3a. Philosophical origins of Psychology

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview into the main philosophical perspectives and how they have shaped the history and development of psychology.

Each philosopher and philosophical perspective detailed in this chapter will be examined only in relation to theories of the mind and body to provide insight into how these perspectives have formed our current thinking. We can acknowledge that this chapter cannot provide an exhaustive account of philosophical origins of psychology, nor is it to be seen as a critique of the theories, but to provide an overview to stimulate your own thinking and questions. For more information on any of the philosophers and their theories, there is a wealth of information to be found in the usual places.

This chapter will detail some of the main philosophers of our time:

- Plato
- Aristotle
- Descartes
- Locke
- Hume
- Kant
- Darwin
- Wittgenstein

Plato

427 BC – 347 BC

Any attempt to explain the rise of Western philosophy should perhaps begin with the ancient Greeks, who produced not only the first but also some of the greatest Western philosophers. The most familiar name within philosophy is that of Socrates, who died in the year 399BC.
Plato was about 31 when Socrates died and was a former pupil of his. Most philosophical work before Plato had never been written down so it could be said that Plato began his career to put into written form the thoughts and conversations of Socrates, which he then later added to and became perhaps the most influential philosophers of all time.

One of Plato's earlier works is the Republic, which describes his ideas for a better government in Athens.

Plato also thought a lot about the natural world and how it works. He thought that everything has an ideal **form**, like the idea of a chair, and perhaps that an actual chair was a poor imitation of the ideal chair that exists only in your mind.

One of the ways Plato tried to explain his ideas was with the famous metaphor of the cave. He said, imagine there is a cave, and inside the cave there are some men chained up to a wall, so that they can only see the back wall of the cave and nothing else. These men can't see anything outside of the cave, or even see each other clearly, but they can see shadows of what is going on outside the cave. Wouldn't these prisoners come to think that the shadows were real, and that was what things really looked like?

Suppose now that one of the men escaped, and got out of the cave, and saw what real people looked like and real trees and grass. If he went back to the cave and told the other men what he had seen, would they believe him, or would they think he was crazy?
Plato asserted that we are like those men sitting in the cave: we think we understand the real world, but because we are trapped in our bodies we can see only the shadows on the wall. One of his goals is to help us understand the real world, by finding ways to predict or understand the real world even without being able to see it.

But if chairs have ideal forms, then so do people. The ideal form of a man is his soul, according to Plato. The soul is made of three parts: our natural desires, our will, which lets us resist our natural

desires, and our reason, which tells us when to resist our natural desires and when to obey them. For instance, when you are hungry, and you want to eat, that's a natural desire. When these three parts of your soul are balanced, you will lead a virtuous life, says Plato, answering Socrates' question about what virtue is.

But if the three parts of your soul are out of balance, then that can lead to badness. If your natural desires are too strong, you will be unable to control your urges. If your will is too strong, it may keep you from listening to your natural desires. If you are without reason, it may tell you to control yourself at the wrong times (e.g. obsessions, eating disorders).

Platonic dualism

Dualism

(See also, Descartes)

Plato was one of the first philosophers to present written arguments in favour of dualism.

The basic assumption behind dualism is that a human being is a composite of two disparate entities.

- A non-physical mind (or soul as it was more commonly referred to).
- A physical body.

Plato believed in the survival of the soul after death, and also it's pre-existence before birth.

In that state is was supposedly acquainted with the '**forms'** (perfect, timeless archetypes that Plato believed were the original templates of things). For Plato, the soul - or mind - obtained knowledge through recollection of these forms. By doing this the soul was simply returning to the state of knowledge that it had before birth. Because of this view, Plato's arguments for dualism centre on the relationship between reincarnation and the process of obtaining knowledge through acquaintance with the forms.

Plato's ideas on politics didn't get much attention in Athens, and soon after the death of Socrates he left for Sicily to be the tutor of a young prince there. He tried to bring the prince up to be a good guardian for his people. But the prince didn't really pay any attention, and after twelve years, now in his mid-forties, Plato gave it up in despair and came back to Athens sadly.

Back in Athens, Plato started a school for philosophers, called the Academy. The Academy was a big success, and Plato stayed there for the rest of his life, another forty years. Plato spent a lot of the last part of his life writing another political piece called the Laws, which is much more pessimistic than the Republic, and talks more about how corrupt politicians are.

Plato died at 82, in 347 BC. His students at the Academy preserved and copied all of his writings, so there is a pretty complete record of everything Plato wrote.

Aristotle

384 BC – 322 BC

One of Plato's students at the Academy was Aristotle.

At the death of Plato in 347, the pre-eminent ability of Aristotle would seem to have designated him to succeed to the leadership of the Academy, but his divergence from Plato's teaching was too great to make this possible, and Plato's nephew Speusippus was chosen instead.

Aristotle's work encompassed areas such as logic, the physical world and metaphysics, the works of the psyche, natural history, and works of philosophy.

Aristotle defines philosophy in terms of essence, saying that philosophy is 'the science of the universal essence of that which is actual'. Plato had defined it as the 'science of an idea', meaning by idea, what we should call the unconditional basis of phenomena. Both pupil and master regard philosophy as concerned with the universal; Aristotle, however, finds the universal in particular things and called it the 'essence' of things, while Plato finds that the universal exists apart from particular things, and is related to them as their prototype or exemplar. For Aristotle, therefore, philosophic method implies the ascent from the study of particular phenomena to the knowledge of

essences, while for Plato philosophic method means the descent from knowledge of universal ideas to a contemplation of particular imitations of those ideas. In a certain sense, Aristotle's method is both inductive and deductive, while Plato's is essentially deductive.

One of Aristotle's famous works was work on 'De Anima' – the soul. In contrast to Plato's claim that the soul can exist apart from the body, Aristotle argued that the (human) soul is the *form* of a natural, organised human body — the set of powers or capacities that enable it to express its 'essential whatness', which for Aristotle is a matter of fulfilling the function or purpose that defines it as the kind of thing it is. Just as the form of an axe is whatever enables it to cut, and the form of an eye is whatever enables it to see, the (human) soul is to be identified with whichever powers and capacities enable a natural, organised human body to fulfil its defining function, which, according to Aristotle, is to survive and flourish as a living, acting, perceiving, and reasoning being.

So, Aristotle argues, the soul is inseparable from the body, and comprises whichever capacities are required for a body to live, perceive, reason, and act.

