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HISTORY  
AND  
SYSTEMS  
OF  
PSYCHOLOGY

FIFTH EDITION

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JAMES F. BRENNAN

# **History and Systems of Psychology**

*Fifth Edition*

**James F. Brennan**

*Loyola University of Chicago*



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*Para a minha mulher, Maria Cândida,  
e para as minhas filhas, Tara e Mikala,  
por todo o seu apoio.*

# ❧ Preface ❧

My prefatory remarks for this edition cover the same ground as in prior editions, namely, that this text is written as an introduction to psychology's past, grounded firmly in the intellectual history of Western civilization. Psychology emerged as a scientific discipline within the context of the intellectual history of Western Europe. The progression of ideas that led to the post-Renaissance development of empirical science allowed psychology to assume its present diverse form. Accordingly, the scope of twentieth-century systems of psychology may be best understood in terms of the evolution of Western thought from the time of antiquity. This book contains a historical perspective on the intellectual development of Western civilization, which gradually focuses on the emergence of psychology as an independent, recognized scientific enterprise.

The first half of the book introduces the major themes of psychological inquiry initially considered by early Greek scholars and subsequently modified by Christian and Islamic writers. As modern science grew out of the Renaissance, the place of psychological inquiry became a source of controversy that resulted in competing philosophical models of the nature of psychology. These models are organized along characteristic national trends of psychological views proposed by scholars in France, Britain, and Germany. The tremendous advances of the empirical disciplines, which culminated in the nineteenth century, led to the articulation of the formal study of psychology in the 1870s by Wundt and Brentano.

The second half of the book deals with the major twentieth-century systems of psychology: the American functional movement, Gestalt psychology, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, and the third force movement. A chapter concludes this survey of the systems with an outline of trends within the more contemporary, postsystem period of psychology's development. In the 15 years of work on the four previous editions of this project, the database of psychology has seemed to grow exponentially. The disciplinary content of psychology has diffused to various allied fields. Cognitive science and neuroscience have matured and brought psychology into intimate contact with research trends derived from other disciplines. Such developments are obviously difficult to capture in a book of this nature, yet they justify even more the need for understanding the historical background of psychology.

I would like to thank those who have taken the time, with previous editions of this work, to offer suggestions for improvement and clarification. I especially want to thank my colleague Dr. Michael Riccards, president of Fitchburg State

College, for his continued support during the various iterations of this project. I must also thank the many students who, over the years, have helped me express my ideas and have always ignited the spark that made teaching psychology so much fun.

I would like to acknowledge the helpful comments of the following people, who served as reviewers for the publisher: Bill Faw of Brewton-Parker College, Charles Johnson of the University of Evansville, and Denis Nissim-Sabat of Mary Washington College.

I am grateful to my wife, Maria, and daughters, Tara and Mikala, for their ongoing help and consistent support during the years devoted to this project and to other academic demands. Their patience with me and this project merits far more than a dedication.

**James F. Brennan**  
*Chicago, Illinois*

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# Introduction: Past for Present

Approaches to Historical Investigation

Organization of the Book

Eastern Traditions in Psychology

    The Crossroads: Persia and the Middle East

    India

        Hindu Science and Philosophy

        Buddhism

    China

        Early Philosophies

        Confucius

        Later Philosophies

A Note on Resources

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A cursory glance at contemporary psychology reveals startling diversity. Psychology seems to mean many things to many people. In everyday life the word *psychology* has a variety of meanings with mentalistic, behavioristic, or abnormal implications. The popular media seem to reinforce this perception. For example, we often hear the words *psychological*, *psychiatric*, and *psychoanalytic* used interchangeably. We often read or see research results on smoking or drug hazards conducted by psychologists but described as medical research. Or we see instances in which a psychologist, using “armchair” methodology, responds in a newspaper with profound advice to a reader in distress. Nor does the college-level introductory course to psychology necessarily dispel the confusion. Those who have taken such a course may have dim, confused recollections of IQ tests, dogs salivating, hierarchies of anxiety, the Oedipus complex, figure-ground reversals, rats running through a maze, heart rate control, peer group influence, and so on. Similarly, listing the range of positions held by psychologists does not resolve the confusion. We find psychologists in hospitals and community mental health centers, in advertising and industry, in government and the military, and in the universities.

