Define Psychology using three perspectives: Psychoanalytical, Behaviourist and Cognitive.

The word 'Psychology' is derived from two Greek root: 'Psyche', meaning 'mind' or 'soul' and 'Logos', meaning 'study of'.
A more recent definition is that of Atk inson et al (1991) suggesting that psychology is: 'The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes'.
A contradiction to this is the dictionary definition claiming that psychology is 'the study of human and animal behaviour' and the informal term be ing 'a person's mental makeup'.
All definitions are correct in their own rights but as simple definitions are slightly misleading as throughout history, psychologists have not only disagreed about the designation of psychology but what and how it should be studied.
I will be concentrating on defining psychology using a variety of perspectives and describing how psychologists have developed them. Firstly, I will introduce, discuss and explain each approach before then deciding on arguments for and against th em.
Finally, I will give an evaluation of the relevance of each approach, highlighting the bias and flaws and inputting my own ideas and opinions on what I feel best defines psychology.

Psychoanalysis is name applied to a specific method of investigating unconscious mental process and to a form of psychotherapy. The term also refers to the systematic structure of psychoanalytical theory, which is based on the relation of conscious psychological processes.
The technique of psychoanalysis and much of the ps ychoanalytic theory were developed by Sigmund Freud (1856 -1939). His work concerning the structure and the functioning of the human mind had far -reaching significance, both practically and scientifically. Contemporaries of Freud, such as Carl Jung and Alfred Adler, despite being inspired by Freudian theory, emphasized different issues in human development and experience. This wider theoretical framework is known as the psychodynamic approach.

The first of Freud's innovations was his acknowledgment of uncon scious psychiatric processes that follow laws different from those that preside over conscious experience. The laws of logic, indispensable for conscious thinking, do not apply to the unconscious mental productions. The unconscious part of the mind was seen as being dominated by the 'id', the primitive part of an individual's personality that is purely concerned with self -gratification. This part carries out the 'primary process thinking'. The second area is the 'ego', dominating the conscious mind. This is the part of the mind that is in contact with the outside world and as such carries out 'secondary process thinking'. The third part, the 'superego' that develops as we become more aware of the rules and conventions of society and specifically of our paren ts. According to Freud, the ego and superego dwell largely in the conscious mind, while the id is in the unconscious area of the mind.
These ideas are just a few of the controversial aspects of Freud's theories.

The psychodynamic approach is also used to e xplain various unconscious anxieties that can be expressed in different ways. An important contribution of the psychodynamic approach is suggested by Tavris and Wade (1995), they feel it may be shown in all of us, that due to our unconscious patterns and needs, we tend to be the last to know the reasons for our behaviour.
 Tavris and Wade also suggest that it is possible to apply the psychodynamic approach to account for unpredictability of our behaviour, the unwanted negative moods that arise for no appar ent reason and the emotional overreaction to innocent remarks.
The many supporters and critics include Slife and Williams (1995), who put forward that as the unconscious mind influences of which we are unaware, we are unaware of the forces that guide us th erefore we are not capable of intervening to change or go against them.
According to Freud, we are a large part of legacy of our past. Our adult life is shaped by the way in which we have charted our stages of development and dealt with the conflicts prese nted in each. As Slife and Williams point out, this view of development makes us very much 'victims of our past'.

In order to accepted as a scientific theory, it should be possible to conceive of the circumstances of where the theory might be proved wron g, because if there is no way to suggest the theory might be wrong, there is no grounds for accepting that it might be right. Such a theory would lack 'falsifiability.'
Much of Freudian theory makes use of concepts or process (such as the superego) that can be observed directly, but can only be inferred. Although offering a persuasive description of human behaviour, it seems to explain a lot but predict very little, therefore firing claims about the lack of validity.
Taking the 'holism and interactionism' view in the reductionism debate it is suggested that there is a great practical difficulty in investigating the theories. Experimental research carried out on Freudian hypotheses has failed to support his theory and ideas. This is agreeable with the view taken by psychoanalytic and psychodynamic psychologists, as holistic explanations tend to get more hypothetical and separated from physical reality.
The aforementioned unpredictability of the theories means they lack the power of the physical sciences, whi ch is another argument against holism. The strength of ideas concocted by Freud, Tavris and Wade et al on the other hand was that they have a large amount of explanatory power and have something to say on a huge variety of topics.
Again taking the holism view, the psychodynamic approach does not ignore the complexity of the individuals problem instead it is assumed that 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.
Consequently I can conclude that although psychoanalysis/dynamic may fail on scientific and validity grounds, the ideas have provided research, discussion and reference for the last hundred years therefore the must be some reality in the theory.