Aristotle was not called a great philosopher, but 'The Philosopher' by scholastic thinkers. These thinkers blended Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity, bringing the thought of Ancient Greece into the Middle Ages. It required some Aristotelian principles to be overturned for the sciences and the arts to free themselves for the discovery of modern scientific laws and empirical methods. The Western mind is essentially 'Aristotelian'- it formats the external world into factual and 'scien'-tific categories. ('Scien'-tific meaning something that is knowable or known. Latin *scientia* = knowledge).

Descartes

1596 - 1650

Rene Descartes was born in France in 1596 and can be viewed as the inaugurator of modern philosophy. His famous published works of philosophy are 'Discourse on the method' and 'Meditations'.

To put Descartes and his work into an historical context its important to note that science, as we know it didn't exist at that time; there was no organised method of enquiry or laboratories. The general consensus was that there was no specific way of acquiring knowledge and there was also an air of scepticism due to the religious reformation.

These sceptical times however coexisted in an odd way with the extravagant hopes of what science (medicine and industry etc) might be able to do.

Descartes became fascinated by the question of whether we could ever really know anything for certain. **He was clear from the outset of his work that certainty and truth are *not* the same thing.** He would have to eliminate any aspect of doubt or scepticism before he came to any true claims, to be one step ahead of all the scepticism present in the current climate.
This viewpoint influenced his methodology greatly with three main characteristics to focus on:

1. He had to put aside any obvious doubts; facts in the physical world such as a straight stick can look bent in the water.
2. The next step was to doubt he was awake and not dreaming. He recognised his belief was dependant on his experience. For example he had experienced what it was like to be asleep and perceive objects and people and situations and then to wake from his dreams and realise he had been dreaming; how could he be sure that he really was awake now and not dreaming?
3. Descartes then postulated the most extreme doubt possible. He imagined a malign spirit (the 'malicious demon' as it later became known) whose sole intent was to deceive him. However this method of doubt was not to be taken too literally, merely to be served as an intellectual critique.

Descartes then did an effectual U-turn with his thinking that, if it could be doubted it might therefore not exist, when he asserted that even if he had a false thought (implanted by the malign spirit) he *did still* have a thought therefore 'I am here', 'I do exist,' and this he could be sure of.

So his first fundamental certainty was 'I am thinking, therefore I exist', or as we more commonly know it, 'I think therefore I am'.

Furthermore this type of thinking is not just limited to conscious thought but all sorts of conscious experience such as feelings, perceptions, pain etc.

> ‘I am consciously aware therefore I know I must exist’.
>
> ‘I can conceive of myself without a body but I cannot conceive of myself as existing without conscious awareness, so my body is not part of the quintessential me’.

“*Thinking is another attribute of the soul; and here I discover what properly belongs to myself. This alone is inseparable from me. I am – I exist: this is certain; but how often? As often as I think; for perhaps it would even happen, if I should wholly cease to think, that I should at the same time altogether cease to be. I now admit nothing that is not necessarily true: I am therefore, precisely speaking, only a thinking thing.”*

(R. Descartes, Meditations (London: Everyman Classics 1986 p.88)

This type of philosophy was echoed by the traditional Christian view held at the time and leads logically onto the famous term ‘Cartesian Dualism’.

Descartes was the most famous exponent of dualism after Plato and added fresh impetus to the idea.

Cartesian Dualism

Like Plato, Cartesian dualism suggests that throughout life the body and soul are linked and each can affect the other, but at death the link is severed. The soul, however, remains.

Dualism has seemed an attractive doctrine for many due to the assertion that the soul remains indefinitely, and certainly was echoed by religious belief.

Descartes continues to assert that thinking is not just a characteristic of the soul but its essential characteristic or essence; thus the soul cannot lose its essence without ceasing to exist. This is why Descartes was prepared to embrace the claim that the human soul is always thinking, even in the womb.

Descartes’ take was more scientifically driven than Plato as he described the body as a complex machine which can be explained in scientific and mechanical ways, and by these views he was laying the foundation of the scientific approach of what makes living things alive.

Plato, however, asserted that it is the soul that makes living things alive, perhaps by a mysterious life force that lays scope for his theories beyond empirical investigation.

Cartesian dualism does away with mystery and makes the functioning of living things explicable in terms of chemistry and physics. For Descartes, the body does not die because the soul departs, but rather that the soul leaves because the body dies.

More crucially, the hallmark of the mental for Descartes is consciousness therefore the notion of an unconscious or non-conscious mind would be a contradiction in terms. He also believed that only humans have souls, thus animals neither have thought or consciousness. Animals should be compared to machines, so it’s just as possible to inflict suffering on an animal as it is to inflict suffering on a car being taken to a scrap heap.

The absence of a soul is, therefore, also characterised by the absence of language and its meaning. Descartes, anticipating Chomsky in the 20th Century, recognises that language possessors have the ability to generate and understand language; unlike the Parrot for example who can repeat words but has no concept of the meaning.

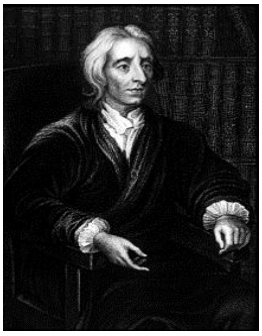
Noam Chomsky (see Perspectives in Psychology - Cognitive Psychology) however posited that we have a LAD (Language Acquisition Device), which consists of minute highly complex physical structures and circuits in the brain, which are clearly *physical* in nature. Perhaps a clear argument again Cartesian dualism.

In sum, Descartes alone brought it about that the centre of Western Philosophy for these past centuries has been the theory of knowledge and, ‘What can I know?’

It was not until our century that a significant number of philosophers have questioned the. ‘What can I know?’, as being the central question in Philosophy.

However it is perhaps largely evident that Descartes’ ‘What can I know’ and ‘what can I doubt?’ ‘How do I get behind them to see if they’re really true’ are all underlying foundations of modern science and psychology and are clearly echoed in the empirical nature of research and knowledge.

Locke
1632 - 1704



John Locke was a 17th-century English philosopher.

He developed the Lockean social contract, which included the ideas of a state of nature, "government with the consent of the governed," and the natural rights of life, liberty, and estate. Locke was also the first to fully develop the idea of 'tabula rasa'.

Locke's ideas had an enormous influence on the development of political philosophy, and he is often seen as one of the most influential contributors to liberal theory as well as Enlightenment thinkers.

Locke was born on August 29, 1632, in a small thatched cottage in Wrington, Somerset. Soon after Locke's birth, the family moved to Pensford (about seven miles from Bristol) where Locke grew up.

