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A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology

In line with the British Psychological Society's recent recommendations for teaching the history of psychology, this comprehensive undergraduate textbook emphasizes the philosophical, cultural, and social elements that influenced psychology's development. The authors demonstrate that psychology is both a human (i.e., psychoanalytic or phenomenological) and natural (i.e., cognitive) science, exploring broad social-historical and philosophical themes such as the role of diverse cultures and women in psychology, and the complex relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in the development of psychological knowledge. The result is a fresh and balanced perspective on what has traditionally been viewed as the collected achievements of a few "great men."

With a variety of learning features, including case studies, study questions, thought experiments, and a glossary, this new textbook encourages students to critically engage with chapter material and analyze themes and topics within a social, historical, and philosophical framework.

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A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology

Diversity of Context, Thought, and Practice

RICHARD T. G. WALSH

THOMAS TEO

ANGELINA BAYDALA

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978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

CONTENTS

List of figures vi
List of tables viii
List of boxes ix
Preface xi
Acknowledgments xvii
About the authors xviii

1 Introducing the history and philosophy of psychology 1
2 Ancient and premodern psychological thought 49
3 Early modern psychological thought 99
4 The philosophical and scientific climate in the nineteenth century 151
5 Early natural-science Psychology 202
6 Natural-science Psychology between the world wars 251
7 Natural-science Psychology after world war II 303
8 Applied and professional psychology 355
9 Human-science psychologies: psychoanalysis 405
10 Human-science psychologies: hermeneutic to transpersonal 454
11 Constructing psychological research 502
12 Critical philosophical and historical reflections 555

Timeline 605
Glossary 610
References 627
Name index 685
Subject index 690

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

FIGURES

1.1 Kilmainham Gaol understood as a panopticon *page* 21
© Matthi/Shutterstock.com
1.2 Leonardo Da Vinci's Vitruvian Man integrates art with anatomy 33
© Janaka Dharmasena/Shutterstock.com
2.1 The School of Athens after the sixteenth-century original, by Raphael. Fresco. Vatican City, 1509 65
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/V&A Images – all rights reserved
2.2 Map showing the Roman Empire 70
© Vladislav Gurfinkel/iStock.com
3.1 Early scholars in a home laboratory 102
© HultonArchive/iStockphoto.com
3.2 For Descartes, consciousness located in point-like fashion 127
© Everett Collection Historical/Alamy
4.1 The rising middle class was the subject of satire, November 1, 1800. Hand-coloured etching 154
© The Trustees of the British Museum
4.2 1975 British stamp dedicated to J. M. W. Turner, Romantic painter 160
© markaumark/123rf.com
5.1 Boys going to work, photo Lewis Hine (1874–1940). Photograph. Rhode Island, USA, 1909 204
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/V&A Images – all rights reserved
5.2 Men loading and unloading goods in nineteenth-century London 241
© Duncan Walker/iStockphoto.com
6.1 Migrant family in the USA during the Depression 253
Photograph by Dorothea Lange, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection , LC-USF34-T01–009095-C
6.2 Whatever happens the children will have their Christmas toys, a shopping catalogue for games and toys. Lithograph. London, 1920 293
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/V&A Images – all rights reserved
7.1 The Synchrotron Light Source II at the US Brookhaven National Laboratory 306
Courtesy of Brookhaven National Library
7.2 The brain is like a computer motherboard 324
© seamartini/iStockphoto.com
8.1 In early twentieth-century London, a teacher conducts a lesson in Ashford Residential School. London Metropolitan Archives from London County Council Photograph Library 371
© City of London
8.2 Pinel at the Salpêtrière releasing "lunatics" from their chains 379
© North Wind Picture Archives/Alamy

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

9.1 Tibetan mandala symbolizing the Self in its totality 415
© Wojciech Zwierzynski/iStockphoto.com
9.2 *Salvador Dalí A* (1948): this artwork depicts Dalí's dream-like surrealism 436
Photograph by Philippe Halsman, courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, PH Filing Series Photographs Collection , LC-DIG-ppmsca-09633
10.1 A Spanish postage stamp shows Pablo Picasso's painting *Guernica* 456
© Neftali/Shutterstock.com
10.2 NASA image of Earth 492
Courtesy of NASA/JPL/UCSD/JSC
11.1 *Vivisection* by Will Crawford 521
Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-27713
11.2 William Blake's painting *The Ancient of Days*, reason defining the world 544
© The Trustees of the British Museum
12.1 *Earth* Reproduced from Ponrus Hulten *et al*., from *The Arcimboldo Effect: Transformations of the Face from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century*, by Giuseppe Arcimboldo. Vienna, c.1570. London: Thames & Hudson, 1987. 565
© Victoria and Albert Museum, London/V&A Images – all rights reserved
12.2 Statue depicting multiple perspectives of Buddha 579
© Olga Lipatova/Dreamstime.com

