising unconscious processes and explaining mental distress in their patients, the field of developmental and child psychology was being born.

Jean Piaget was the founder of developmental psychology. He created a theory of cognitive development consisting of 4 stages; sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational.

He also contributed to work in the theory of the development of knowledge. His literary work included 'Judgement and Reasoning in the Child' (1928) and 'The Construction of Reality in the Child' (1937).

At a similar time, Lev Vygotsky was conducting research into developmental experimental psychology and understanding early childhood experiences. He believed that social interaction was key to cognitive development. He wrote about his findings in *'Thought and Language'* (1934).

Gestalt Psychology

Gestalt psychology deals the holistic or integrated nature of human experience. It was founded in the early **1900s** by Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Lewin, who were all working at the Psychological Institute in Berlin.

The Gestalt psychologists believed that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – and that humans naturally seek to perceive objects and events as unified wholes.

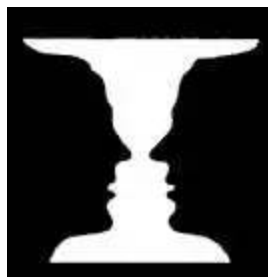
They carried out experiments which showed that people are able to perceive shapes even when they are only partially visible (the famous 'Gestalt-shapes' experiment).

Perception

The Gestalt psychology was particularly interested in perception and how humans see the world around them. The three most important parts of gestalt psychology are figure-ground, grouping, and closure.

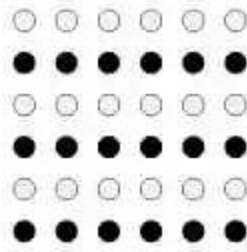
Gestalt Perception Principles

Figure-ground states that when we look at an image, we tend to see some parts as figures (the focal point) and others as ground (the backdrop). For example, in the image below, you will likely see a vase in the middle of the two faces.

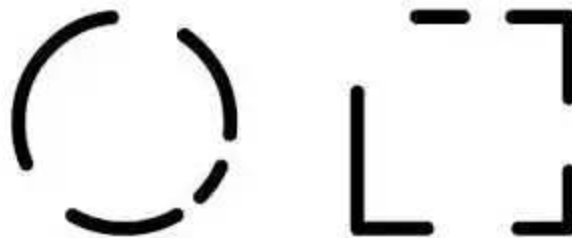


Grouping states that when we look at an image or group of objects, we tend to see some parts as being related to each other (a group), and others as being separate from each other (individual objects). Such as the dots below, will likely be perceived in lines (groups) rather than separate dots from each other.

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Closure refers to our tendency to fill in missing information in order to create a complete picture, because it is easier for us to process information when it is complete. The closure principle also applies to auditory stimuli – for example, when we hear a word that is not finished, we often ‘fill in the blanks’ and complete the word in our minds. Similarly to the lines of shapes with missing links, like below;



As Gestalt psychology became increasingly popular in the early 1900s, its influence began to spread beyond Europe and into America. One of the most notable American Gestalt psychologists was Kurt Koffka who, like Wertheimer and Köhler, was also interested in perception, mental representations, how we understand the world around us. He wrote about his findings in the book *‘Principles of Gestalt Psychology’* (1935).

Watson, Skinner & Behaviourism

During the early part of the twentieth century, a new school of thought known as behaviourism rose to prominence. Psychologists began questioning the legitimacy of the unconscious mind, and questioned if a more quantitative approach was possible, using experimental psychology.

Behaviorism was a significant shift from previous theoretical ideas, rejecting the level of significance that the psychoanalysis played on the conscious and unconscious mind.

Behaviourists posited that these internal processes were too abstract and subjective to measure at a scientific level, and instead aimed at identifying processes that were quantitative in nature. By analysing human behavior in a scientific study, behaviorists believed they could identify the underlying causes of behavior and develop ways to change it.

As such, Behaviourism was a school of thought in psychology that focused on observable behaviour rather than internal processes. These observable human behaviours could be monitored, tracked and could be indicative of mental disorders or abnormal brain states. As such, behaviourism treated theory more as a science and academic discipline.

Behaviourists believed that it was possible to 'condition' human behaviour through various learning processes. These processes included; classical conditioning, operant conditioning, and modelling.

Thorndike, Pavlov & Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning was the first form of behaviorism researched in a clinical setting, starting in the late 19th century. Classical conditioning assumed that all behaviour was reflexive in nature – that is, it was a response to an environmental stimulus.