One of Locke's most famous works is *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* In this essay he describes the mind as a blank state at birth (tabula rasa), without rules for processing data, and that data is added, and rules for processing is formed, solely by one's sensory experiences. This notion is central to Lockean empiricism.

Empiricism denies that humans have innate ideas or that anything is knowable without reference to experience.

As understood by Locke, *tabula rasa* meant that the mind of an individual was born 'blank', and it also emphasised the individual's freedom to author his or her own soul. Each individual was free to define the content of his or her character – but his or her basic identity as a member of the human species cannot be altered. It is from this presumption of a free, self-authored mind combined with an unchangeable human nature that the Lockean doctrine of 'natural' rights derives.

Tabula rasa is also featured in Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis.

In relation to empiricism, Locke held that we have no grounds for complaint about the limitations of our knowledge, since a proper application of our cognitive capacities is enough to guide our action in the practical conduct of life. The *Essay* brought about great fame, and Locke spent much of the rest of his life responding to admirers and critics by making revisions in later editions of the book.

Although empiricism was a common view held at the time (and still is in certain sectors), total empiricism is generally rejected nowadays. People now recognise the fact that most of the brain is indeed pre-programmed and organised in order to process sensory input, motor control, emotions, and natural responses. These pre-programmed parts of the brain then learn and refine their ability to perform their tasks. The only true clean slate is perhaps the neo-cortex. This part of the brain is involved in thought and decision making and is strongly linked with the amygdala. The amygdala is involved in responses such as flight or fight and emotions, and like the other parts of the brain is largely pre-programmed, but has space to learn within its programming.

Hume
1711 - 1776

David Hume was a philosopher and historian from Scotland. Along with Adam Smith and Thomas Reid, Hume was one of the most important figures in the Scottish Enlightenment. Many regard Hume as the third and most radical of the so-called British Empiricists, after John Locke.

Compared to his contemporaries, Hume is still an influence in modern day philosophical disputes.

Two of Humes' influential works include *The Treatise of Human Nature* and *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.* Within these works Hume introduces his philosophical arguments that include: (these are only a few)

- Ideas and Impressions
- The problem of induction
- The bundle theory of self

Ideas and Impressions and The bundle theory of self
One of Hume's most influential pieces of work was titled *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* and suggests that all human knowledge comes to us through our senses.

Our perceptions, as he called them, can be divided into two categories: ideas and impressions
.

> "By the term impression, then, I mean all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will. And impressions are distinguished from ideas, which are the less lively perceptions, of which we are conscious, when we reflect on any of those sensations or movements above mentioned." He further specifies ideas, saying, "It seems a proposition, which will not admit of much dispute, that all our ideas are nothing but copies of our impressions, or, in other words, that it is impossible for us to think of anything, which we have not antecedently felt, either by our external or internal senses."
> *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*

This forms an important aspect of Hume's scepticism, for he says that we cannot be certain a thing, such as God, a soul, or a self, exists unless we can point out the impression from which the idea of the thing is derived.

Hume believed that all meaningful concepts, or ideas, are ultimately derived from sense experience, or impressions. According to Hume, the way to get clear about any concept that is obscure is to trace it back to sense. Lack of clarity about the self, he thought, meant that one must try to find the sense impression from which the concept of self is supposed to be derived. Hume introspected to find the self who is the owner of experiences. However, as famously reported, he could not find it. The most he could discover were particular experiences that he was undergoing and that kept rapidly changing. He thus concluded that there is no self, no subject of experiences, no 'I' over and above the experiences themselves.

The self, then, he concluded, must ultimately be nothing more than a bundle of experiences related in appropriate ways.

The problem of induction
Hume's problem of induction is concerned with our commonly held notion that the past acts as a reliable guide for the future. For example Physicists' laws of planetary orbits work by describing past planetary behaviour. However, how can we justify this assumption?

Hume identified two possible justifications, but rejected them both. The first one was that of logical necessity; the future must resemble the past. Hume, however, conceived of a future that has nothing to do with the past. The second justification was concerned with 'it has worked before it will continue to work'; Hume rejected this too.

This problem still remains with us. Hume seems to hold the view that we have an instinct like belief that the future will resemble the past based on the development and progress of habits in our nervous system, a belief that we cannot eliminate.

A possible answer to Hume's problem of induction centres on the 20th Century philosopher Karl Popper. Hume would suggest that because the sun has risen every day for as long as anyone can remember, doesn't mean that there is any rational reason to believe it will come up tomorrow. Popper however stated that while there is no way to prove that the sun will come up, we can theorise that it will. If it does not come up, then it will be disproved, but since right now it seems to be consistent with our theory, the theory is not disproved.

Kant
1724 – 1804

Immanuel Kant was a German philosopher and is generally considered one of the greatest and most influential thinkers of modern Europe and the last major philosopher of the Enlightenment.

Although the writings of Kant's youth and early middle age made him widely known, his lasting fame rests on a series of publications, which he did not begin until he was fifty-seven, and which continued into his seventies.

His most influential works include his acknowledged masterpiece *The Critique of Pure Reason* published in 1781, *The Critique of Judgement* in 1790 and The

Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Ethics, which has had an immense influence on moral philosophy ever since it was published in 1785.

One of the main concerns for Kant was the apparent conflict between the findings of the physical sciences in his day and the fundamental religious and ethical convictions about human behaviour.

Kant famously remarks that Hume's work in this area awoke him from his "dogmatic slumber". Hume held that all knowledge is either concerned with relations of ideas or matters of fact, and Kant goes one step further with his conflicting view of the world.

This conflict consisted mainly of the idea that the physical world behaves in the way it does because of antecedent happenings – ***'a posteriori'*** (this is contrary to Hume's view). Kant, however, does not extend this theory to the behaviour of humans. Kant believes that when we are talking about moral conduct we have possible alternative choices of action before us – ***'a priori'***; therefore we have to accept responsibility for what we actually do.

This conflict is also concerned with the question of how the physical world could be explained by scientific laws and our behaviours and free will to exhibit them cannot.

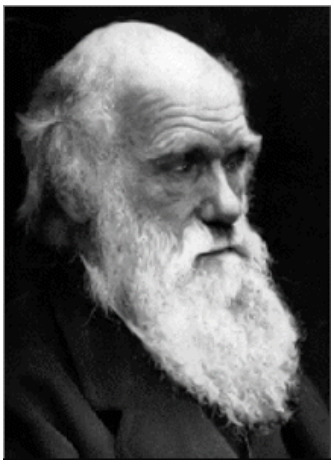
Thus, philosophy, according to Kant, is the outcome of the use of human reason, which undertakes investigations *a priori* (independently of experience). Reason also has both a theoretical and a practical employment. Reason is theoretical when it is concerned with the way things really are, and it is practical when it considers how things ought to be. Thus the two main branches of philosophy are metaphysics, the investigation *a priori* of the nature of reality, and ethics, which seeks *a priori* for rules governing the way in which beings with free will ought to decide what to do.

