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Thoughts and discussions of the mind belonged to philosophers long before there were any psychologists. Philosophy means “love of wisdom” and is the study of how things work, fundamental truths about the world, existence, knowledge, etc. Ancient philosophers, specifically the Greek ones, were curious people, they wanted to know how the world worked and made observations and theories about the world. The ancient philosophers were basically a precursor to more modern scientists and researchers. Plato, in particular, believed the soul to have three parts: reason (logos), an aspect that is smart and intellectual that regulates the other parts; feeling (thymos), an aspect that feels emotions; and appetite (eros), which have something to do with impulses and desires. This theory of plato is remarkably similar to Freud’s theory of the id, ego, and superego.

By the 18th and 19th century, the zeitgeist at the time was being more inclined towards science and empiricism, which is basically the idea that all knowledge is derived from sense experiences and is observable, as well as the doctrine of mechanism. They believed things had a reason and that these things were observable.

More modern philosophers such as Descartes, Comte, and Locke heavily contributed to theories that are the foundations to psychology. René Descartes was a philosopher from the 16-17th century. One of his theories was about how the mind and body interacted; the older, more accepted theory was that the relationship between the mind and body was that the mind could influence the body, but not so much the other way around. According to his theories, he believed that there was more of a relationship between the two; the mind can influence the body, and the body has more influence over the mind than what other theorists realized.

Auguste Comte was alive around the 18th and 19th centuries, he helped foster the idea of positivism, where things that were true and fact were also observable. His ideas about positivism influenced the zeitgeist of the time period.

John Locke was a philosopher who believed that no one was born with innate knowledge, rather they were a blank slate at birth and had to learn, particularly through experience. Locke believed in two types of experiences, getting from sensations, or from reflections. Sensation is basically getting sensory information from the environment. Reflection is more or less about pondering on those sensations until it forms an idea.

Ideas and concepts found in philosophy became the foundation for what psychology came to be.