1897: Russian Physiologist Ivan Pavlov would conduct his famous experiment with dogs. In his experiments, he found that he could condition a dog to salivate at the sound of a bell by ringing the bell every time he fed the dog. Eventually, the dog would begin to salivate at the sound of the bell even when there was no food present – showing that classical conditioning could be used to 'condition' a behaviour.

Pavlov and his work on classical conditioning was significant as it showed that behaviours could be learned through the process of association. This provided a way to explain how phobias and other psychological disorders could develop, as well as how we learn new behaviours in general.

Watson, Thorndike, Skinner & Operant Conditioning

Thorndike contributed to scientific psychology using various animal studies. He would place a cat or other animal inside a box, and the animal would have to perform a task (such as pulling a lever) to escape. Thorndike found that the animals would learn the task more quickly if they were placed in the same puzzle box multiple times. The observable behaviour that was exhibited by the animals could be explained by Thorndike's 'Law of Effect'. This law stated that behaviours that led to a positive outcome (such as escaping the puzzle box) were more likely to be repeated, while behaviours that resulted in a negative outcome (such as not being able to escape the puzzle box) were less likely to be repeated.

Mechanisms of Operant Conditioning

Operant conditioning posited that behaviour is controlled by its consequences – if a behaviour is followed by a positive consequence (reinforcement), then it is more likely to be repeated. On the other hand, if a behaviour is followed by a negative consequence (punishment), then it is less likely to be repeated. The same effect could be achieved through various applications of positive and negative reinforcement.

Importantly, the use of the word 'positive' and 'negative' in behaviourism is not meaning 'good' or 'bad', but is instead related to the addition of stimuli or subtraction of stimuli, respectively.

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	Punishment (decreasing behavior)	Reinforcement (increasing behavior)
Positive (adding)	adding something to decrease behavior	adding something to increase behavior
Negative (subtracting)	subtracting something to decrease behavior	subtracting something to increase behavior

1913: John Watson published *'Psychology as the Behaviourist Views it'*. Operant conditioning becomes popularised as Watson's text outlined his belief that all behaviour could be explained through classical conditioning – a view that was widely accepted at the time.

Watson also famously conditioned his infant son to fear rats by exposing him to them while making loud noises; a study that influenced psychology heavily to this day.

1938: American psychologist B.F Skinner would build on Watson's work and publish *'The Behaviour of Organisms'*. Skinner argued that it was not just environmental stimuli that controlled behaviour, but the consequences of that behaviour as well. He would go on to show how operant conditioning could be used to change behaviour through the use of reinforcement and punishment, and cement American psychology and a significant influence on the history of psychology.

1948: Skinner conducted his famous experiment in which he placed a rat in a box and gave it a lever to press. Every time the rat pressed the lever, it would receive a food pellet as reinforcement. As a result, the rat quickly learned to press the lever in order to get food.

During these years, psychology developed from early history influences into more research settings and would conduct research in various areas on human development and display psychological science indimentendy. This experimental psychology approach was not just to improve understanding of mental disorders, but also improve clinical practice merit. American psychology was displaying how geographical location appeared to influence the scientific study of the discipline.

Problems Arising with Behaviourism

Behaviourism was a dominant school of thought for many years, however it did have some criticisms. One of the main criticisms was that it neglected the importance of mental processes, and instead only focused on observable behaviour.

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Another problem with behaviourism was that it could not be used to study concepts like consciousness, dreams and imagination – which are all internal mental processes. Whilst these concepts were the ones the behaviourists explicitly wanted to move away from in light of the earlier psychoanalysts, important other internal psychological processes could no longer be ignored.

An individual's thoughts & beliefs, their cognitive processes, and associated elements were being shown to play a larger and larger role in mental health, and start the cognitive revolution.

1946: U.S. President Harry Truman signs the National Mental Health Act. The National Mental Health Act would provide funds to the National Institute of Mental Health

1950s: Solomon Asch conducts his series of experiments on social conformity.

His work has shown that people are greatly influenced by the opinions of others, even when those opinions are clearly wrong. Asch's work shed new light on phenomena like authoritarianism and groupthink, where individuals give up their own judgments in favor of majority opinion.

1959: Henry Murray conducts purposefully abusive experiments at Harvard university to measure individuals' responses to stress.

1952: The First Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) is published by the APA.

Rogers, Maslow, and the Rise of Humanism (1950s)

To date, most of the clinical theory had focused on establishing a model for psychopathology and ways to categorise mental illness.