Kant considered himself to be a revolutionary thinker. He believed that he brought to philosophy a new method, which he called criticism. Other philosophers had brought forth their systems without having examined beforehand the power of human reason to think objects *a priori*.

These Kantian ideas have largely influenced all subsequent philosophical discussion and analysis. The specifics of Kant's account generated immediate and lasting controversy. However, his theory of the mind itself makes a lasting contribution in knowledge, which is therefore subject to limits it cannot overcome and that morality is rooted in human freedom.

Darwin

1809 - 1882



Charles Robert Darwin was a British naturalist who achieved lasting fame as the originator of the theory of evolution through natural selection and sexual selection.

In 1838 Darwin read the Rev. Thomas Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798). Malthus was widely believed to have conclusively demonstrated that human population growth would necessarily outstrip food production unless population growth was somehow checked. Population growth was geometrical. For example, two parents might have four children, each of whom could have four children, whose children could also have four children. Thus in four generations there would be an increase from 2 to 4 to 24 to 96 and so forth.

The focus of this argument inspired Darwin. He realised that an enormous proportion of living things are destroyed before they can reproduce. This must be true because every species would breed enough to fill the earth in a few hundred generations. But they do not do so. Populations remain roughly stable year after year. The only way this can be so is that most offspring do not survive long enough to reproduce. For example, there are around 9 million cats in Britain today. There are about 120 million birds. Britain's cats kill about 60 million birds per year. Many millions more die from loss of habitat, starvation, disease, flying into windows, cars and so forth. Yet the bird population is not declining. So although birds are breeding at a Malthusian rate, accidents and predation and so forth kill so many that the population size essentially stands still.

Darwin, already concentrating on how new varieties of life might be formed, suddenly realised that the key to evolution was whatever made a difference between those that survive to reproduce and those that do not. He called this open-ended collection of diverse causes 'natural selection'.

Darwin later states in the *Origin of Species* (1859):

> 'As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected. From the strong principle of inheritance, any selected variety will tend to propagate its new and modified form'.

Therefore, only the survivors would pass on their form and abilities. Their characteristics would persist and multiply whilst characteristics of those that did not live long enough to reproduce would decrease. Darwin did not know precisely how inheritance worked—genes and DNA were totally unknown. Nevertheless he appreciated the crucial point that inheritance occurs. Offspring resemble their parents.

Darwin's work had a tremendous impact on religious thought. Many people strongly opposed the idea of evolution because it conflicted with their religious convictions. Darwin avoided talking about the theological and sociological aspects of his work, but other writers used his theories to support their own theories about society.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution based upon natural selection changed the thinking of countless fields of study from biology to anthropology.

Wittgenstein

1889 – 1951

Ludwig Wittgenstein is one of the most influential philosophers of the twentieth century, and regarded by some as the most important since Immanuel Kant.

He contributed several ground-breaking works to modern philosophy, primarily on the foundations of logic, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of mind.

His most influential works include *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* published in 1921 *and Philosophical Investigations 1953.*

Both of these works focus on the role of language in human thinking and human life.

To illustrate this and on the subject of philosophy Wittgenstein commented:

> "*Most of the propositions and questions to be found in philosophical works are not false but nonsensical. Consequently we cannot give any answer to questions of this kind, but can only establish that they are nonsensical. Most of the propositions and questions of philosophers arise from our failure to understand the logic of our language.*" ("Tractatus" 4.003)

Wittgenstein is concerned with meaning and reality not being reality just because names and words denote it, but also because sentences picture it.

For us to be able to say how things are we also need to be able to put words in a particular relation to one another, which pictures the relation in which things in the world stand to one another. Furthermore it is not just the outside world that dictates the structure of our language but it is possible to find out about the structure of the world by analysing the structure of language.

Thus we can learn about the structure of reality from sentences, independent of whether they are true or not. For example, the word "pain" may have meaning, even if it refers to something that no longer exists. A person may understand what it means to have pain, even if he or she is not actually having pain.

Wittgenstein was not necessarily concerned with actual words or on the surface structure of sentences but more the hidden meaning and context.

For example, to understand the meaning of the word "pain," it may be necessary to have experienced pain. In order to imagine another person's pain, it may be necessary to recall one's own previous experience of pain.

Although this was a major part of his theory, in his later work he abandoned the picture theory of meaning in favour of a use or tool conception of meaning. He urges us to think of words as tools and sentences as instruments, but even the most complicated things in life such as religion and ethics can't always be expressed through language. Wittgenstein believed that our language is completely inadequate to say what it is we want to convey, what we are about, or what we even are.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein describes language as a game in which words may be used in a multiplicity of ways: for example, to describe things, to ask questions, to report events, to speculate about events, to make requests, to give commands, to form hypotheses, to solve problems, and to perform other acts of communication.

Wittgenstein says that the failure to understand words, or the failure to use words clearly, may often be caused by misunderstanding of how words are used in a language-game. Failure to communicate clearly may be caused by the use of words that have an unclear or indefinite meaning, or by lack of understanding of the relation between the meaning of words and the way in which they are used.

The task of philosophy may be to clarify the uses of language, and to assemble `reminders of usage' concerning how rules are applied to language.

Interestingly there has been a strong association made between Wittgenstein's theories and Freudian Psychoanalysis. According to Wittgenstein, our philosophical problems are caused by conceptual confusions that have their origins in a deep-lying misuse of language. The task of the philosopher, therefore, is to track down and bring to light the cause of the confusion, and when this has been done there is no longer a problem.

This comparison between Freud and Wittgenstein is still seen as an odd one due to Wittgenstein's very serious objections to Freud's psychoanalysis as not being very scientific.

Perhaps a possible critique of Wittgenstein's theory is that he says nothing of the brain and its importance for the understanding of mental phenomena. However, many modern philosophers believe that Wittgenstein has only just scratched the surface of understanding and that he didn't finish his work - he had only just started.

b. Perspectives in Psychology

This chapter aims to provide a brief introduction into the main perspectives in psychology. Each paradigm deserves a more thorough approach than is offered here, as only the main theoretical points and theorists are covered. Although the information provided is sufficient, for anyone wishing to find out more, there is a wealth of information to be found on the Internet and in any good psychology texts.

