

Mind and body – history of psychology

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The history of psychology dates back to the Middle Ages and it was considered a branch of Philosophy until the middle of the the 19th century, when psychology developed as an independent scientific discipline. The term Psychology comes from two Greek words: psyche, which means “ soul,” and logos, 'the study of. ' These root words were combined in the 16th century, at a time when the human soul, spirit, or mind was seen as distinct from the body. It is to Rene Descartes, a French mathematician, philosopher, and physiologist, that Psychology owes the first systematic account of the mind and body relationship.

Descartes was the first to talk about mind and body interactions, and eventually had a great influence in later psychologists and thinkers. He believed that the mind and body were distinct essences, but that they had direct influence on each other. In other words, Descartes proposed that not only the body can influence the mind, but that the mind could also affect the body. Mind can be defined as the collective aspects of intellect and consciousness which are a combination of thought, perception, emotion, imagination, wills and most important reasons (Merriam- Webster. Mind can also be define according to Jean Piaget's theory as an active biological system that seeks, selects, interprets, and recognizes environmental information to fit with or adjust to its own existing mental structures.

We can define consciousness as the quality of the mind generally regarded to comprise qualities such as subjectivity, self-awareness and the ability to perceive the relationship between oneself and one's environment. Merriam-Wesbter). We can say that dreams, emotions, surroundings, upbringing, environment, religion, and the senses; sight, smell, touch, and brain activity

comprise the basic characteristics of being able to observe the world and experience it. Language can also be considered part of the consciousness because it allows humans to communicate the experience of consciousness, although it is not consciousness itself.

It was not until 1879 when Wilhelm Wundt who is considered the “father of psychology” founded the first psychological laboratory in Germany hoping to use scientific methods to understand the human mind by identifying the constituent parts of the human consciousness, in almost the same way that a chemical compound is broken into various elements and the debate on how to describe and explain the human mind and behavior began. According to Wundt, the man was merely a product of his genes.

In his words, “If one assumes that there is nothing there to begin with but a body, a brain and a nervous system, then one must try to educate by inducing sensations in that nervous system.” In a Wundt textbook, translated into English in 1911, Wundt declared, “The soul can no longer exist in the face of our present day physiological knowledge.....” Now a days we know that “The mind and body are definitely related, they are not two but actually one—a single bodymind—and every part of the body is the mind expressing itself through that part.

When something goes wrong it is usually a combination of both physical and psycho-emotional causes” (Shapiro, 2007). Because conscious as described before is actually the quality of the mind then mind and body and conscious are one. Without mind the body cannot fulfill its purposes and without a body a mind is useless therefore without a conscious there is no mind and without a mind as stated before the body would not be able to function. Although

Philosophically we can say that consciousness is the process of a thinker focusing a thought on some aspect of existence.

In conclusion Descartes theory was correct, that not only the body can influence the mind, but that the mind could also affect the body. The body responds to the way humans think, feel and act and this is what is called the mind/body connection. Life itself brings issues that can be disruptive emotionally and physically. Symptoms may vary, but to name a few; back pain, dry mouth, headaches, chest pain, ulcers, etc. , they can all be a sign that our emotional health is out of balance due to stress, a divorce, changing jobs, starting school, etc. etc. The best way to deal with the mind/body connection is to try to recognize, control and understand emotions and try to figure out the cause of the stress. Following are some suggestions that can be helpful to have a good mind and body; is to learn relaxation techniques like meditation, exercise, eat healthy, learn how to express feelings and find a friend or a loved one to talk too. These suggestions may be very helpful to the mind and body connection.