**Learning Journal Unit 1**

University of the People

PSYC 1504-01: Introduction to Psychology-AY2025-T2

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22 November 2024

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The scientific method is a method of inquiry that helps us understand nature around and within us. When we talk about “science” as only one way to explain nature, and psychology, in particular, as one way to explain human behavior, what do you think this means? Can you think of other ways that we have used to explain behavior?

**Learning Journal Entry: Explaining Human Behavior**

Reflecting on the idea that science, and psychology in particular, is just one way to explain human behavior, I realize that human actions are influenced by a range of factors and can be understood through multiple lenses. Psychology, as a scientific discipline, uses the scientific method to study behavior, relying on evidence and experimentation to identify patterns and causes. While this approach is invaluable in understanding how we think, feel, and act, it’s not the only way to explain behavior. There are other methods, such as philosophy, culture, religion, intuition, and even psychoanalysis, that provide unique perspectives on human actions.

Science, especially through psychology, helps us understand human behavior by using systematic observation and controlled experiments. Psychologists develop hypotheses about why people behave in certain ways, then test these ideas through research. For example, studies on conditioning and reinforcement have helped us understand how certain behaviors are learned, while research on brain function has shown us the neurological underpinnings of thought and emotion. What I find most interesting is how psychology enables us to uncover the influences of genetics, environment, and cognition on behavior. It’s through these findings that we can better predict and modify behaviors, such as in the treatment of mental health disorders or the design of educational programs.

However, psychology is not the only way to explain behavior. One alternative explanation comes from philosophy. Philosophers like Plato and Aristotle proposed that human actions were motivated by reason, virtue, and the pursuit of happiness. Aristotle’s view, for example, suggests that human beings aim for eudaimonia, or flourishing, through the cultivation of virtues. These ideas, though not empirical or scientifically tested, offer valuable insights into how people make ethical decisions and live a good life. Philosophical perspectives, therefore, provide a broader framework for understanding the moral and rational aspects of human behavior.

Cultural explanations also play a significant role in shaping behavior. I’ve realized that people from different cultures often behave in ways that reflect their societal values. In individualistic cultures, for example, people tend to value personal achievement and independence, whereas in collectivist cultures, people may prioritize group harmony and interdependence. This cultural context influences everything from communication styles to how people resolve conflicts. As a result, understanding behavior requires considering the cultural norms and social structures that shape a person’s identity and actions. This suggests that, while psychology focuses on the individual, culture provides a more collective and environmental explanation for behavior.

Religion and spirituality also offer explanations for human actions. Many religious traditions, such as Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism, use concepts like divine will, karma, and morality to explain why people behave the way they do. For instance, the belief in karma explains how one’s actions will ultimately return to them, which influences how people make ethical decisions. While these religious frameworks are not empirical in the scientific sense, they offer moral guidance and help individuals understand their role in the world. This approach is more focused on the meaning behind actions and the consequences of behavior, providing comfort and purpose to many.

Another explanation for human behavior comes from intuition and common sense. Often, people make quick decisions based on gut feelings or previous experiences, without relying on scientific evidence. Intuitive reasoning may not always be accurate, but it’s a natural part of human cognition. It allows individuals to navigate social situations and make judgments when faced with uncertainty. This intuitive approach is less structured than the scientific method but plays an essential role in everyday life.

Lastly, psychoanalysis, though controversial, offers an interesting perspective on behavior. Sigmund Freud’s theories about the unconscious mind, repressed desires, and childhood experiences provided an early framework for understanding how unconscious motives could influence behavior. While psychoanalysis is largely viewed as unscientific today, it still contributes to the understanding of how emotional and psychological forces shape actions. Many modern therapeutic approaches still incorporate elements of Freud’s theories, demonstrating the lasting impact of his work.

In conclusion, while the scientific method in psychology provides a robust and systematic way to study human behavior, it is only one of several methods we use to explain actions. Philosophy, culture, religion, intuition, and psychoanalysis all offer valuable insights that expand our understanding of why we do the things we do. These perspectives highlight the complexity of human behavior and suggest that no single approach can fully explain the intricacies of human nature. By considering multiple viewpoints, we can gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the human experience.

**References**

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