Within this chapter, it is interesting to note the overlap between theories and indeed theorists and also where one finds their own views and interests lying.

For more information on some of these perspectives and how they relate to therapeutic intervention see John Crawford's chapter 'Fields of Psychology'.

This chapter will detail the main paradigms (listed below) in no particular order, as there is undoubtedly an overlap with the shift in perspectives over time.

- Psychoanalytic/psychodynamic approach
- Structuralism
- Behaviourism
- Functionalism
- Cognitive Psychology
- Gestalt Psychology
- Humanistic Psychology
- Developmental Psychology
- Social Psychology

Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic approach

The central assumption of the Psychoanalytic or Psychodynamic approach to Psychology, originally developed by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), is that psychopathology results from unconscious conflicts.

1. Freudian perspective

Freud divided the mind into three principal parts: The Id, Ego and Superego.

Id	–	Present at birth, accounts for all energy needed to run psyche (termed the Libido), basic urges, food, water, elimination and sex etc. Concerned with fantasy.
Ego	–	Primarily conscious, unlike Id, develops in second 6 months of life. Task is to deal with reality.
Superego	–	Our conscience.

The behaviour of a human being, as conceptualised by Freud, is the complex interplay between the three parts of the mind. Most of the determinants of behaviour according to Freud are unconscious.

Stages of Psychosexual development

Freud conceived of the personality as developing through a series of four distinct psychosexual stages. At each stage the different parts of the body are at their most sensitive to excitation and are most likely to provide libidinal satisfaction.

Oral – Birth – 18-months/ pleasure from feeding, sucking etc.
Anal – 18 months – 3 years/ libidinous pleasure from passing and retaining faeces.
Phallic – 3 – 5/6 years - gratification from genital stimulation.
Between 6 and 12 years a latency period – Id impulses not a major motivator in behaviour.
Genital – Adult stage.

During each stage the individual must resolve conflicts between what the Id wants and what the environment will provide. To Freud the most important stage was the Phallic stage - at around the age of four the child is overcome with sexual desire towards the opposite sex parent. The desire and repression form what he refers to as the Oedipus and Electra complex.

Resolving the Oedipus and Electra complex is key to the child's ongoing sexual development. Failure to do so will lead to problems such as guilt/ fear/ repression/ anxiety/ phobias/ OCD etc.

2. Neo – Freudian Psychodynamic perspectives

Carl Jung (1887 – 1961)

Jung proposed ideas radically different from Freud on many issues, especially the de-emphasis of the importance of biological drives as the main determinant of human behaviour.

One of Jung's concepts was of self realisation, and that a person can reach a state of fulfilment when he can balance and give expression to all the positive and creative aspects of his personality.

In addition to the personal unconscious, Jung asserted the notion of the collective unconscious that contains information from the social history of humankind. The collective unconscious contains many positive and creative forces, unlike Freud's idea of exclusively sexual and aggressive energy.

Where Freud regarded current and future behaviour being dictated by the past, Jung focused on decision making and goal setting as dictating the future. To understand people, according to Jung, one has to understand their dreams and aspirations not just the things that have happened to them in the past.

3. Erikson & Psychosocial stages of development

(not to be confused with Milton Erickson)

Erik Erikson (1902 – 1995) emphasised the independence of the ego from the id, and attributed to it a greater role in determining behaviour.

Whereas Freud believed that most of a person's development was early on in life, Erikson believed it was more long term and referred to it as life-span developmental psychology.

Eight stages of psychosocial development

1. Trust vs. mistrust (0-1)
2. Autonomy vs. shame and doubt (1-3)
3. Initiative vs. guilt (3-6)
4. Industry vs. inferiority (7-11)
5. Identity vs. identity confusion (12-20)
6. Intimacy vs. isolation (20-30)
7. Generativity vs. stagnation (30-65)
8. Integrity vs. despair (65 +)

The resolution of the challenges faced in each stage will determine how the individual deals with each subsequent stage. If an earlier challenge is not adequately handled then this hampers the subsequent stages.

Summary and evaluation

Freud has been heavily criticised over the years, within the psychodynamic paradigm as well as outside of it.

One of the main criticisms of Freud is that his evidence is based on anecdotes from therapy sessions (with a small sample of well educated, affluent Viennese) and is not scientifically based.

However, Freud and subsequent theorists have had an enormous contribution and impact to the field of psychopathology. Here are four main ways the psychoanalytic approach has affected the field of psychology and the beliefs we currently hold:

1. Childhood experience helps shape adult personality.
2. There are unconscious influences on behaviour.
3. People use defence mechanisms to cope with stress. (e.g. According to Freud: Repression).
4. The tendency to not accept things at face value and to look under the surface of things.

(For more information on Psychoanalytic therapy, see John Crawford's *Fields of Psychology*)

Structuralism

At the turn of 19th century the founding father of experimental psychology, Wilhelm Wundt (1832 – 1920), tried to experimentally confirm his hypothesis that conscious mental life can be broken down into fundamental elements which then form more complex mental structures.

One of the major believers of this view was Edward Titchener (1867-1927) who was trained by Wundt and worked at the Cornell University, who then coined the term Structuralism as the goal was to specify mental structures involved in cognition.

Titchener devised elaborate training procedures to teach subjects to report on the most basic of their experiences whilst being exposed to certain stimuli. For example, the subjects in these experiments listened to a metronome set to click slowly and sometimes to click fast. The subjects looked within themselves and reported that a series of fast clicks made them excited whereas a slow series, relaxed. Just before each click they felt a slight tension and afterwards they felt relaxed.

Wundt's structuralism however was quickly abandoned with the view that conscious experiences are not easily subjected to experimentation in the same way that behaviour is (see behaviourism).

Today however, brain scanning technology *can* identify, for example specific brain structures that responds to certain stimuli. This has led from the older form of structuralism to a newer paradigm, cognitive psychology. (see cognitive psychology)

Behaviourism

The behavioural paradigm, sometimes called the learning paradigm, is concerned with the assumption that abnormal behaviour are responses learned in the same way that other human behaviour is learned.
After some years many in the field of psychology began to lose faith in the ability of introspection (see structuralism) to obtain useful knowledge about people.

This dissatisfaction was brought about by an American psychologist, John B Watson (1878-1958) who was the major figure in establishing behaviourism. Watson defined psychology as the study of observable behaviour rather than an investigation of subjective experience, and because of his efforts the dominant focus of psychology switched from thinking to learning.

Two particular types of learning were identified; Classical and Operant conditioning.