The 1950s: A new movement in psychology was emerging that focused on the individual and their experiences, as opposed to psychopathology and mental illness.

This new perspective was known as humanistic psychology, and it emphasised the importance of personal growth and self-actualisation.

Key figures in humanistic psychology included Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers, who both believed that people are capable of reaching their full potential if they are provided with the right environment and opportunities. Humanistic psychology paved the way for later movements such as positive psychology, which focus on helping people achieve happiness and fulfilment in their lives.

The key benefit of humanistic psychology was that it allowed for a more holistic approach to understanding the human experience. Rather than viewing individuals as solely products of their environment or as machines driven by instinct and compulsion, humanistic psychologists sought to understand how people cultivate their unique identities and how they can realize their fullest potential.

Humanistic psychologists redirected attention from observable behaviour to subjective experience and holistic processes including emotions and feelings. Humanistic psychologists rejected the idea that individuals could be treated by manualised protocols.

Carl Rogers (1902 – 1987)

Carl Rogers was a humanistic psychologist who is best known for his client-centered approach to therapy. He believed that the therapist's role was not to diagnose or treat mental illness, but to provide a supportive environment in which the client could explore their feelings and experiences. Similarly, he did not think psychopathology could be 'solved' by therapy, and that the client was the expert in therapy, as they have more information on their internal processes.



Rogers' theory of personality development emphasised the importance of self-esteem and positive reinforcement in the development of a healthy sense of self. He also developed the concept of unconditional positive regard, which refers to the therapist's acceptance and non-judgemental attitude towards the client.

Rogers developed a client-centered approach to therapy, which emphasised the importance of self-esteem and positive reinforcement in the development of a healthy sense of self. His concept of unconditional positive regard refers to the therapist's acceptance and non-judgemental attitude towards the client.

Rogers believed that everyone has a natural tendency to grow and develop, and that therapist should provide a supportive environment in which this can take place. Client-centred therapy is based on the following three principles:

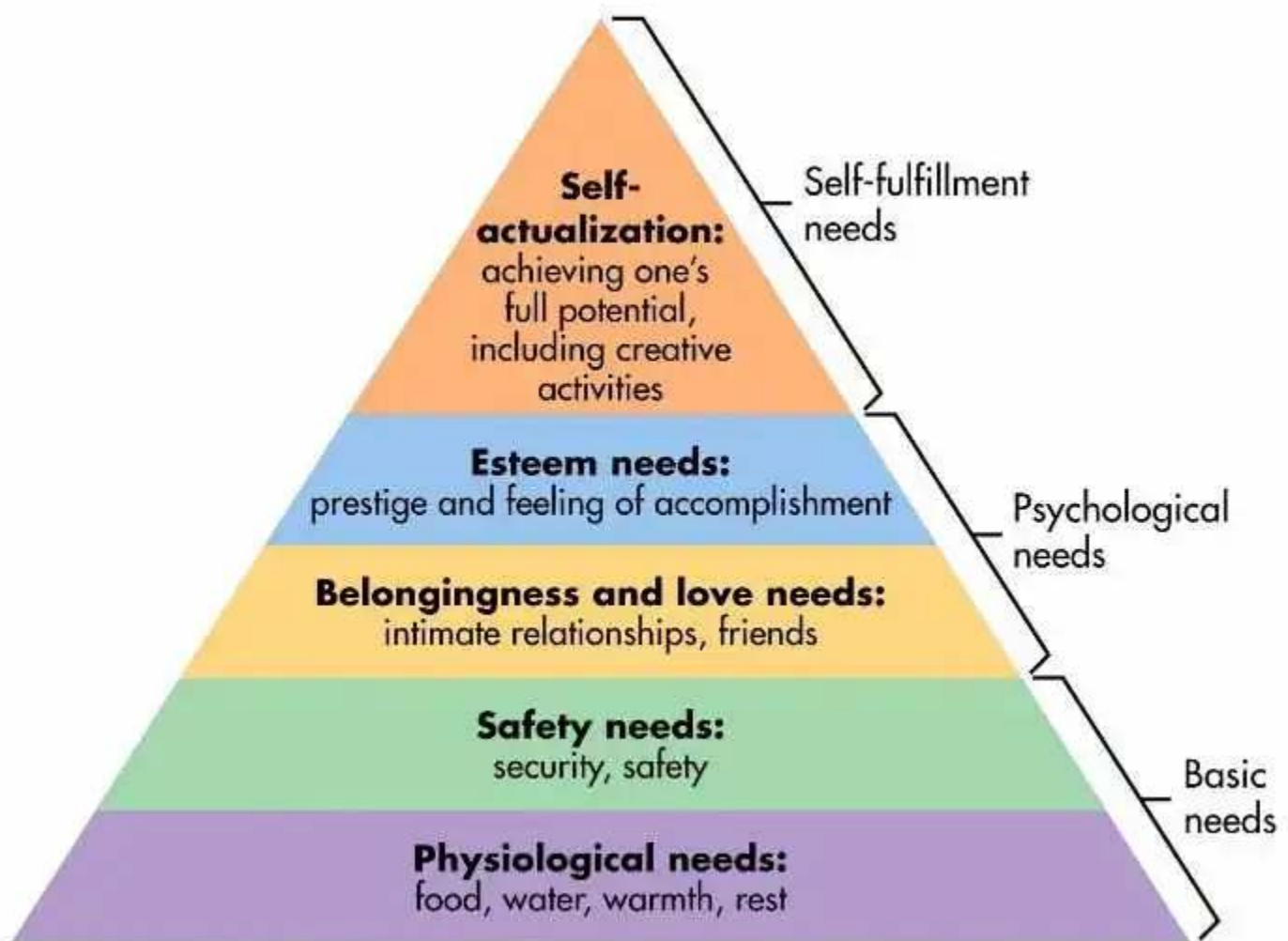
- Therapists should have empathy for their clients
- Clients should be treated with respect
- Clients should be active participants in their own therapy