While the diversity of modern psychology is a source of bewilderment, psychology’s range of study is justifiably broad. As a formal, independent discipline studied and taught in universities, psychology has been in existence for only a century. However, we should recognize that people have been “psychologizing” since they first began to wonder about themselves. The long history of theories and

models of psychology slowly evolved, mostly within philosophy, until the nineteenth century, when the methodological spirit of science was applied to the study of psychology, and the formal discipline of psychology appeared in Western intellectual institutions.

The emergence of psychology as a formal discipline takes us to the problem of science. Generally, *science* is defined as the systematic acquisition of knowledge. However, from a more narrow perspective, the acquisition of knowledge is limited to observations validated by our senses. That is, we must see, hear, touch, taste, or smell events to confirm their existence as scientific data. This type of science is called *empiricism*, and its most controlled application is called the *experimental method*, in which variables are manipulated and measured. Over a century ago, this more narrow, empirical definition of science linked up with a nineteenth-century model of what psychology should study to form the discipline of psychology. Yet neither at that time nor during the last hundred years did that form of psychology win universal acceptance. Some scholars argued for a different model of psychology, a broader definition of science, or both. Thus psychology's long past, coupled with more recent differences of opinion about the form that the discipline of psychology should take, resulted in the heterogeneous discipline we study today.

Although the variety of opinions about psychology can be confusing, it can also be a source of excitement. Psychology is a young, unsettled, and often unwieldy discipline that has highly stimulating subject matter to investigate—human activity. The purpose of studying psychology's history is to help remove the confusion caused by the diversity of psychology. By using this diversity as a resource rather than a hindrance, our understanding of psychology's development makes contemporary psychology richer for us. There are other reasons to study the history of psychology. Knowledge of the past per se is certainly worthwhile and beneficial in providing perspective. Furthermore, the study of psychology's history may help illuminate some of the questions that have concerned scholars through the ages. However, the most pressing reason to study the history of psychology may be to understand the basis of its present diversity.

## APPROACHES TO HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION

In their examination of the past, historians have proposed structures, or models, within which events may be categorized, correlated, and explained. For example, the preeminent historian of psychology E. G. Boring (1950) contrasted the *great man* and *Zeitgeist* models as they applied to the history of psychology. Expressed succinctly, the *great man theory* holds that historical progress occurs through the actions of great persons who are able to synthesize events and by their own efforts change the path of those events toward some innovation. The *Zeitgeist*, or “spirit of the times,” model argues that events by themselves have a momentum that permits the right person at the right time to express an innovation. Accordingly,

Martin Luther (1483–1546), in nailing his theses condemning corruption in the Church to the church door at Wittenberg in 1517, may be viewed either as a formidable figure starting the Reformation or as the agent of Reformation forces already at work.

A variant of the *Zeitgeist* view for the history of science, proposed by Kuhn (1970), suggests that social and cultural forces develop paradigms, or models, of science at various stages and that scientific work is conducted within a given paradigm for a limited period until that paradigm is replaced. The change in paradigms is a by-product of both the cultural needs of the age and the inability of the old paradigm to accommodate new scientific findings. Accordingly, Kuhn presents scientific progress as a cyclic process. Within a given scientific paradigm that is accepted by a consensus of scientists, an anomaly arises that cannot be explained or accommodated by the paradigm. A crisis is generated, and new theories compete to replace the inadequate paradigm. Finally, a single view gains the commitment and allegiance of a group of scientists who implement a scientific revolution, and a new paradigm is accepted. When an anomaly again arises, the cycle is repeated. Thus Kuhn proposed a relativity in the understanding of theories, facts, and observations which is sensitive to the implicit assumptions of scientists.