Classical Conditioning

Classical conditioning is the process of reflex learning through which an *unconditioned stimulus*, which produces an *unconditioned response,* is presented together with a *conditioned stimulus*, such that the *unconditioned response* is eventually produced on the presentation of the *conditioned stimulus* alone, thus becoming a *conditioned response.*

- **Ivan Pavlov (1849 –1936)**
  Classical conditioning had been discovered quite by accident by a Russian psychologist, Pavlov.
  In his studies of the digestive tract, Pavlov found that after some time of being given meat powder to make it salivate, a dog would anticipate being fed when it saw the person who fed it and would begin to salivate before the meat powder was presented.

  Pavlov studies this further by ringing a bell whenever the meat powder was presented to the dog. After a while the unconditioned stimulus (meat powder) and the unconditioned response (salivation) had become associated with the conditioned stimulus (bell), and then produced the conditioned response (salivation) whenever the bell was rung, even though there was no meat powder present.

  Other examples of classical conditioning can include the experience of a smoker. A smoker may associate cigarettes with many stimuli: coffee, tea, alcohol, meals, telephone etc.

  (For a demonstration, and to try out for yourself how to condition Pavlov's dog, visit www.nobelprize.org).

Operant Conditioning

The premise behind operant conditioning is, if when an organism emits a behaviour, and the consequences of that behaviour are reinforcing, it is more likely to emit it again.

- **Edward Thorndike (1874-1949)**
  Thorndike was interested in the effect of consequences on behaviour. He had observed that caged alley cats, in their efforts to escape, would accidentally hit the latch that freed them. Recaged again and again, they would soon come to touch the latch repeatedly and purposely.

- **B.F Skinner (1904 – 1990)**
  Positive and negative reinforcement.

  +ve reinforcement refers to the strengthening of a tendency to do something again by virtue of a pleasant event.

  -ve reinforcement also strengthens a response but is does so by the removal of a negative event if a behaviour is followed.

Summary:

The behaviourist view minimises the importance of biological factors and focuses more on learning processes.

Behaviour therapy adopts this approach by focusing on changing specific behaviours rather than uncovering unconscious conflicts.

Functionalism

Functionalism began as a reaction to Titchener's Structural theory and takes some of the basic ideology from William James and Charles Darwin. It supposes that psychology is the study of mental life as an adaptive and organic process. Functionalism conceives of the mind as a function, run on the hardware of the brain, where sensory inputs are converted in behavioural outputs.
John Dewey, one of functionalism's key founders, proposed that the stimulus - response phenomena is not an automatic behaviour in as much as it is informed by the goals of the person performing it.

For example, a baby may reach forward to grasp a candle (stimulus) and then retract the hand, as the flame is hot (response). However, this experience is not that straightforward. Dewy argued that if one wanted to warms one hand then the response would be different. Therefore, it is the *function*, or the goal of the whole action, that elicits the response.

One of the antecedents of functionalism could be seen to be Aristotle's view of the soul. In contrast to Plato's claim that the soul can exist apart from the body, Aristotle argued that the (human) soul is the *form* of a natural, organized human body, and that the set of powers or capacities that enable it to express its "essential whatness", which for Aristotle is a matter of fulfilling the function or purpose that defines it as the kind of thing it is. Just as the form of an axe is whatever enables it to cut, and the form of an eye is whatever enables it to see, the (human) soul is to be identified with whichever powers and capacities enable a natural, organised human body to fulfil its defining function, which, according to Aristotle, is to survive and flourish as a living, acting, perceiving, and reasoning being.

Later studies and research by functionalist thinkers have produced theories such as the Turing test. In 1950, A.M Turing proposed the question, 'can machines think?', given that the central hypothesis of the paradigm is that we can conceive of a mind (therefore thinking) as a function, run on the hardware of the brain, where sensory inputs are converted in behavioural outputs. Parallels could be drawn to computers if it passed the Turing test.

Cognitive Psychology

Cognition is a term that groups together the mental processes of perceiving, recognising, conceiving, judging, and reasoning.

The cognitive paradigm focuses on how people structure their experiences, how they make sense of them, and how they relate their current experiences to past ones that have been stored in memory.

The year 1956 was critical in the development of cognitive psychology. It was in this year that Chomsky gave a paper on his theory of language, George Miller presented a paper on short-term memory, and Newell and Simon discussed a computational model called the general problem solver'.

The term came into use with the publication of the book Cognitive Psychology by **Ulric Neisser** in 1967.

Cognitive psychology is concerned with how we organise information, and considers the learning process to be much more complex than just a passive stimulus-response process. To cognitive psychologists, the learner is an active interpreter of a situation, with the learner's past knowledge imposing a perceptual framework on the experience. The learner fits new information into an organised network of already accumulated knowledge, often referred to as a schema.

Cognitive psychology is radically different from previous psychological approaches in two key ways:

- It accepts the use of scientific method, and generally rejects introspection as a valid method of investigation, unlike methods such as Freudian psychology.
- It explicitly acknowledges the existence of internal mental states (such as beliefs, desires and motivations), unlike behaviourist psychology.

The major research areas in cognitive psychology are:

- Memory
- Perception
- Knowledge representation
- Language

- Thinking

Two influential theorists:

George Miller (1956)
George Miller's classic study in 1956 expanded on the current theories of memory at the time and stated that the short term memory can hold 7 chunks of information plus or minus two, depending on the information. For example, a chunk could be 'IBM' for those familiar with the company name, but three chunks for anyone else.

Noam Chomsky
Chomsly was a pioneer in the field of psycholinguistics, which, beginning in the 1950s, helped establish a new relationship between linguistics and psychology.

In Chomsky's view, certain aspects of linguistic knowledge and ability are the product of a universal innate ability, or "language acquisition device" (LAD), that enables each normal child to construct a systematic grammar and generate phrases. This theory claims to account for the fact that children acquire language skills more rapidly than other abilities, usually mastering most of the basic rules by the age of four. As evidence that an inherent ability exists to recognise underlying syntactical relationships within a sentence, Chomsky cites the fact that children readily understand transformations of a given sentence into different forms-such as declarative and interrogative-and can easily transform sentences of their own.

Summary
Cognitive psychology is currently the most common paradigm adopted by psychologists. However one of the common observations of cognitive psychology is that the paradigm does not offer much information or explanations of psychopathology.

For example, cognitive psychologists may state that a depressed person is depressed because they have a negative schema, therefore they think negative thoughts and that these thoughts are given causal status to the feelings associated with depression. Other approaches, however, would state that this leaves the unanswered question of where the negative schema came from in the first place. Furthermore, cognitive explanations of psychopathology focus on current determinants of disorders and not on historical antecedents; this approach obviously has its followers but also its rejecters who believe that it sheds little light on the causes or origins of mental disorders.