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

TABLES

2.1 The psychology of humours *page* 93
3.1 Kant's three critiques 136
4.1 New-Enlightenment perspectives 163
6.1 Scientific conceptions 254
8.1 CPA approach to clinical ethics 399

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CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

BOXES

1.1	"Great psychologists"	*page* 9
1.2	Corporate–hospital–university interference	39
2.1	An emergent psychological interior	77
2.2	Hildegard von Bingen	82
3.1	Women in natural philosophy	103
3.2	Blaise Pascal	143
4.1	Women in science	178
4.2	The Helmholtz–Hering debate	184
5.1	The imageless-thought debate	230
5.2	Different approaches to education	235
6.1	The "Little Albert" study	270
6.2	Social reformers	296
7.1	Eleanor Gibson	313
7.2	The Milgram studies	342
8.1	Contrasting management approaches	366
8.2	Cultural deprivation	394
9.1	Seduction theory	411
9.2	The object relations – ego psychology conflict	429
10.1	Interpretation in composing a psychology article	463
10.2	Theatre acting and spirituality	494
11.1	Current investigative practices	511
11.2	Group vs. case studies	528
12.1	Applying Habermas to Psychology	568
12.2	Applying Foucault to the making of academic psychologists	581

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-69126-0 — A Critical History and Philosophy of Psychology
Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

PREFACE

In this textbook on the history and philosophy of Psychology our intention is to provide a comprehensive but accessible account with international content suitable for a one-term or two-term, advanced undergraduate course in which the instructor aims to foster critical thinking about the discipline's intellectual and social development. Below we describe our intellectual approach, text structure and chapter content, and the educational intent and pedagogical features of our text.

The distinctive **characteristics of the text** are as follows:

- Integrates the history and philosophy of Psychology.
- Distinguishes between natural-science and human-science Psychologies.
- Relies on current scholarship in the history and philosophy of Psychology.
- Takes an international and contextualized approach to psychological ideas.
- Includes applied and professional psychology, current developments in the discipline, and Psychology's research traditions.
- Fosters students' critical thinking about the history and philosophy of Psychology.
- Facilitates instructors employing a different order of presenting the twelve chapters, because they are relatively self-contained, yet thematically linked.

Intellectual approach

As teachers and authors of works on historical and philosophical issues in Psychology, we were dissatisfied with the coverage of these issues in the available textbooks. Whether these works were primarily historical, theoretical, or an integration of both, the authors seemed to be relatively uncritical and to take for granted psychologists' standard concepts, theories, research findings, methods, and professional practices, all of which have a history and philosophical content. Writing from a standpoint of Anglo-American nations, the authors tended to celebrate the achievements of mainly White men, universalized across times, places, and persons (Brock, 2006a).

However, the Psychology typically practised in the USA, which has prevailed internationally since World War II, represents one perspective, *Psychology as a natural science*. As we note throughout this textbook, another perspective, *Psychology as a human science*, has flourished simultaneously since the discipline's formal inception, if in circumscribed ways and contexts. Arguably, then, diverse philosophical positions best characterize Psychology's history (G. Richards, 2010; R. Smith, 1997).

Here we describe the particular emphases that we place in practising our intellectual approach, our conception of historical scholarship (i.e., historiography), and the critical standpoint that we adopt.

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Richard T. G. Walsh , Thomas Teo , Angelina Baydala
Frontmatter
More Information

Emphases

In integrating the history and philosophy of Psychology we assume that any history of a discipline presupposes theoretical and philosophical content. Correspondingly, all theoretical and philosophical content has a history, because it is a human creation subject to contingencies of time and place. Accordingly, our intellectual approach is less chronological and less centred on "great men," while more philosophical than the standard text.

We concentrate on the connections among the psychological ideas of key individuals in their social-historical context and underscore the diversity of thought and practice in Psychology's history internationally. This approach of intellectual history situated in social context is congruent with the recommendations of the British Psychological Society for a course in the history and philosophy of Psychology.