Abraham Maslow

Maslow's theory, at its core, centers around the idea that humans have certain needs that must be met in order for them to live fulfilled lives.

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1943: Maslow publishes his theory of the “*hierarchy of needs*” following a humanistic research program. Maslow proposed that human beings have a hierarchy of needs, and that they must satisfy each need in turn before moving on to the next. The most basic needs, such as food and shelter, are at the bottom of the hierarchy, while more complex needs, such as self-actualization, are at the top.



Beck, Ellis & The Cognitive Revolution (1960s)

In the latter half of the twentieth century, a new school of thought known as cognitive therapy began to emerge. Cognitive psychology theorised that it was our thoughts and beliefs that determined our behaviour, rather than our unconscious desires or the environment around us.

Importantly, that thoughts and beliefs would influence behaviour, perhaps precede actions, positing that thoughts themselves are more indicative of abnormal human psychology than behaviour.

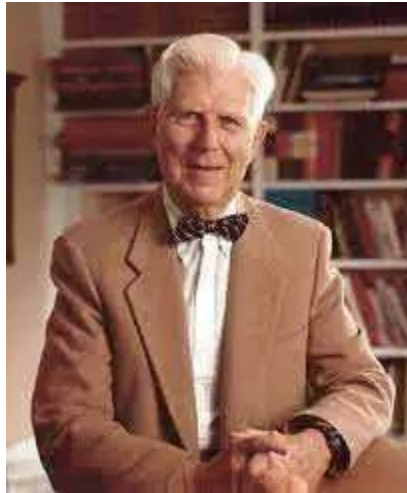
Cognitive Psychology & Aaron Beck (1921 – 2021)

Aaron Beck is considered the father of Cognitive Therapy (CT), and started the cognitive revolution.

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CT is a form of therapy that focuses on changing negative thought patterns in order to improve emotional well-being.

His approach was developed after studying the works of both Freud and many other clinicians before him, and Beck believed that cognitive therapy was a more effective way of treating mental illness than either psychoanalysis or behaviourism.



1964: Beck published his groundbreaking book *Thinking and Depression*, in which he argued that it was not just our behaviours or environment that determined how we feel, but our thoughts as well.

In his text, Aaron Beck referenced *'cognitive distortions'*; ways in which his patients thinking was biased, which contributed to emotional distress. Initially, 5 distortions were noted; with two more being added in the 1970s.

Dr David Burns was an early student of Aaron Beck, and who has done much to popularize CT and further the cognitive revolution.

