**INTRODUCTION TO PSYCHOLOGY: THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY**

Psychologists seek to obtain scientific information on virtually every imaginable aspect of human behavior. Psychology came from two roots, philosophy and physiology.

From **philosophy** came two key ideas: empiricism (the view that knowledge can be gathered through careful observation and rationalism. The view that knowledge can be gained through logic and careful reasoning).

**Physiology:** The branch of biology that studies the functions of living organisms e. g how receptors in the eyes and ears receive and interpret sensations from the outside world. Gustav Fechner demonstrated that seemingly hidden mental events such as sensations could be precisely measured.

These advances led inevitably to the position that the methods of science should be used as a basis for studying human behavior. **Wilhelm Wundt** (1832-1920), a German professor was an ardent supporter of this. He mounted a campaign to make psychology an independent discipline rather than a step child of physiology and philosophy. In 1879 Psychology was born.

According to Wundt, psychology was more about **consciousness awareness** of immediate experiences. What goes on inside our minds? He focused on introspection in which individuals describe what is going on in their own minds. He got many students who studied under him and some of these students went to N. America (U.S and Canada).

This view was gradually rejected by psychologists in America who moved to another idea: that psychology should study only what we observe-overt behavior. The most radical spokesperson for this view, known as behaviourism was John B. Watson (1878-1958). Watson held that internal events such as thoughts, images, feelings and intentions are unmeasurable, so should not be part of the new science. Therefore psychology as a subject had to give up consciousness as its subject matter and become instead a **science of behavior.**

So compelling were his arguments and other psychologists such as B.f Skinner that their conception of psychology defined the field for more than 40 years-up to the 1960’s. During that decade it expanded its scope to recapture the mental events that Watson and others had written off as outside the proper domain of psychology.

Why did this shift take place? Some of the factors included advance in technology which provided new improved techniques for studying mental events. E.g. computers made it possible to expose individuals to specific stimuli in a very precise manner and then measure the speed of their reactions to them, again with great precision. Such information could then be used for drawing inferences about underlying mental processes. The result of this was something psychologists refer to as cognitive processes.

As a result of this most psychologists define psychology ***as the science of behavior and cognitive processes.*** By the term behavior psychologists mean any observable action or reaction by a living organism-everything from overt actions (anything we say or do); through subtle changes in the electrical activity occurring deep within our brains. Similarly by the term cognitive processes psychologists mean every aspect of our mental life-our thoughts, our memories, and mental images, how we reason, make decisions and judgements etc.

The point to remember is that **human behavior is extraordinarily complex** and it’s influenced by many different factors. Here’s a summary.

**MAJOR PERSPECTIVES OF MODERN PSYCHOLOGY**

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| **PERSPECTIVES** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| Behavioural | Focusses on overt behavior |
| Cognitive | Focusses on cognitive processes such as memory, thought and reasoning. |
| Socio-cultural | Focusses on all aspects of social behavior and on the impact of cultural factors of behavior. |
| Biological | Focusses on the biological events and processes that underlie behavior. |
| Psychodynamic | Focusses on personality and on the role of hidden, often unconscious, processes of behavior. |
| Evolutionary | Focusses on the possible role of inherited tendencies in various aspects of behavior. |

**Psychologists and Psychiatrists**

The term Psychologists and Psychiatrists are quite similar, so many people think they mean the same thing. However the two refer to very different groups of professionals. Psychiatrists are physicians who after completing medical studies, specialize in the treatment of mental disorders. In contrast psychologists study graduate programs in psychology in Masters and Ph.D. Psychologists who choose to specialize in certain areas of the field such as treatment of psychological disorders complete 1 or more years of practical training in a hospital or clinic or school. However all psychologists must also finish extensive training in related fields such as physiology, sociology, or management science (which psychiatrists don’t do).

So the two fields are often confused because many psychologists specialize in diagnosis, study and treatment of psychological (mental) disorders. This means they focus on the same problems and perform many of the same activities as psychiatrists. However only psychiatrists can prescribe medication for mental illnesses and disorders.

Psychology has many sub fields.

**THE MAJOR SUBFIELDS OF PSYCHOLOGY**

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| **SUBFIELD** | **DESCRIPTION** |
| Clinical Psychology | Studies diagnosis, causes and treatment of mental disorders. |
| Counselling Psychology | Assists individuals in dealing with many personal problems that do not involve psychological disorders. |
| Developmental psychology | Studies how people change physically, cognitively and socially over their entire lifespan. |
| Educational Psychology | Studies all aspects of the education process. |
| Experimental Psychology | Studies all basic psychological processes, including perception, learning and motivation. |
| Cognitive Psychology | Investigates all aspects of cognition-memory, thinking, reasoning, language, decision making etc. |
| Industrial/ORGANISATIONAL Psychology | Studies all aspects of behavior in work settings. |
| Social Psychology | Studies all aspects of social behavior and social thought-how we think about and interact with others. |
| Psychobiology | Investigates all biological bases of behavior. |