Behaviourism is a movement in psychology that advocates the use of strict experimental measures to study observable behaviour (or responses) in relation to the environment (or stimuli).
 The American psychologist John B Watson first developed behaviourism in early in the early 20th century. The dominant view during this period was that

psychology is the study of inner experiences or feelings by subjective, introspective methods. Watson did not deny the existence of inner experiences, but he insisted that these could not be studied because they were not observable.

Watson proposed to make study of psychology scientific by using only objective procedures such as laboratory experiments designed to establish statistically significant results. This led him to formulate a stimulus-response theory of psychology, this claims that all complex forms of behaviour - emotions, habits, and such like - are seen as composed of simple muscular and glandular elements that can be observed and measured. He claimed that emotional reactions are learned in much the same way as other skills.

Watson's stimulus-response resulted in a tremendous increase in research activity on learning in animals and in humans, from infancy to early adulthood.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, American psychologist Edward Lee Thorndike (1874-1949) investigated how animals learn. In one series of observations he placed a cat in a 'puzzle box' and measured the time it took to escape. Over a number of trials, the time taken to escape decreased. From his observations he developed the Law of (positive) Effect, this states that any behaviour leading to a positive outcome will tend to be repeated in similar circumstances.

Thorndike's work was developed by the behaviourists including B.F. Skinner (1904-90). Skinner believed it was unnecessary to look for any underlying causes of behaviour. He explained all behaviour with reference to the reinforcement contingencies that could be used to change it.

Reinforcement is a key concept in behaviourism; it increases the likelihood that an action will be repeated in the future.

Punishment on the other hand, reduces the likelihood that an action will be repeated. For example, shouting at the child who is behaving in an irritating way, might in fact lead to the behaviour appearing more frequently. The shouting, therefore, has seen as reinforcing (e.g. by providing attention) rather punishing.

One of the main moral issues surrounding behaviourism relates to its ideas about control.

A primary belief in behavioural theory is the belief that human behaviour is the belief that human behaviour does not just happen, but rather it is caused by environmental events that we cannot control. In other words, behaviourism is strongly deterministic. This means it is unfalsifiable since it always assumes a cause exists, even if one has not been found yet.

The behavioural model has been criticised by other approaches for ignoring innate learning due to evolution. Taking the reductionism view, this is where others feel perhaps there is oversimplification and 'the whole maybe greater than the sum of its parts'.

The behaviourists' value of explanation is very simple; a great variety of phenomena is explanation is very simple, a great variety of phenomena is explained using only a few (classical and operant) principles.

The meaning of an action, such as a hand wave, is gained from its situation (greeting or drowning) not its underlying physiological description.

Behaviourists carry out their investigation by studying large groups; this takes the nomothetic argument. The disadvantage of this argument is that we develop a superficial understanding of any one person. Basically, nomothetic generalisations may be too inaccurate to understand an individual fully.

On the other hand, behaviourism has produced many practical applications some of which have been very effective. This could be associated with reductionism view the theory has taken; breaking the whole down into smaller parts enables it to be easily tested.

Although first presented as a disadvantage, explaining phenomena in terms of their physical basis can ideally gain the support and credibility of science.

As mentioned before behaviourism is strongly deterministic, this means that the theories are easily explained, predicted and controlled behaviour above the levels achieved by unaided commonsense.

The nomothetic approach presents the ability to generalise laws from limited instances and is very useful in predicting and controlling behaviour.

Consequently, I can conclude that although behaviourism may fail a complete understanding of any individual, the ideas have produced many practical applications, which has dominated experimental psychology. This approach emphasizes the importance of environment (as opposed to genetics0in shaping how people behave.