Another manner of structuring the historical progress of science has been proposed by Watson (1971). Watson offered prescriptions, or dimensions for classifying psychological issues, by examining and describing the relationship between scientific findings and the prevailing cultural forces of a given age. Essentially, Watson's strategy evaluated a number of possible underlying assumptions and consequent implications of theoretical positions (details of Watson's prescriptive dimensions are given in Chapter 9). This approach is useful as an evaluative tool to compare the issues and implications of various theoretical positions within psychology.

Interpretations and explanations of historical events certainly help us bring order to the history of psychology. As we examine psychology's past and its contemporary state, we will refer to the various interpretations of scientific history to understand the meaning of specific intellectual movements. However, this book may be best described as eclectic in orientation. As its author, I am not a historian, but rather a psychologist writing of the historical antecedents of my discipline in the clearest way I can, without any commitment or allegiance to a particular interpretation of historical events.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This work is divided into two parts. The first deals with the evolution of competing models of psychology from the classic Greek philosophers to the emergence of empirical psychology in the 1870s. Although the study of psychology is our main concern, such a study must be placed within the broad, rich context of Western European intellectual thought. In so doing, we implicitly recognize that psychology

is an integral part of the tradition of Western civilization. The goal of the first part of this book, then, is to present psychology's history—a history that is intimately linked to the milestones of Western civilization. In particular, the close association of psychology's history with Western traditions flows logically from basic philosophical premises about the nature of the person, which date back to the ancient Greeks. However, in order to keep an accurate perspective on psychology, it is critical to recognize that important statements about human activity were made within the rich traditions of non-Western thought. Thus the next section, "Eastern Traditions in Psychology," summarizes some of those movements before we proceed to the main themes of psychology within Western intellectual history.

The second part of the book, starting with Chapter 12, considers the major movements that developed as psychology became more distinct from philosophy, physiology, and physics. It is difficult to conceive of twentieth-century systems of psychology without an understanding and appreciation of the events preceding the last hundred years. As will become apparent, few of the critical issues that have emerged during the last hundred years of psychology are really novel. Emphases have shifted, new technologies for study have been developed, and new jargon has been invented, but essentially we are stimulated and perplexed by the same issues that confronted our ancestors in their wonder about themselves.

At the end of the book is a glossary of terms. In the study of the history of psychology, we confront terminology derived from a variety of disciplines, a reflection of the diversity of psychology's antecedents. Jargon describing concepts and issues from such disciplines as philosophy, physics, and physiology fit into the development of psychology. Accordingly, the Glossary offers ready definitions of some of the terms needed to understand the evolution of psychological thought.

## **EASTERN TRADITIONS IN PSYCHOLOGY**

As stated above, psychology, as it emerged as a formal discipline of study in nineteenth-century Europe, was the product of an intellectual tradition that viewed human experience through a particular set of assumptions. The very conceptualization of psychology as we know it today was formed, nurtured, structured, and argued over during the 2,500 years of turbulent intellectual progress that have elapsed since the flowering of classical Greek thought. Psychology's reliance on Western intellectual thought must be appreciated, and this relationship justifies limiting the focus of this book to Western traditions.

Although the longstanding intellectual tie between contemporary empirical psychology and Western thought is apparent, it is also important to recognize that non-Western philosophies have given considerable attention to the nature of the person and the internal world of individual reflection. So, before proceeding with our story, it is appropriate to pause briefly to review some of the alternative approaches to the subject matter of psychology, articulated through a variety of intellectual works in religion, especially in Eastern philosophies. These non-Western

sources of psychology's past often brought new achievements to Western intellectual progress or resulted in the rediscovery of ancient writings preserved by Eastern scholars. For example, algebra, usually attributed to ancient Indian philosophers, was first used in the West by ancient Greeks of the fourth century before Christ, but was lost during the Middle Ages. Western Europe recovered it as a result of contacts with Islamic culture during the Crusades. Algebra had been preserved by Arab scholars, and through them its methodology and very name were reintroduced to the West (*al-jbr* means "to reunite separate or broken parts").