The cognitive paradigm has gained widespread attention in behaviour therapy; in brief cognitively orientated behaviour therapists attempt to change the thinking processes of their patients in order to influence their emotions and behaviour.

(For more information on CBT see John Crawford's - Fields of Psychology)

Gestalt psychology
Gestalt psychology (also Gestalt theory of the Berlin School) is a theory of mind and brain that proposes that the operational principle of the brain is holistic, parallel, and analogue, with self-organising tendencies.

An early influence on Gestalt psychology was the philosopher, **Immanuel Kant**. He argued that we do not perceive the world as it is; we impose cause and effect relationships on it and, therefore, our perceptions are influenced by our experiences.

Later, this understanding emerged in Max Wertheimer's explanation of a phenomenon known as apparent motion.

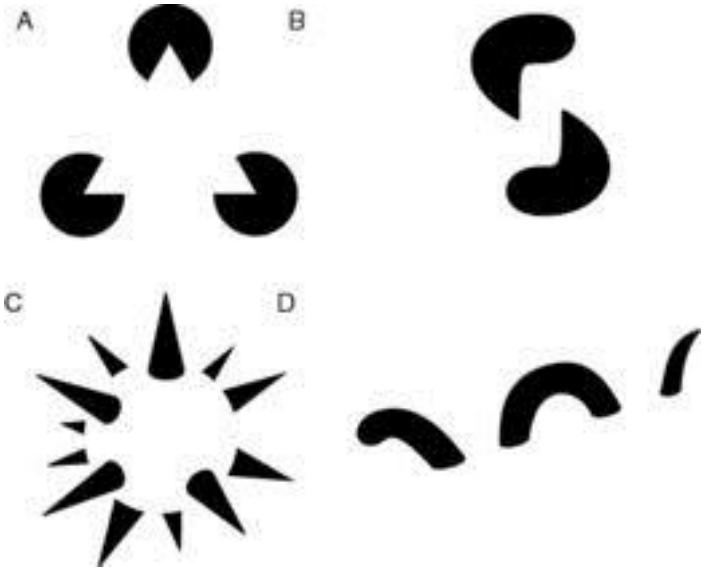
Max Wertheimer
Max Wertheimer, considered to be Gestalt psychology's founder, was born in Prague in 1880 and studied at the University of Frankfurt. Here he became aware of a form of apparent motion, known as the phi phenomenon. The phi phenomenon is experienced when an observer notices that two lights, within close proximity to each other and flashing alternately, appear to be one light moving back and forth to and from both locations. The observer perceives movement, even though none has occurred. This concept is called apparent motion, and is thought to occur because we perceive experiences in a

way that calls for the simplest explanation, even though it may differ with reality. This is known as the Gestalt law of Minimum Principle: … "we do not perceive what is actually in the external world so much as we tend to organise our experience so that it is as simple as possible… simplicity is a principle that guides our perception and may even override the effects of previous experience." Explaining apparent motion in this way marked the beginning of Gestalt psychology as a separate school of thought.

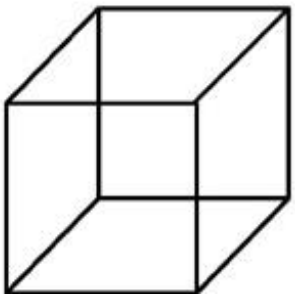
Key properties of Gestalt systems:

Emergence: Objects are seen as 'whole', not just a sum of their parts.

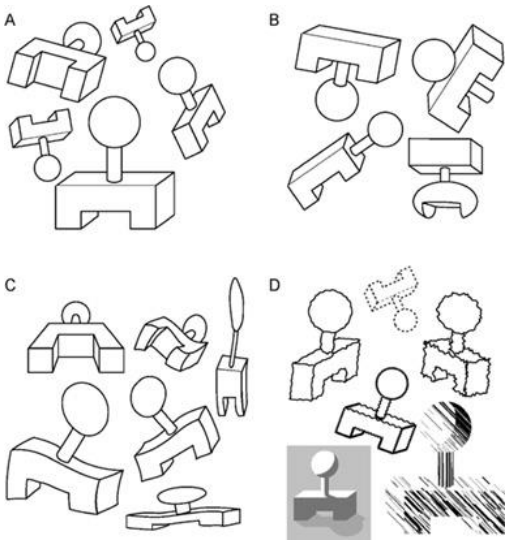
Reification/closure: Images contain more explicit spatial information than just the sensory stimulus evident.



Multistability: The tendency of ambiguous perceptions to pop back and forth between two or more interpretations.



Invariance:
Simple geometric objects are recognised independent of rotation or scale.



Gestalt psychological perspectives are loosely connected to Gestalt therapy founded by Fritz Perls (1893-1970). The closest similarity may be in the attention to *wholes.* Perls wanted to make individuals whole by increasing their awareness of unacknowledged feelings, and having them reclaim the parts of their personality that had been denied. Gestalt therapists focus on what the client is doing here and now and doesn't delve into the past. In Gestalt therapy, all that exists is now.

Humanistic Psychology

Humanistic psychology is a school of psychology that emerged in the 1950s in reaction to both behaviourism and psychoanalysis.

Humanistic psychology is a psychological perspective that emphasizes the study of the whole person. They look at human behaviour, not only through the eyes of the observer, but also through the eyes of the person doing the behaving. They also believe that an individual's behaviour is connected to his inner feelings and self-image.

Unlike behaviourists, humanistic psychologists believe that humans are not solely the product of their environment. Rather they study human meanings, understandings, and experiences involved in growing, teaching, and learning. They emphasise characteristics that are shared by all human beings such as love, grief, caring, and self-worth.

Humanistic psychologists study how people are influenced by their self-perceptions and the personal meanings attached to their experiences, and are not primarily concerned with instinctual drives, responses to external stimuli, or past experiences. Rather, they consider conscious choices, responses to internal needs, and current circumstances to be important in shaping human behaviour.

Summary:

Humanistic psychologists believe that:

- An individual's behaviour is primarily determined by his perception of the world around him.
- Individuals are not solely the product of their environment.

