More than the list of names and dates about its beginnings, this section on the development of psychology will help you visualize how this discipline evolved as a response to its environment in the course of time. Learners will also know more about the different schools of thought of psychology that paved the way to build the entirety of this field.

A Brief History of Psychology.

Long before it was formally established as a separate discipline in the late 1800s, foundational forms of psychology had been existing as early as the time of Plato and Aristotle. Faced with a number of fundamental questions, these Greek philosophers were considered the first psychologists who explored the distinction between nature and nurture.

During the Renaissance period, the principle of dualism introduced by French philosopher Rene Descartes contributed greatly to the development of psychology. This idea that the mind is essentially a different entity from the body influenced how psychology started to view mental processes.

But despite its origins being traced back to 400-500 years BC, psychology is relatively a new discipline as it was officially founded in the nineteenth century. It focuses on the scientific study of human behavior as well as their thoughts and mental processes. Originating from the Greek word "psyche" (meaning life), psychology covers a wide range of topics ranging from what can be observed in the actions to the internal aspects of the human mind.
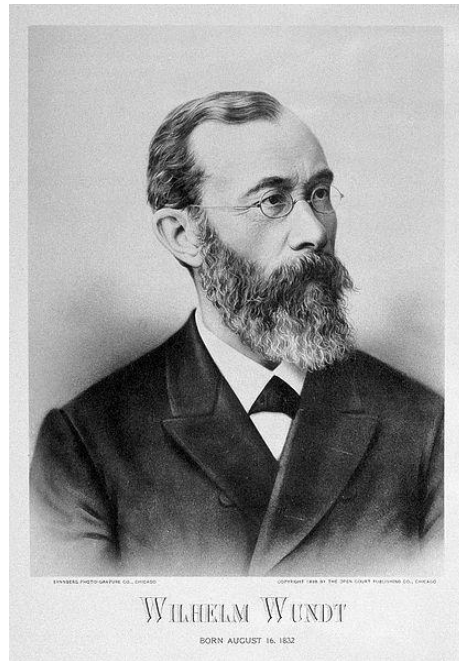
One of the founders of psychology is Wilhelm Wundt who is very much into investigating human reaction times to study human consciousness. He opened the first-ever psychology laboratory at the University of Leipzig, Germany in 1879 and is well-known for his process of introspection. This process, also referred to as *internal perception*, which involves examining one's conscious experience, has set the stage for the experimental methods used in psychology today.

Schools of Thought in Psychology.

The first major school of thought in psychology was founded by one of Wundt's students, Edward B. Titchener. Heavily influenced by the teachings from Wundt, this approach called

structuralism believes that one can analyze the human mind's basic elements to understand an individual's conscious experience.

With its scientific and rigorous method, its research attempts were successful in quantifying mental events. Structuralism, however, died down with the passing of Titchener and the recognized limitation of its method of introspection on objectivity.

Psychology reached its peak in American society during the mid to late 1800s, making William James, a major psychologist at that time and the author of *The Principles of Psychology*, the father of American psychology. His ideas in his book became the starting point for another school of thought named functionalism.

Unlike structuralism, functionalism looks at consciousness with the belief that is a continuous and changing process— that the human brain is adapting to the function that is needed by the human experience. Direct observation is one of the methods that functionalists use to examine both the human mind and behavior. In addition to this, James utilized different recording devices to come up with more objective conclusions.

Principles from this school have been absorbed by one of the fields of the discipline, evolutionary psychology. James, being imparted with Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection, has similarly applied it to treating psychological characteristics. A key component termed fitness is a concept that helps explain why there are certain characteristics that individuals possess that have higher rates of being passed on to the nature of the organism's next generation.

A group photo featuring some of the most notable psychologists including Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, and William James. Via Wikimedia Commons.

Another school is psychodynamic psychology, which is championed by the famous Sigmund Freud.

In his theory of personality, Freud gave an emphasis on understanding the unconscious mind including thoughts, memories, and feelings. He asserted that the problems of his patients in their personalities (e.g., depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders) were caused by their painful or traumatic experiences in their early childhood, some of which are repressed or forgotten. These unconscious thoughts spring up through dreams and slips of the tongue (also called Freudian slips).

Freud authored the book *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* and was followed by other remarkable psychologists like Carl Jung, Erik Erikson, Alfred Adler, and Karen Horney.

German psychologists Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka introduced Gestalt psychology in the United States. The word gestalt essentially means "whole", highlighting that the human mind tends to perceive things as part of a greater whole instead of breaking it down into smaller components.

In the early twentieth century, a school of thought dominated the world of psychology, significantly challenging all the other previous approaches mentioned. Behaviourism puts greater importance on observable behaviors rather than on knowing what is going on in both the conscious and unconscious mind. One of its main arguments includes that studying the human mind is not necessary when one can successfully predict a behavior even without delving into the internal processes.

Russian physiologist Ivan Pavlov's work on classical conditioning (behaviors can be learned through conditioned associations) facilitated the beginning of the Behaviorism school of thought. John B. Watson, who is considered as the father of behaviorism, later on formally defined it in his published book *Psychology as the Behaviorist Views It.* The principle about operant conditioning, which employs rewards and punishments as part of learning behaviors, furthered the perspective even more. Proposed by B.F. Skinner, this concept created an impact in the field until the rise of cognitive psychology.

Humanistic psychology, or what is commonly referred to as the 'third force' in psychology, came to dominance in the latter part of the twentieth century. Founder Carl Rogers magnifies one's free will and the power of self-determination, in contrast with the behaviorist perspective that behavior is entirely affected by the environment and the individual's nature. Abraham Maslow and his theory on the human hierarchy of needs became a primary element under this approach as well.
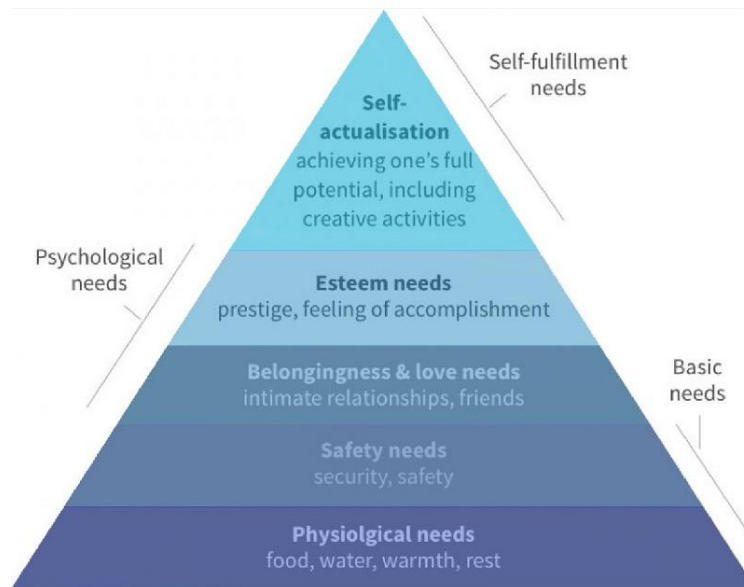
From the 1950s to 1960s, it was cognitive psychology that eventually replaced the dominant schools of thought. This approach balances the study of observable behaviors and the mental processes such as thinking, perception, and memory; a movement where Noam Chomsky served as one of the starters.

At present, psychology has advanced so much and branched out to different subfields like abnormal psychology, clinical psychology, developmental psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and personality psychology amongst many others.