As we begin the study of psychology's past, beginning with ancient Greek thought in Chapter 2, it will be helpful to keep in mind the broader perspective; namely, that intellectual achievements were occurring simultaneously in other cultures and traditions. For the most part, these events were parallel developments with little interaction, but in some cases these advances did enrich Western traditions.

### **The Crossroads: Persia and the Middle East**

The Crusades, which are described in Chapter 3 within their historical context, produced many benefits for Western intellectual progress, especially in providing contacts beyond the intellectual limits of western European thought of that period. Indeed, it was the scholarship of Muslim and Jewish teachers in Islamic territories that had preserved the essential body of ancient Greek writings and extended their interpretations to philosophy, science, and medicine. Islamic scholars were able to extend earlier intellectual achievements because of their contacts with Eastern civilizations, so that Eastern thought was transmitted from its origins to centers of intellectual achievement in the Arab world, and consequently to western Europe.

In much the same way as its Arab neighbors, Persia served as a conduit between East and West. Occupying roughly the territory of present-day Iran and the immediately surrounding area, the ancient Persians were an Indo-European tribe that came into contact with India to the east, Russia and the Slavic tribes to the north, and Arabia and the Middle East to the west. Led by great kings such as Cyrus (reigned 550–529 B.C.) and Darius (reigned 521–486 B.C.), ancient Persia grew in territory and power. However, when Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) defeated Darius III (reigned 336–330 B.C.) at Arbela, resulting in the latter's death, Persia became a province of Macedonia. Whereas Persia lost its empire, ancient Greece increased its contacts with the East—to the ultimate benefit of Greek intellectual life.

The central religious philosophy of ancient Persia was named after the priest and prophet Zarathustra (reigned ca. 628–551 B.C.), also known by the Greek name Zoroaster. Legend has it that he was born of the spirit of the supreme god, Ahura-Mazda, the Lord of Life. Zarathustra personified goodness, love, wisdom, and beauty but was severely tempted by the devil to do evil. As a reward for his virtue, God gave him the *Avesta*, a book of knowledge and wisdom, which formed the basis of Zarathustrian teaching. The *Avesta*, or what survives of it, is a collection of prayers, legends, poetry, and laws which describes the struggle between the god

of good and the devil. Earthly existence is a transition in this conflict between good and evil, and it will last for 12,000 years. The virtues of purity and honesty will lead to everlasting life. Because they are targets of evil in life, the bodies of the dead must not be burned or buried, but rather left to birds of prey or thrown to the dogs and returned rapidly to nature. The supreme god, Ahura-Mazda, created and ruled the world and was assisted by lesser gods; Zarathustra taught that Ahura-Mazda had seven aspects for people to emulate or strive for: light, good mind or wisdom, right, dominion, well-being, piety, and immortality.

As part of this earthly conflict, individuals were engaged in a struggle between good and evil, and had the free will to choose between them. This psychology led to a code of ethics and values that stressed honesty and piety. The major sin in this code was unbelief, which was dealt with swiftly. The moral code was enforced by the priests, called *magi* (from the Persian word for “sorcerer”) because of their reputation for wisdom, who were also practitioners of Persian medicine. As in pre-Renaissance Europe, religion and medicine were mixed by the priestly class in their service to the masses.

The legacy of Zarathustran philosophy and religion were far reaching. The conflict between good and evil found expression in the works of the ancient Greek philosophers. The emphasis on one god was paralleled in Judaism, and there may have been other Zarathustran influences on Hebrew thought. Even the Christmas visit of the Magi and the birth of the boy-god have precedents in Zarathustran tradition. Occupying the bridge between the Hindu society of India and the Arabic and Greek societies of the Middle East, Persia had an influential and rich position and put its imprint on the mix of ideas.