Cognition is the act or process of knowing; it includes attention, perception, memory, reasoning, judgement, imaging, thinking, and speech. The entire field-cognitive psychology-has arisen since the 1950s. It studies cognition mainly from the viewpoint of information handling.

The cognitive approach is the dominant approach in modern psychology. The study of the physical world and the mental world and the differences between them was starting point for cognitive psychology. In some early experiments, Gustav Fechner (1801-87) was able to demonstrate some of these differences. For example, he investigated how much louder a sound had to be, compared with the original sound, before a person would perceive it as twice as loud. Fechner discovered that the sound had to approximately eight times greater before it was perceived as twice as loud . Obviously, the physical sensations created by stimuli impinging on the sense organs are only the first steps in how we come to experience our world.

According to Wilhelm Wundt (1823-1920), psychology was the study of immediate experience, and that excluded any consideration of cultural or social interpretations.

Early proponents of the cognitive approach (such as Miller et al. 1960) pointed out that behavioural accounts were inadequate because they say nothing about how people process information. Cognitive psychologist, on the other hand, went on to propose models of human thought and problem solving (e.g. Newell and Simon 1972). These advances continue today. Cognitive psychology has helped explain many aspects of everyday behaviour and experience, e.g. why we forget things, why eyewitness testimony is often inaccurate and why we experience visual illusions. By applying knowledge from cognitive psychology, we can improve our performance in many areas.

Cognitive psychology has influenced and integrated w ith many other approaches and areas of study to produce, for example, social learning theory, cognitive neuropsychology, and artificial intelligence.
Cognitive psychologists assume that mental processes can and should be investigated scientifically. The be lief of cognitive psychologists is that humans are not merely passive renders to their environment.

One of weaknesses of the cognitive approach is its failure to address everyday behaviour and experience.
Wundt set the agenda for ignoring social and cultu ral variables and although some cognitive psychologists have shown the importance of these variables (e.g. Bartlett 1932, Deregowski 1972) they do not form part of the general debate in cognitive psychology.
The cognitive model like behaviourism has been a ccused of being over simplistic, it is said to ignore the complexity of human functioning compared to computer functioning. To put it one way, just it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck does not mean that it really is a duck. There is more to a duck than walking and quacking. Therefore, to date, the computer metaphor remains an inadequate way of modelling human cognitive processes.
This model has also been accused of being to unrealistic and over hypothetical because of the lack of attention paid to b iological influences and grounding mental processes. Another accusation would be how the model seemingly ignores the emotional life of humans, their conscious experience and possible use of freewill.
The strengths of the most dominant approach today are th at investigates many areas of interest in psychology that had been neglected by behaviourism; yet unlike psychoanalysis, it investigates them using more rigorous scientific methods.
The approach has provided explanations of many aspects of human behaviour and has had useful practical applications it has also combined with other approaches to strengthen its explanations and usefulness, e.g. cognitive neuropsychology.

Consequently, I can conclude that Cognition although possibly ignoring factors that need attention has proved to be easy to human behaviour therefore making it a strong contender in the battle for dominant and applications to psychology.

 My conclusions are simple I, personally believe that it is possible to use every one of the approach of psy chology to make a final definition of the term. To leave any approach out the explanation would make your definition less valid and factual, I myself have failed to mention to two of the main approaches, Humanism (looking at our previous experiences) and B iological (looking at what we are made of), due to lengthy description and analysis I have gone into of each approach. There are many more approaches, not ignored or any less important than the others -evolutionary, structuralism etc which are perhaps not as popular or as mentionable as the others but that could still be use to define the term, psychology.

The reason some choose to apply, develop and quote some approaches rather than others is due to personal opinion rather than one being considerably better than the other. Each have approximately the same amount of strengths and weaknesses as the other therefore it is not possibly to claim one as being officially the best approach.

I personally do not have a preferred perspective, and if asked to explain psychology I would quote from each model as I feel each helps enlighten to as what psychology is about.

Consequently I can conclude that to define psychology I do not feel it possible to use one quote, statement, theory or idea and each and every theory will add to a section of your explanation of what is the complex subject we call Psychology.