

It has been said that psychology has a long past but a short history. For centuries, dating back to the time of **Plato**, and **Aristotle**, people have wondered about human behavior and mental processes. But in late 1800s Psychology has begun to apply scientific methods to particular questions. Psychology comes into being as a formal discipline separate from philosophy. Psychology emerged from Philosophy

Beginning with the first psychological laboratory, founded in 1879 by German philosopher and physiologist Wilhelm Wundt, modern psychology's can be traced in many disciplines and countries. Psychology's historical perspectives and current activities lead us to define the field as the science of behavior and mental processes.

There are many disciplines that study human nature. Psychology is one. Within psychology, the biological, behavioral, psychoanalytic, cognitive and social- cultural perspectives are complementary. Each has its own purposes, questions, and limits; together they provide a fuller understanding of mind and behavior.

Psychology is a quest/inquiry for understanding about behavior. Everyone wants to know about one self and others. The search for such knowledge requires scientific approach with strong motivation. Psychologists have begun to understand a lot about human nature but still the work of psychology goes on in laboratories, as well as in natural settings, from pre-school to colleges and universities, from factories, markets, offices, parks and including every social setting. They study about how, what and why of human behavior.

Definitions with the passage of Time

It was in the year **1590** that **Rudolf Geockle** used the word psychology. The word "Psychology" comes from Greek roots meaning "the study of Soul. The Combination of two letters "**Psych**" and "**ology**" make the term psychology. Psych means self, soul or mind and logus stands for knowledge.

Psyche Means Soul, Mind, Breath, Life, and Spirit.

ology, Means study. So psychology was defined as knowledge of soul, mind, and consciousness in different era.

However, the limits of psychology have been gradually widened with the extension of its scope. Hence the old definitions have been replaced by new ones.

Psychology as a Science of Soul

First of all psychology was defined as a "Science of Soul". Soul is concept we all know very well but can't describe easily. Muslims and Non-Muslims both have clear concept according to their own belief.

This term has changed its meaning with the passage of time. In primitive era it was believed that each and everything has the soul, but afterward this belief was limited to living organisms only. Another strong notion about soul is that it is immortal. In Greek period concept of good and bad soul was prevailing yet Greek philosopher had described it by their own. Let's discuss some of them.

Pythagoras

He proposed that body is a **prison** for soul. After the death of an individual soul becomes free and roam anywhere according to its will.

Socrates

He was the first who introduced the word **psyche**. He advocated that **soul is greater than body**. He believed that soul is immortal and not the body. He said that everybody must seek the knowledge to make the soul pure.

Plato

Plato was in opinion that soul and body are two **separate systems**. Both remain active and functioning till the last breath. He told that soul is just a shadow which can only be felt but no one can understand its reality.

Aristotle

He wrote a book "**De Anima**" which is considered the **first book** on psychology. So he is considered the first psychologist. He termed soul as living principle in all animate beings believed that life is nothing without soul because it is the basic principle of life.

Criticism

1. **Psychology** is defined as a science. In science experimentation and observation is necessary. Being science of soul this condition can't be fulfilled.
2. **Soul** is mystery it can't be seen so can't be observed or verified.
3. **Soul** as a term implies certain theories of religion with regard to immortality and relationship to God. Psychologists do not oppose the religion, but they certainly want to keep this science free from religious impact and vague terminology.

Psychology as a Science of Mind

Greek philosophers named psychology as a science of mind. Mind is defined as feelings, sentiments, Sensation, conscious and Unconscious functions.

Greek philosophers used the term of soul and mind unanimously. Plato was the first person who introduced this term for the first time. Aristotle proposed that mind as the function of body and mental processes are affected due to environmental factors. John Locke declared that soul is religious concept and mind is psychological concept. He presented the notion known as “**Tabula Rasa**” that means mind is absolutely blank sheet at the time of birth, environmental experiences make prints on it. When individual analyze and organize these prints, the effect his sensation and feelings about that particular event, situation or person.

In 19th century psychology was emerging as a separate discipline. It was defined as the science of “Mental Processes”.

Wilhelm Wundt

In 1879, Wilhelm Wundt, a physiologist and philosopher at the University of **Leipzig** in Germany, founded the **first formal psychological laboratory**. He was striving to develop techniques to uncover the natural laws of the human mind. To isolate the basic units of thought, Wundt examined the process by which we create meaningful patterns out of sensory stimuli. There are two types of mental processes **Cognition** and **Affect**.

Perception, beliefs, thoughts, and ideas are included in cognitive mental process. It also includes activities such as perceiving, thinking, understanding and remembering. Affect refers to mental processes involving one’s feelings, mood or emotional state.

Example

When we look at an apple, we immediately think. “Here is a fruit” something to eat.” But these are associations based on past experience.

Criticism

1. Mind and mental process are untouchable and can’t be seen or observed. So experimentation will become impossible or difficult.
2. We can be aware of our mental activities and not of others.
3. Animals, Kids and mental patients can’t be observing their own mental processes.

So this definition is also not fully acceptable.

Psychology as a Science of Consciousness

Psychology was also defined as a science of consciousness. What is meant by consciousness? The present momentary awareness is called as consciousness.

- **John Dewey**
- **William James**

Psychology as a Science of Behavior

What a living thing does is generally known as behavior. It means response or reactions to various kinds of stimuli. When this definition was adopted for psychology it gained lot of fame and acceptance. As it is discussed earlier that in order to understand the minds of other person’s and animals. We have to study the behavior. Behaviorist conducted a lot of experiments and became dominated during first half of 20th century. Psychology has benefitted from this definition. Experimentation on behavior made the prediction easy. But it is not enough to study the behavior only. To cover the complete area of psychology this definition needs some addition.

- **John B Watson**
- **Thorndike**

Comprehensive Definition of Psychology

Psychology is a branch of science which we study the human Behavior and Mental processes.

Psychology is currently defined as a the systematic and scientific study of behavior, both animals and human the term behavior refers to observable actions such as eating, speaking, and laughing as well as to mental activities such as planning, thinking, and imagining.