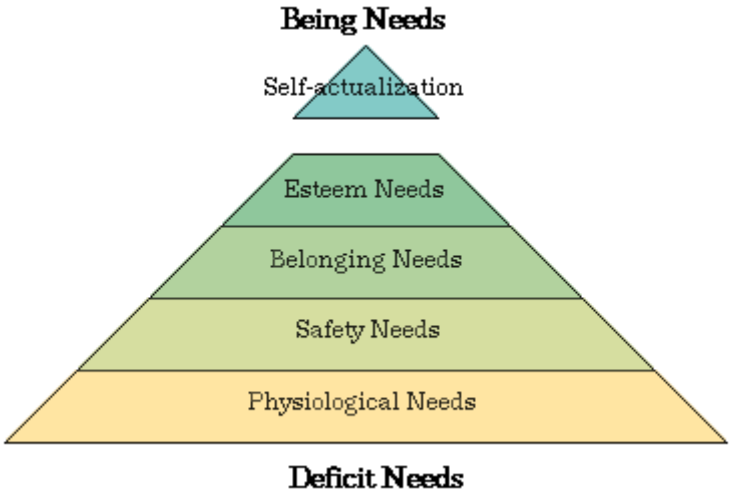
- Individuals are internally directed and motivated to fulfil their human potential.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987)

"An assumption unusual in psychology today is that the subjective human being has an important value which is basic; that no matter how he may be labelled and evaluated he is a human person first of all, and most deeply. "
Carl Rogers (1962)

Rogers sees people as basically good or healthy -- or at very least, not bad or ill. In other words, he sees mental health as the normal progression of life, and he sees mental illness, criminality, and other human problems, as distortions of that natural tendency.
His theory is built on a single "force of life" he calls **the actualising tendency**. It can be defined as the built-in motivation present in every life form to develop its potentials to the fullest extent possible. He doesn't just refer to survival: Rogers believes that all creatures strive to make the very best of their existence. If they fail to do so, it is not for a lack of desire.
Rogers captures with this single great need or motive all the other motives that other theorists talk about. He asks us, why do we want air and water and food? Why do we seek safety, love, and a sense of competence? Why, indeed, do we seek to discover new medicines, invent new power sources, or create new works of art? He answers, because it is in our nature as living things to do the very best we can!

Abraham Maslow (1908 – 1970)
Maslow's main theory is concerned with his hierarchy of needs.



He talks about these levels in terms of **homeostasis**. Homeostasis is the principle by which a furnace thermostat operates: When it gets too cold, it switches the heat on; when it gets too hot, it switches the heat off. In the same way, your body, when it lacks a certain substance, develops a hunger for it; when it gets enough of it, then the hunger stops. Maslow simply extends the homeostatic principle to needs, such as safety, belonging, and esteem that we don't ordinarily think of in these terms.

Maslow sees all these needs as essentially survival needs. Even love and esteem are needed for the maintenance of health. He says we all have these needs built in to us genetically, like instincts. In fact, he calls them **instinctoid** -- instinct-like -- needs.

In terms of overall development, we move through these levels a bit like stages. As newborns, our focus (if not our entire set of needs) is on the physiological. Soon, we begin to recognise that we need to be safe. Soon after that, we crave attention and affection. A bit later, we look for self-esteem.

Under stressful conditions, or when survival is threatened, we can "regress" to a lower need level.

If you have significant problems along your development - a period of extreme insecurity or hunger as a child, or the loss of a family member through death or divorce, or significant neglect or abuse - you may "fixate" on that set of needs for the rest of your life. This is Maslow's understanding of neurosis. (For more information on Rogers & Maslow, and client centred therapy, see John Crawford's – Fields of Psychology).

Developmental Psychology

Developmental psychology is the scientific study of progressive psychological changes that occur in human beings as they age. Originally concerned with infants and children, then other periods of great change such as adolescence and aging, it now encompasses the entire life span. This field examines change across a broad range of topics including: motor skills and other psycho-physiological processes, problem solving abilities, conceptual understanding, language acquisition, moral understanding, and identity formation.

A significant question in developmental psychology is the relation between innateness and environmental influence in regards to any particular aspect of development. This is often referred to as 'nature versus nurture'.

Developmental psychology is concerned with many different components of human psychology and how they change over time. These different aspects of development complement many other areas of psychology, including cognitive psychology and social psychology.

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)
Piaget is best known for reorganising cognitive development into a series of stages.

Stages of cognitive development:

- **Sensorimotor stage**: (Birth –two years.) Where children experience through their senses.
- **Pre-operational stage**: (Two – seven years.) Motor skills are acquired.
- **Concrete operational stage**: (Seven- eleven years.) Children think logically about concrete events.
- **Formal operational stage**: (Eleven +.) Abstract reasoning developed.

Piaget is widely recognised as the greatest development psychologist of the century. His ideas have been refined and added to, but they remain the foundation of child psychology.

Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934)
Social development theory

The major theme of Vygotsky's theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. Vygotsky (1978) states: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological).

A second aspect of Vygotsky's theory is the idea that the potential for cognitive development depends upon the "zone of proximal development", which relates to the gap or difference between what the child can learn unaided and what he or she can learn with the help of an adult or a more capable peer. This idea of assisting the learner is known as **scaffolding**.

Vygotsky's theory was an attempt to explain consciousness as the end product of socialisation. For example, in the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication, but once mastered they become internalised and allow "inner speech".

Social Psychology

Social psychology is the study of the *nature and causes* of *human social behaviour*, with an emphasis on how people think towards each other and how they relate to each other. As the mind is the axis around which social behaviour pivots, social psychologists tend to study the relationship between mind(s) and social behaviours.

It could be said that Social psychology can try and bridge the gap between sociology and psychology. However, social psychologists have different perspectives on what ought to be emphasised in the field, which leads to a schizm in the discipline between sociological social psychology and psychological social psychology.

Main interests:
Socialisation
Communication
Social perception and social cognition

Social emotion theories
Moral development

Leon Festinger
Leon Festinger was a social psychologist that was best known for his Theory of Cognitive Dissonance.

According to cognitive dissonance theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions (i.e., beliefs, opinions). When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviours (dissonance), something must change to eliminate the dissonance. In the case of a discrepancy between attitudes and behaviours, it is most likely that the attitude will change to accommodate the behaviour.

Example:
Consider someone who buys an expensive car but discovers that it is not comfortable on long drives. Dissonance exists between their beliefs that they have bought a good car and that a good car should be comfortable. Dissonance could be eliminated by deciding that it does not matter since the car is mainly used for short trips (reducing the importance of the dissonant belief) or focusing on the cars strengths such as safety, appearance, handling (thereby adding more consonant beliefs). The dissonance could also be eliminated by getting rid of the car, but this behaviour is a lot harder to achieve than changing beliefs.