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## Two Important Figures In Psychology: Wundt & Piaget

Psychology is the scientific study of the human mind and its functions. In this essay I am going to be identifying two important figures in psychology, for each I will be looking at both their theories and experiments to provide a full understanding of the area of psychology they studied and how effective their theories are. After analyzing their work, I will then provide an in-depth evaluation to show whether their work has contributed to modern day psychology. The two psychologists I am going to be using for this essay are Wilhelm Wundt and Jean Piaget.

Wilhelm Wundt was a psychologist from the 19th century and many people see him as the father of psychology as he formed the first experimental psychology lab. Wundt was focused on the mind and wanted to do work which would separate psychology from philosophy, more importantly he wanted to look at the human mind to gather a better understanding of how the mind works and reacts to different situations. He believed in reductionism, reductionism means that any complex situation can be explained by analyzing physical processes that happen during the situation. Wundt's theory created a breakthrough for psychology as he used structuralism which allowed the key components of the mind to be identified and broken down into basic elements allowing the mind to be understood in a new way which would change psychology forever, "he believed consciousness could be broken down to its basic elements without sacrificing any of the properties of the whole."

Wundt practiced experimental philosophy, where he would carry out tests by measuring the body which would enable him to then study the mind. The first experiment he carried out using this method was assessing the speed of thought regarding how long it took test subjects to make a judgment. Wundt continued to carry out experiments on people in controlled groups and environments over the years he continued his work and studied vision, hearing, taste, touch, memory, time perception and many more subjects. Throughout this time, he created his own algorithm known as Wundt's curve. Wundt's curve illustrated that as stimulus intensity increases or decreases the test subject would then comment on whether it is pleasant, unpleasant or painful. The Wundt curve also allowed him to measure the thought process realizing that as the stimuli changed and reaction times took longer the more mental process there must be behind it. The algorithm also shows that if the stimulus is pleasant it can result in a reward whereas if the stimulus is painful or unpleasant it falls into punish. Wundt's Curve has also been related to theories of human novelty seeking. Wundt has played a big part in psychology without his work psychology would still be a branch of philosophy.

Jean Piaget was a Swiss psychologist, his work was mainly focused on cognitive development in particular with children, his work was inspired by the observations he made on his own daughter and nephew. Piaget's work was revolutionary at the time as his work and experiments he carried out showed that children are not mini adults so therefore they do not think the same as adults. Piaget's theory identified four stages that children should pass through at different ages and stages of their life. His theory splits children into age categories where during their intellectual development they should be attaining certain milestones. The 1st stage of Piaget's theory is known as the sensorimotor stage, this ranges from the age of 0-2 years old. During this stage children learn from their senses such as touch, taste and sound, they also develop intellectually through the use of their motor movements, this involves holding a hand, kicking a

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ball. This stage of Piaget's theory is important as if children have not achieved this milestone it will make it difficult for them to participate in the other stages of Piaget's theory. The second stage is known as the preoperational stage, this stage goes from the age of 2-7 years old and focuses on language and play. During this stage children will be expanding their vocabulary and learning how to use words properly as well as playing in a symbolic way which is important for their social development as well as their intellectual development. The third stage is called the concrete operational stage which focuses on children from ages 7-11, in this stage children will start to develop their logical thought process but will still need help to develop it fully. The final stage of Piaget's theory is known as the formal operation stage, this stage starts at age 12 and goes on into adulthood, where children become more abstract and will have developed their thought process.

Piaget carried out numerous experiments on children in each stage of his theory, these tests allowed Piaget to measure the amount of intelligence children had at each stage of their life. One experiment Piaget used on children in the sensorimotor stage was hiding an object under a pillow to see if the child could find it. This experiment allowed Piaget to see the child's instincts and reactions. If the child found the object it showed that their intelligence was high and that they had a good knowledge of the environment around them as well as understanding how to use their motor skills. Throughout his time Piaget continued to use his theory to test children at each stage allowing him to understand how children think. Some other experiments Piaget used were pouring a liquid from a small wide glass into a tall narrow glass to show that although the glasses were different both glasses held the same amount of liquid.

Wilhelm Wundt's work can be applied to modern day psychology as he was the first psychologist to develop an experimental lab which changed psychology forever, from developing this lab Wundt made data more accurate and reliable. Wundt helped to develop structured ideas of how the mind works and reacts separating it into different components. In doing this Wundt encouraged the work of other psychologists to test their theories and helped them to build upon the work he had started. Through separating psychology and philosophy Wundt opened up a whole new area of science which would continue to flourish and expand breaking into different areas rather than just cognitive psychology, psychology now looks at many more areas such as behavioral psychology. Wundt also wrote the first book on psychology in this book it outlined his theories and thoughts allowing future psychologists to continuously develop psychology as a whole.

Although Wundt's work was significant for the world of psychology there were some aspects of his work that could have been improved, Wundt's work was seen as outdated by other psychologists and one of his students criticized his work saying "Wundt confused others by mixing introspective psychology and experimental psychology"