## India

As the birthplace of Buddha, the historical home of the Hindus and the metaphysical *Upanishads*, the target of repeated Muslim invasion, and the object of colonial exploitation by several European powers, India is a storehouse of deep intellectual variation. As a subcontinent filled with polyglot tribes, often clashing yet more often living in mutual tolerance, India’s material and human resources have attracted outsiders throughout history. Western interest in India goes back a considerable time in recent history. Marco Polo visited India in the thirteenth century, and was followed 200 years later by a Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama. Columbus was seeking India when he discovered the Americas in 1492. In succession, the Dutch, French, and British established power bases and colonial economies in India.

***Hindu Science and Philosophy.*** Much of the knowledge of ancient India comes from the *Vedas*, the *Book of Knowledge*. The *Vedas* are a collection of lessons, hymns, poetry, and prose that were compiled from oral recitations. The *Rig-veda* is perhaps most famous as a literary achievement, involving many hymns and poems praising various objects of worship, such as the sun, moon, wind, dawn, and fire. But the *Upanishads* are of particular interest because they represent the



collected wisdom of Hindu scholars who thought about the person's relation to the world. An early expression of Hindu pantheistic philosophy, the *Upanishads* are a collection of over 1,000 discourses authored by various scholars between 800 and 500 B.C., seeking to describe individual relations to the universe. The *Upanishads* are important because several predominant themes in them reflect the unique character of Indian philosophy. Distrust of the intellect and sensory knowledge is a dominant theme, as is the search for self-control, unity, and universal knowledge. The process of attaining these goals involves shedding knowledge, participation, and even awareness of the particular and the ephemeral. We are not body or mind or both; rather, we are an impersonal, neuter, and pervading reality. Within the lessons of the *Upanishads* are themes of special metaphysical knowledge that secure for us a release from the bonds of the particular and material. The *Upanishads* focus on methods of spiritual transcendence. Transmigration of a person's essence is viewed as punishment for evil living, and eventual release from successive reincarnations is the way in which we transcend these bonds. By eliminating individual desires through ascetic living, we can escape from our individualism and be reabsorbed into a whole unity of being.

The goals expressed in the *Upanishads* lead to a psychology that is quite opposite to the basic philosophical tenets of Western psychology. Whereas the latter recognizes the individual asserting himself or herself as a process of successful development and adaptation (indeed, much of Western psychology actually describes and predicts ways to facilitate this individuation), the *Upanishads* propose the opposite. The mystical, impersonal, and unified themes of the *Upanishads* reveal a harmony that can be achieved by rejecting individual expression. These themes pervade Hindu and Buddhist thought and provide a striking contrast for understanding some of the basic differences between Indian and Western thought.

The Hindu philosophies have important implications for psychology. First, the individual is characteristically a part of a greater and more desirable unity. Individual growth, then, is away from individuality and toward an emergence into the bliss of universal knowledge. Second, the assertion of individuality is seen, not as meaningful in itself, but rather as an activity to be minimized and avoided. Sensory and mental events are unreliable. Indeed, truth lies in transcending sensory and mental activities and voiding consciousness. Finally, the emphasis on humanism and the centrality of the individual self, expressed in some Western views of psychology, is out of synchrony with the major themes of Indian philosophy. According to the basic Hindu conceptualization, the integrity of the individual person is questionable, because the individual occupies an insignificant place relative to the entire, harmonious complexity that is the cosmos.

**Buddhism.** Although Buddhism spread to China, Japan, and Southeast Asia, it originated with the Indian philosopher and teacher Siddhartha Gautama (ca. 563–483 B.C.), Buddha. Indeed, Buddhism served as a vehicle for exporting many Indian products besides philosophy. The decimal system was introduced to China by Buddhist missionaries, and the mathematical bases of Chinese astronomy came to China with Buddhism.