

# A Textbook of Human Psychology

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# INTRODUCTION

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There are so many good textbooks in the field of human psychology that anyone producing a new one must have a good excuse, ready to explain his temerity. Our reason for bringing together the various authors who have contributed the chapters of this book is a very simple one. Most textbooks are written just for future professional psychologists, i.e. for students who are going to adopt psychology as their life's work, and whose main area of concentration is psychology. These students are, of course, a very important group, yet psychology is becoming more and more important to professionals in other fields as well—psychiatrists and doctors generally, sociologists, educationalists, social workers, penologists, and many, many more. Indeed, hardly any profession which deals with people has reached a standard of perfection where training in scientific knowledge of people would not be useful; these many non-professional psychologists are not very well catered for in the standard type of textbook which takes up much time and space with discussions of issues which may be important and interesting to the psychologist, but which are irrelevant to the many non-specialists who wish to gain insight into the main findings of psychology which might be relevant to their own work.

We have tried to keep this particularly in mind when designing this book. We hope, therefore, that it will fulfil a useful double role: firstly, as a practical *introductory* textbook for full-time psychology students and, secondly, as a *comprehensive* textbook for students and professionals in other fields who need a proper understanding of psychology.

This book is largely based on the psychology course that is taught to psychiatrists in training here at the Institute of Psychiatry in London. It tends to give emphasis to the more applied and 'human' areas of psychology—personality, social, developmental and abnormal psychology in particular—but there is also a large section on basic psychological processes because we believe that a firm foundation in the general principles of behaviour is essential to effective applications in the abnormal, or any other, field. It is, therefore, a general psychology textbook. It differs from other such texts not so much in content as in approach. We have concentrated on presenting as much factual material as possible within the space available, minimising the amount of history and philosophy that abounds in many psychology texts. In

this sense the book is more comparable to modern textbooks of 'harder' sciences such as physics and physiology. Theories are considered important, but only theories that are scientific in the sense that they continuously interact with empirically derived facts. Theories which seldom make contact with facts (e.g. Jung's theory of archetypes) are generally ignored.

There is one other point about which we would like to be explicit. Textbooks often state different theories regarding a particular phenomenon, or set of phenomena, without giving any opinion as to which of these theories might be judged superior to the others. In a textbook directed just at future scientists, this is not unreasonable; but in a book such as this it seemed more acceptable to make judgements and to deal largely with a particular theory, if we felt that this theory was superior to its rivals in its explanatory powers and in its support in experimental research. Similarly, textbooks often deal with discredited researches, simply because textbooks have always dealt with these studies in the past; it seemed pointless to us to discuss the research first, and then point out why it was not worth discussing. We have preferred to omit the study in question altogether. In some cases, discredited methods which at one time were widely used, and a knowledge of which might be useful in reading older texts, have been very briefly discussed and the main reasons given for not going into details; projective techniques are an example of this genre. Theories which have been widely held, but which have not found ready support in experiment, have not been dealt with, even critically, as already pointed out; the only exceptions are psychoanalysis and Laing's existentialism. These theories have achieved such widespread popularity that we felt it necessary to show in some detail why they are not highly regarded by psychologists.

It is sometimes said that introductory textbooks offer a more systematic treatment if they are authored rather than edited. We believe that the science of psychology has reached such proportions that no one man can claim all-round expertise, and it is especially when a broad area has to be condensed into a chapter of twenty pages or less that it is necessary to have a specialist to do the job. Only a specialist has sufficient perspective within an area to be able to abstract the most important material, and only a specialist is sufficiently familiar with the current literature to be able to sift out genuine discoveries and

developments from temporary fads and fashions. The chapters in this book have been mainly prepared by the members of our own Department who are currently teaching those topics; they will be recognised as distinguished researchers who have made substantial contributions to the literature in their respective fields. Where possible, the chapters are based on lecture notes that have evolved progressively over several years, being continually improved and refined as a result of the teaching experience and feedback from the students. This, we believe, is one of the primary advantages that this text may have over its predecessors.

We have tried to write at a level which would be intelligible to the layman as well as the professional, and without too many references, the very profligacy of which he might find confusing. This has not always been easy and occasionally we have failed. Our failures are, however, more often due to difficulties inherent in the subject matter of a given chapter than to malevolence of the author; it is easier to write at an elementary level about Interviewing than about Memory, for instance. We have tried to combine scholarly exactness with simplicity and clarity; such compromises are inherently difficult and no doubt we have not succeeded in every instance. Yet the effort seemed worth making. We have tried to organise the field in such a way that the reader would go away with an overall pattern, some hint of a general organisation of mental activity, in his mind; we have aimed at presenting a model of man and have applied this

model to various practical problems, such as criminality, mental disorder, etc. This, of course, is the most difficult task of all and we are not optimistic that reviewers will concede that we have had even a moderate success. Nevertheless, we feel that psychology should strive for something of the kind; the usual collection of unrelated chapter headings does not inspire students with confidence in the existence of a unitary subject called 'psychology'. We hope that students will get the feeling of this model toward which psychology is groping, and will feel inspired to try to apply it in practice; as we shall argue, such applications as have been made of it in various spheres have by no means been completely unsuccessful.

We have kept the book as short as possible so that it might also be useful to students as a practical aid to retention for examination purposes (the limitations of lecture notes in this connection are well known and, in any case, the process of taking notes tends to interfere with appreciation of the lecture). This leaves the lecturer free to elaborate on the material in the text and discuss interesting recent developments in the field. Most of the material contained in this book is dealt with in much greater detail in reference books such as *The Handbook of Abnormal Psychology* (Eysenck, 1973) and it may often help the student to consult this work in addition. Obviously some sacrifices have to be made for the sake of brevity, but we have tried as far as possible to keep the book interesting and informative as well as understandable and manageable.

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