In his self-help book *'Feeling Good'* (1980) he compares unhelpful thinking styles to the kinds of illusions performed by magicians *"When you are depressed, you possess the remarkable ability to believe, and to get the people around you to believe, things which have no basis in reality"*. Importantly, he used language that made cognitive distortions more engaging and understandable. Burns' work contributed to the existing cognitive distortion work from Beck. A list of the identified distortions at the time looked as the following:

1. All-or-nothing thinking
2. Overgeneralization
3. Mental filter
4. Disqualifying the positive
5. Jumping to conclusions
6. Magnification and minimization

7. Emotional reasoning

8. “Should” statements

9. Labelling and mislabelling

10. Personalisation

Albert Ellis

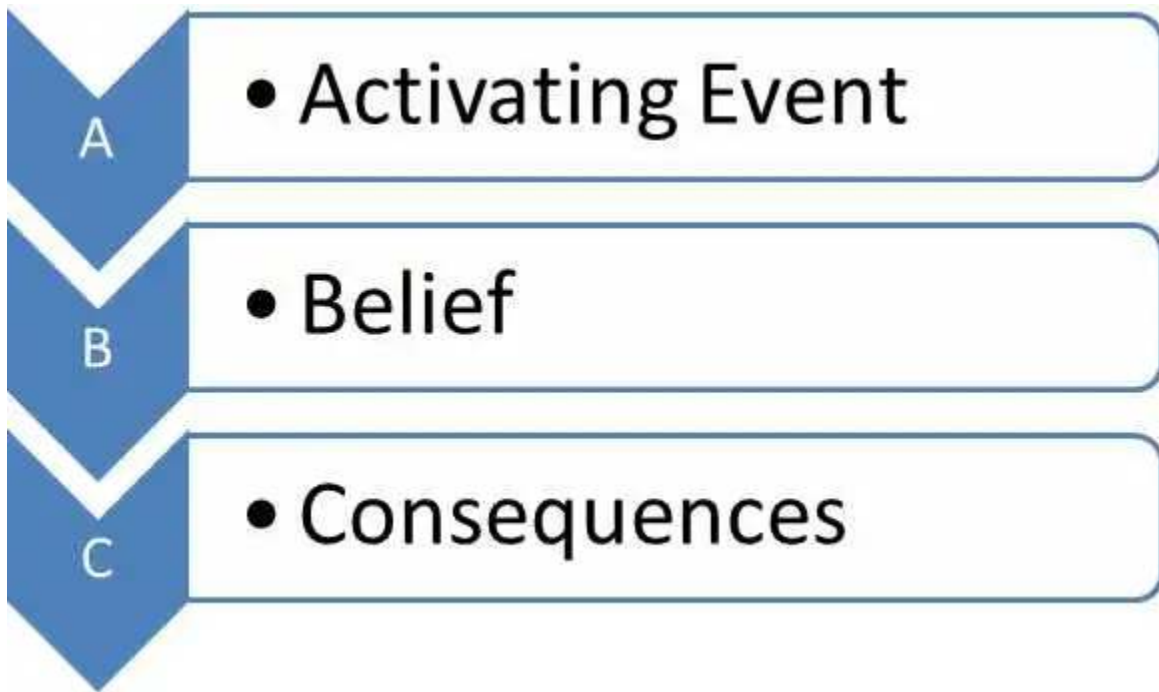
Whilst Aaron Beck is often considered the father of cognitive psychology, his contemporary, Albert Ellis, was infact also influential in the early development of cognitive psychology during the 1960s.

According to Albert Ellis, everyone has different assumptions that act as a guide in life and influence our reactions to various events. However, some people’s views are irrational, causing them to behave inappropriately and decreasing their likelihood of happiness or success. Ellis refers to these concepts as basic irrational assumptions.



When individuals assume they must be loved by all – yet constantly seek approval and feel rejection instead – it affects every interaction, including how they process compliments after a great party.

1957: The ABC Technique of Irrational Beliefs was developed by Ellis and becomes a major tool in cognitive therapy. The first three steps examine the manner in which a person may develop unrealistic beliefs and may be represented in a three-column table.



Experimental Psychology

At this point, multiple areas of social psychology developed through experiments being conducted to further understand the mind.

1960s: Harry Haslow conducts his series of attachment experiments on baby monkeys.

His work has shown that baby monkeys are capable of some impressive feats of intelligence. For example, they are able to solve complex problems and remember large amounts of information. Haslow's work has also shed light on the ways in which baby monkeys interact with their mothers and other members of their troop.

1963: Stanley Milgrim conducted his study on obedience to authority, now known as the 'Milgrim Experiment'.

Milgram's study was designed to test how willing people were to follow orders, even when those orders resulted in harmful consequences. The results of the study were disturbing, revealing that people were much more likely to obey authority figures than they were to disobey them, even when doing so caused harm.

1965: Mary Ainsworth conducts her 'Strange Situation' Experiment assessing individual differences in attachment.

