

SETTING THE STAGE.....

When the field of cognitive psychology began (during the 1950s and 1960s), cognitive psychologists found the workings of the brain to be quite interesting but not necessarily relevant to their understanding of how cognitive processes worked. The idea was that description of cognitive processes and structures was best done at a level of abstraction above the neural level, which was thought to be too inordinately complicated. Many feared that a description of how each neuron in the brain worked would not yield a comprehensible explanation of, say, how one's learning of French verb endings takes place. The level of detail of the neurons in your brain would simply not provide a very useful explanation, whereas one couched in terms of theoretical ideas such as memory storage areas (which might not physically exist) would. Theorists began to distinguish between different