

Evolution of psychology from greek philosophy



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Abstract

Noting that psychology has its roots from past philosophy, this paper examines how psychology evolved within these three dimensions: The Early Greek Philosophers, After Aristotle and the Modern Science Philosophy acquiring these discoveries to seek for answers towards psychology. Generally, this paper was cited with a call of scholars, researchers, philosophers to tap the potentially rich contributions of some famous Great Philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Descartes in their major contributions that enabled psychology to be an independent discipline after the 19th century. With these breakthrough findings, it is vital to acknowledge that historical theory context does contribute to evolution in psychology in understanding how humans fit into this natural history.

Keywords: Aristotle, Descartes, Early Greek Philosophers, evolution, Plato, philosophy, psychology

Evolution of Psychology from Early Greek Philosophers, After Aristotle and Modern Science Philosophy

Psychology is a living discipline with its own history, current concerns and future considerations to consider. However, by looking at the present is insufficient to explain why modern psychology is like it is. In order to understand its concerns and conflicts, we need to gain understanding of the history and philosophers' theories which had shaped that history by looking back to the past philosophers. (Hayes, 1986) Typically, there is no doubt that psychologists would opposed that psychology should not be a discipline separate from philosophy. Merely the fact that psychology is thought of as a

science sets it apart from philosophy and, frequently, makes it quite incompatible with philosophy.

Yet psychology and philosophy are bound by history as the school of psychology received methods from the school of philosophy that psychology employs in analyzing and evaluating in all that it entails. The idea of the earth and living organisms revolve and evolve in a systematic way were derived from the Early Greek Philosophers. The derivation was that Greece was a maritime country and array of life forms could be observed led to some early Greeks developing rudimentary theories of evolution. However, the evolutionary theories were unable to develop fully due to Plato and Aristotle disbelief in evolution.

For Aristotle perspective, his belief that knowledge is gained by sensory experience, everything within its nature as its own purpose to determine its living and everything happens for a reason rather than natural occurrence. Wrenn (2006) proposed that to Aristotle, reason is the source of the first principles of knowledge. Sensory experiences perceived the object while reasoning forms an abstract and ideally concept. However, reasoning itself was already a source of ideas potentially. Hence, sensations were limited to an individual as reason opposed to the sense. Steadily, it arrived via a process of development with a sense of thought blended in to interpret sensory experiences.

Whilst, Plato, a disciple of Socrates and a teacher of Aristotle was influenced by the Pythagoreans opposed that sensory experience led to ignorance but proposed the idea of the reminiscence theory of knowledge. He theorized

that the number of pure forms were fixed forever and condemned into irreversible change. Even though Aristotle made several mistakes, his findings brought Greek philosophy into greater heights.

Thus, these findings were significant as it replaced supernatural powers explanations to naturalistic observations by encouraging evaluation and criticism on theories. This issue was put to rest when the Christians added some conceptions on divine creation as described in Genesis. They believed that God's wisdom had created a fixed number of species and the modification could only be modified by God, not by natural forces. This account was then carried until modern times.

After Greece was defeated by the Spartans, followed by Aristotle's death (322 B. C.), people were interested in the practice of living by beginning to question what is the nature of a good life and less concerned with philosophical theory when Romans invaded Greek territory with the continuation on the increasing level of demoralization inflicted in the people of Greece. Many philosophers (e. g. Sceptics, Cynics, Epicureans, Stoics and the Christians) were overwhelmed by the questions and started to seek answers to it.

According to Philo whom believed in Neo-Platonism, proposed that people either pursue a physical life or a spiritual life. However, the Romans weakened the spiritual teachings which led to an incompleteness of Philo's theory. The Roman emperor Constantine (ca. 272-337) was said to be the one who changed the fate of Christianity. Constantine wanted uniformity in Christian scriptures and he implemented a "Constantine bible" to ensure

everyone follow his new testament. The Christianity framework was provided by St. Augustine (ca. 354-430) who combined Stoicism, Neo-Platonism and Judaism to produce a worldview Christianity. His view was that people should be able to differentiate right from wrong internally. It was important because it ascribes to internal locus of control. Additionally, influence by Plato to know God via introspection and scriptures to seek truth. Suggested that they should be guilt-free from their sins after confessing to God but not guaranteed eternal life in heaven.

