**Psychology notes chapter 1**

**Psychology** is the scientific study of behavior and mental processes. Consequently, the phrase behavior and mental processes encompasses not just what people do but also their thoughts, emotions, perceptions, reasoning processes, memories, and even the biological activities that maintain bodily functioning.

**Sub fields of psychology:**

* Behavioral neuroscience is the subfield of psychology that focuses on the ways in which the brain, the nervous system, and the other biological aspects of the body determine behavior.
* Experimental psychology is the branch of psychology that studies the processes of sensing, perceiving, learning, and thinking about the world.
* cognitive psychology focuses on higher mental processes, including thinking, memory, reasoning, problem solving, judging, decision making, and language.
* Developmental psychology Studies development of children into adults.
* Personality psychology focuses on the consistency in people’s behavior over time and the traits that differentiate one person from another. Studies the differences between personalities.
* Health psychology explores the relationship between psychological factors and physical disease. For example, health psychologists are interested in assessing how long-term stress (a psychological factor) can affect physical health and in identifying ways to promote behavior that brings about good health.
* Clinical psychology deals with the study, diagnosis, and treatment of psychological disorders. Clinical psychologists are trained to diagnose and treat problems that range from the crises of everyday life, such as unhappiness over the breakup of a relationship, to more extreme conditions, such as profound, lingering depression.
* Counseling psychology focuses primarily on educational, social, and career adjustment problems. Almost every college has a center staffed with counseling psychologists.
* social psychology is the study of how people’s thoughts, feelings, and actions are affected by others.
* Cross-cultural psychology Studies the personality differences between people from different cultures.
* Evolutionary psychology considers how behavior is influenced by our genetic inheritance from our ancestors.
* Clinical neuropsychology unites the areas of neuroscience and clinical psychology: It focuses on the origin of psychological disorders in biological factors.

**History of psychology**

We can trace psychology’s roots back to the ancient Greeks.

* Before psychology became a formal science, medical practitioners at the time routinely performed a surgical operation known as **trepanation.** **Trepanation involves surgically boring a hole in a patients skull;** trepanation was performed for many reasons, most prominently to **“let demons out of a person’s soul”**
* 17th-century British philosopher John Locke believed that children were born into the world with minds like “blank slates” and that their experiences determined what kind of adults they would become. His views contrasted with those of Plato and Descartes, who argued that some knowledge was inborn in humans. The mind is **blank** initially and people learn through **experiences** with the passage of time. **Environment** shapes up personality. People with **learning disabilities** lack the ability to learn.
* in the late 19th century, when Wilhelm Wundt established the first experimental laboratory devoted to psychological phenomena in Leipzig, Germany (called the father of modern history). At about the same time, William James was setting up his laboratory in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Wundt goal was to study the structures of the mind and their relationship to conscious experience—an approach he called **structuralism** (he wanted to learn about consciousness). Structuralism focused on uncovering the fundamental mental components of perception, consciousness, thinking, emotions, and other kinds of mental states and activities. Wundt and other structuralists used a method called introspection. **Introspection** is a procedure in which people are presented with a stimulus—such as an image or a sentence—and asked to describe, in their own words and in as much detail as they can, what they were experiencing. **The structuralists argued that the main purpose of psychology was to study consciousness and break it down into basic elements and find how they are interlinked.**
* The perspective that replaced structuralism is known as **functionalism**. Rather than focusing on the mind’s structure, functionalism concentrated on what the mind does and how behavior functions. Functionalists, whose perspective became prominent in the early 1900s, asked what role behavior plays in allowing people to adapt to their environments. For example, a functionalist might examine the function of the emotion of fear in preparing us to deal with emergency situations. They study behavior.
* William James, an American psychologist, led the functionalist movement. Functionalists examined how people satisfy their needs through their behavior and focused on the purpose of thinking, unlike the structuralists, who were more interested in the structure of the brain. The functionalists also considered how the flexibility of the mind allowed people to continually change their thinking as they interacted with a complex world, something the functionalists discussed as the “stream of consciousness” of the mind
* Another important reaction to structuralism was the development of gestalt psychology in the early 1900s. Gestalt psychology emphasizes how perception is organized. Instead of considering the individual parts that make up thinking/consciousness , gestalt psychologists took the opposite tack, studying how people consider individual elements together as units or wholes. **"The whole is different from the sum of its parts."**

**Today, the field of psychology includes five major perspectives:**

1. **The neuroscience perspective** considers how people and nonhumans function biologically.
2. Proponents of the **psychodynamic perspective** argue that behavior is motivated by inner forces and conflicts about which we have little awareness or control. They view dreams and slips of the tongue as indications of what a person is truly feeling. The origins of the psychodynamic view are linked to one person: Sigmund Freud who was an Austrian physician in the early 1900s who gave an idea about unconscious determinants of behavior who said that the mind stores its deepest desires in a hidden part called the unconscious. This unconscious segment of our mind, according to Freud, controls our daily behavior without our awareness. He used this theory to explain mental disorders. For example, a slip of the tongue might be a person's unconscious thoughts surfacing, unbeknownst to the individual. Dreams, too, were seen as a window into the unconscious.
3. **the behavioral perspective** suggests that the focus should be on external behavior that can be observed and measured objectively. John B. Watson was the first major American psychologist to use a behavioral approach. Working in the 1920s, Watson believed that one could gain a complete understanding of behavior by studying the environment in which a person operated. Behavior, in this context, refers to any observable response an organism makes to stimuli.
4. **the cognitive perspective** focuses on how people think, understand, and know about the world. The emphasis is on learning how people comprehend and represent the outside world within themselves and how our ways of thinking about the world influence our behavior. Many psychologists who adhere to the cognitive perspective compare human thinking to the workings of a computer, which takes in information and transforms, stores, and retrieves it. In their view, thinking is information processing.
5. **the humanistic perspective** suggests that all individuals naturally strive to grow, develop, and be in control of their lives and behavior

