

Fundamentals of Psychology

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أساسيات علم النفس

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SOMETIMES WONDER WHAT THE BRITISH poet, Alexander Pope, had in mind when he famously improvised "Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring: There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain, and drinking largely sobers us again". In our original sin of ignorance, what would be the magic formula to sober us again? Some would say that psychology is a field that is inherently endowed with this talent and that it is the only field of inquiry that leads us to introspective thinking which, in the present parlance, constitutes an important catalyst to sober us again from shallow draughts. By this do we mean the psycho-babble that often comes into our homes via Oprah Winfrey chat shows? No, I mean the volume entitled *Fundamental Psychology*. Yes, there are many books on this topic; some would say every Tom, Dick and Harry has churned out similar textbooks. Check out Amazon.com or any bookshop and you will find more psychobabble than books on any other topic. The shelves are filled with 'self-help' books or the success story of a businessman which, given today's economic recession, will utterly fail to entice us. In contrast by all standards, this volume, *Fundamentals of Psychology*, has all the essential ingredients to sober us again. Despite its huge size, multitude of images, and texts from self-quizzes to the eloquent summaries at the end of each of the 25 chapters, the book is easy to read and follow. The glossary and references as well as the author and subject indexes are meticulously arranged by the writer, Michael W. Eysenck, a renowned psychologist at the University of London, UK.

The volume is divided into seven interesting themes. In sync with the modern focus on

neurogenetic determinism, the first section deals with the biological basis of psychology which is preceded by a general introduction on the development of different scientific paradigms under the umbrella of psychology. As psychology is increasingly losing its central tenet of studying the 'soul', the second part of this volume focuses on cognitive psychology with an introduction and subsections on perception and human memory. In other words, the soul is alive and kicking but now it appears in scientific metaphor. If such cognitive psychology is too abstract for you, then please turn to the next section. Here you will find vivid scientific descriptions of mundane issues such as intelligence and personality. In case you prefer the scientific counterpart of Wordsworth's euphemism that "*The child is father to the man*", there is a section covering developmental psychology. This section features topics from cognitive development to the indispensable role of attachment. Then if you are a sentimental type liking John Donne's notion that 'No man is an island', you will be enticed by the section covering social psychology. Psychology cannot be complete unless there is a forum for pondering what constitutes the 'normal' and 'abnormal' repertoire of human behaviour. In favour of simplicity, yet without compromising the complexity of the issue, the topic of psychiatric nosology is therefore presented. The volume is completed by an introduction to research methods.

As the title suggests, the volume is meant to be an introduction to the science of psychology. The book will be appropriate for undergraduate programmes, either for psychology majors or minors, from business to decision-making sciences. Besides

being a general introductory textbook, some of the chapters of this volume will fit well into the much heralded integrative curriculum in medical schools, for example the coverage of health psychology. The author has done an outstanding job in tackling complex issues derived from cutting-edge research and yet made them palatable and accessible to all. This has been done without compromising the central tenet of the new frontiers of psychological sciences. In the age of -ism and schism, paradigm and paradigm shift, the author has handled all the divergent conceptual frameworks evenhandedly from the most controversial to the most mundane. Breaking away from the North American tradition, the book has laboriously attempted to bring out the cultural factors in human beings. This is an important inclusion since 80% of the world population lives outside the Euro-American setting. From this perspective, students will find that this volume rings a bell with their own cultural issues. One may wonder why the author has not included more topics since everything has an element of psychology. However, he has carefully chosen themes

in psychology that have undergone full scientific scrutiny. Many other topics are indeed interesting, but since their development is still in infancy, the author has carefully avoided producing chapters of psychobabble.

If Alexander Pope were alive today, he might well judge that this textbook has some draughts to sober us again. Had I had such a book when I was young, maybe my life would have taken another route. In the interim, I have a copy of this textbook on my bookshelf. Whenever I look at it, I wonder why such treasure cannot be accessed by all.

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