The beginning of the Dark Ages came after St. Augustine's death. During the Dark Ages, scholars of different countries started to gather all the works done by the Roman and Greek philosophers (e. g. Aristotle) by translating them and acquired the works to make great contributions in medicine, science and mathematics. It needed some criticism and evaluations to some Aristotelian principles in order for sciences and the arts to free themselves for the discovery of modern scientific laws and empirical methods. People who attempted to combine Aristotle's philosophy with Christianity were called scholastic. Among them was St. Thomas Aquinas who accepted both reason and faith as ways of knowing God.

The renaissance period was whereby the people started to be human-centered instead of God-centered by accentuating its interest to discovering a human-being for the first time. René Descartes is often credited as being the " Father of Modern Philosophy." Justification of this title was due both to the revelation of traditional Scholastic-Aristotelian philosophy prevalent at his time and to his development and the promoting of mechanistic modern science. First, Descartes was doubtful of Scholasticism as it relied on

sensation as the origin for all perceived knowledge. Second, he wanted to replace causal model of scientific explanation with the more modern, mechanistic model. (Skirry, 2008)

Attempting to portray the definition of how the plane flies: the perpendicular distance of the fly from each wall and from the ceiling. He also realized that any point in space could be defined in a similar way by measuring their distances from perpendicular lines or planes. He made a breakthrough in mathematics which was commonly known as “ Cartesian coordinates” and the perpendicular lines as the x- and y-axes. It led to further development of mathematics such as analytical geometry, blending of algebra and geometry. The discovery of the coordinate plane, alone, is a huge contribution to psychology as the terms of independent and dependent variables were defined the variables relationship, calculating correlations, performing tests of significance, and other quantitative analysis would not be possible without this discovery (Fancher, 1979).

Likewise, the development of analytical geometry methodology was derived as inductive and deductive reasoning, further developed the future of psychology. Significantly, the introduction of methodology for the precise and structured form of evaluating and verifying of thought or supposition was crucial to the development of the field of science in general, but particularly the field of psychology. Descartes’ method fulfilled the fundamental steps of the scientific method that modern sciences hail as a core procedural guideline.

Evidently, Descartes had a profound insight of viewing the world and that these theories are still penetrating till now and seen in much of modern psychology. For Descartes' method of ascertaining the truth by reason alone left out an entire realm of discussion that dealt not with how the senses perceived, but what the senses perceived. Nevertheless, Jacobsen et al (2009) propound that psychology has evolved from philosophy, science, medicine and theology. Psychology evolved out of a coalescence of natural science and the branch of philosophy known as epistemology or the theory of knowledge.

Ultimately, without the discoveries of early philosophers and people trying to seek a good life – After Aristotle and the rebirth period of being accentuating on human-beings, modern science and philosophy would not been in the history, psychology as a subject would not be recognized due to insufficient concrete evidence to support its existence as an independent discipline. At the same time, I have tried to display patterns of thinking emerged within the psychological discipline and how they exert influence to subsequent generations. The implication was just a mode of scientific thought is not valid to produce a strong theory. To put it simply, trying to understand how a cake is baked, one could not miss out on the event of the cake. In fact, the cake was originally constructed from the ingredients such as flour, fats, water, sugar and applying heat to it.

Nonetheless, once the cake is baked, it can neither be reversible nor the ingredients of the cake are explainable. If by explanation, means allow one to understand the cake better than others which also denote that knowing what elements constitutes a cake is not enough. What makes it important is

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the understanding of the context behind it Interestingly, as psychologists we cannot ignore some palatable truth about the history of psychology. Rather, we need to be highly-aware of the social implications of what we are doing and what our predecessors have done so that one would not follow the footsteps of the wrongdoings made by past philosophers and it also a pivot to other researchers in either the psychology or philosophy discipline.

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