Name of Theorist: Virginia Avernal Henderson, (1897 – 1996)

Name of Theory: “The unique function of the nurse is to assist the individual, sick or well, in the performance of those activities contributing to health or its recovery (or to peaceful death) that he would perform unaided if he had the necessary strength, will or knowledge.

Educational Background
- Diploma in Nursing from the Army School of Nursing at Walter Reed Hospital, Washington, D.C. in 1921
- In 1923, started teaching nursing at the Norfolk Protestant Hospital in Virginia
- In 1929, entered Teachers College at Columbia University for Bachelor’s Degree in 1932, Master’s Degree in 1934.

Practice Background
- After graduation in 1921 she worked at the Henry Street Visiting Nurse Service for 2 years.
- In 1923, started teaching nursing at the Norfolk Protestant Hospital in Virginia, and stayed until 1948.
- In 1939, she revised: Harmer’s classic textbook of nursing for its 4th edition, and later wrote the 5th; edition.
- After 1953, Henderson served as a research associate at Yale University School of Nursing.
- Henderson wrote Basic Principles of Nursing Care (ICN, 1960) and was an immediate sensation. In the intervening years the essay has been translated into 29 languages.

Basic Concept of Theory
- Care was based on the individual – through observation, communication, designing and reporting.
- She emphasized the importance of increasing the patient’s independence so that progress after hospitalization would not be delayed.
- She described the nurse's role as substitutive (doing for the person), supplementary (helping the person), complementary (working with the person), with the goal of helping the person become as independent as possible.

Example of Clinical Application
- Care was based on the individual – through observation, communication, designing and reporting.

Reference:
http://currentnursing.com/nursing_theory/Henderson.html
http://www.unc.edu/~ehallora/henderson.htm
Evolution of Nursing Theory: Essential Influences