Mary Ainsworth's research showed that secure attachment in early life is crucial for healthy social and emotional development. However, she also found that attachment is not necessarily fixed and can change over time. These findings have important implications for how we support children as they grow and develop.

1967: Ulric Neisser published a textbook entitled '*Cognitive Psychology*'

Lawrence Kohlberg

Lawrence Kohlberg was an American psychologist who is best known for his work on moral development. He developed a theory of moral development which suggests that people progress through a series of stages, each of which is associated with a different level of ethical reasoning. Kohlberg's theory has been hugely influential and has helped to shape our understanding of morality and ethics.

1985: The First Stable TMS Device was developed.

1994: Aaron Beck and Judith Beck founded the CBT institute.

1994: The APA publishes the DSM-IV

The 21st Century

The 21st century has seen a continued focus on cognitive psychology, with the development of new therapies and approaches.

2002: Martin Seligman was elected President of the American Psychological Association and he proposed the idea of Positive Psychology. This was a new branch of psychology that focused on psychological interventions that aimed to increase happiness and well-being, rather than simply treating mental illness.

Third Wave Therapy

Third wave therapies are a relatively new development in the field of modern psychology, and include therapies such as Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Emotion Focused Therapy (EFT), and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).

These therapies focus on acceptance of what is out of our control, and changing what we can. They aim to help people live more meaningful lives by accepting themselves for who they are, and taking action towards their goals.

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT)

ACT is a type of psychological treatment that was initially developed in the 1980s by Steve Hayes. It is based on the premise that humans often suffer from psychological distress because they try to avoid or escape from unpleasant thoughts, emotions, and sensations. However, this avoidance can actually increase psychological distress and prevent people from living full and meaningful lives.

ACT helps people to Accept their thoughts and feelings without judging them; Commit to taking action that is aligned with their values; and Transform their relationship with their thoughts and feelings so that they no longer control them. Steve Hayes is a professor of psychology at the University of Nevada, Reno, and he has written numerous books on ACT, including "Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life" and "The Studies That Matter Most."

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The goal of ACT is to help people increase their psychological flexibility, which is the ability to be aware of and accept one's thoughts and feelings while still taking action in accordance with one's values. One of the key components of ACT is mindfulness, or the practice of nonjudgmental present-moment awareness. Mindfulness training is designed to help people become more aware of their thoughts and feelings without getting caught up in them. This can be a difficult process, but it is essential for learning how to take values-based action.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy

DBT was created by Marsha Linehan specifically for treating borderline personality disorder, but it has since been shown to be effective for treating a wide range of mental health conditions.

Skills that are taught in DBT include mindfulness, distress tolerance, interpersonal communication, and emotional regulation.

Through the use of these skills, people are able to develop a greater sense of self-awareness and control over their emotions. As a result, they are better able to manage difficult situations and make positive changes in their lives.

Conclusion

In the early part of psychology's history, the dominant school of thought was Freudian psychoanalysis. This approach emphasized the role of the unconscious mind in shaping behavior and focused on exploring childhood experiences and traumas. However, Freud's original ideas were met with considerable criticism, and a new wave of psychologists began to emerge in the mid-20th century.

Among these was B.F. Skinner, who championed the notion of behaviorism. This approach emphasize the role of observable behavior in understanding psychological phenomena.

In the 1950s and 1960s, cognitive psychology began to gain traction as a new way of understanding the mind. This field emphasized the role of mental processes such as memory, perception, and language in shaping behavior.

In recent years, a forth wave of therapy that focuses on happiness and well-being has emerged, including positive psychology, DBT and ACT. Although each of these approaches has its detractors, they have all helped to advance our understanding of human behaviour and mental health.

Psychology's history has been wide ranging. It is a distinct scientific discipline in its own right, but has also influenced many specific domains including;

Modern psychology today is made up of many sub-disciplines including

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- **Social Psychology**
- **Cross Cultural Psychology**
- **Computer Science**
- **Comparative Psychology**
- **Multicultural Psychology Culture**
- **Personality Psychology**
- **Research and Experimental Psychology**

Psychology is a vast and complex field, with roots that can be traced back to some of the earliest recorded moments in human history. In the past century alone, it has evolved into a distinct scientific discipline, with many different sub-disciplines and specialties. As our understanding of psychology continues to grow, so too does our ability to treat mental health conditions and improve quality of life.

If you're interested in learning more about the history of psychology, or any other topic related to mental health, we encourage you to check out our other resources. We cover a range of topics, from anxiety and depression to therapy and brain stimulation. We hope you'll find the information helpful and informative!