Our intellectual approach also is partially *thematic* in that we address broad issues and debates that shift across historical eras and that link earlier and later historical figures. These **themes** include:

- The emergence in European and Anglo-American nations of individualism and administrative management of individuals, two historical trends that made Psychology possible and sustain and shape it.
- The place of women and diverse cultures in Psychology.
- The relationship between objectivity and subjectivity in making psychological knowledge.
- The historical relationship between science and Psychology, on the one hand, and philosophy, spirituality, and religion, on the other hand.

Such themes link past, present, and future concerns of psychologists to the multiple contexts in which the issues have been embedded.

Historiography

Writing history necessarily entails a process of selection; historians include some aspects of the past, while excluding other aspects (Weimer, 1974). But there are consequences of any selection-bias. If authors' frame of reference is exclusively Psychology as a natural science steadily progressing from functionalism through behaviourism to cognitive and behavioural neuroscience, which is the standard account of US Psychology, then authors will ignore Psychology as a human science and the historical trajectories of Psychologies in other nations.

Many history of Psychology textbooks begin with the discipline's emergence in nineteenth-century Germany, concentrating on nearly 150 years of Psychology's development. But we decided to examine psychological thought dating back to ancient times for two reasons. First, scholars might discern partial historical continuity of psychological ideas posed in previous eras. Although these ideas arose from particular existential conditions and are unique to their historical context, one can sense similarities based in common human conditions. Secondly, earlier psychological thought can inspire new ways of thinking about contemporary issues in Psychology. Instead of taking for granted accepted meanings associated with standard practice, scholars can refigure present meanings in the light of past representations.

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Frontmatter
More Information

When we reviewed current textbooks on the history of Psychology, we resolved to write one that acquaints students with the roots, concepts, and practices of both natural-science and human-science Psychology for the central purpose of fostering critical thinking about the origins, present, and future of the discipline. Accordingly, by adopting a social contextual and critical orientation, we highlight the diversity of context, thought, and practice in Psychology's history.

Contextualizing is important, because Psychology has taken different forms in diverse national contexts. If students are exposed to only one national perspective, they are likely to assume that no alternative perspectives have existed. To cite just two national examples, the US American cultural mentality led to functionalist and then behaviourist psychologies, while the contemporary German mentality led to a rather different approach, Gestalt psychology, in which the active perceiving mind was pivotal. In fact, there are numerous examples of the different forms that Psychology has taken historically in diverse contexts (Jansz & van Drunen, 2004).

The forerunners for our intellectual approach include Canadian historian of Psychology, Kurt Danziger (1979, 1990, 1997, 2008), who examined the origins of the discipline's conceptual and investigative traditions in social context, and Dutch authors Jeroen Jansz and Peter van Drunen (2004). Our standpoint also reflects the influence of two British historians of Psychology: Graham Richards (2010) and Roger Smith (1997). In addition, we have incorporated much of the new literature on the history and philosophy of Psychology published in recent decades.

Critical standpoint

The distinction between a critical approach to the history and philosophy of Psychology and the traditional approach deserves explanation. According to the latter, psychologists regard psychological objects as if they are permanent entities, unaffected by social-historical context, objectively knowable as truths, and equivalent to the natural objects that natural scientists study. Authors of traditional histories of Psychology compose a narrative by which the present state of the discipline upholds the truth, while "the past becomes the story of how this truth triumphed and error was defeated" (Danziger, 2008, p. 12).

However, the traditional standpoint on the history of Psychology is problematic for several reasons. Current critical histories of science and philosophy have broadened and deepened the literature on the key figures, intellectual movements, and social conditions that laid the foundation for Psychology's formal emergence in the late nineteenth century. Consequently, rather than using outdated sources and possibly perpetuating misconceptions about Psychology's scientific and philosophical origins, we relied on current historical and philosophical scholarship.

In a *critical* approach to Psychology's history and philosophy, every aspect of psychologists' activities has a social history. Scholars operating from this orientation believe that one can use the past to examine the discipline's truth-claims in the light of social-historical contingencies. Therefore, by adopting a critical historical and philosophical approach we attempted to practise two important intellectual values: explicating the characteristics of the past and showing "the impermanence of human constructions," including psychological concepts (Danziger, 2008, p. 15).

In our experience, Psychology scholars who practise a critical approach to the discipline are rather dissatisfied with the traditional approach to the history of Psychology. Critical

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Frontmatter
More Information

thinkers seek a text that is international in scope and contextualized, and integrates the history of Psychology with its philosophical foundations. This search is what inspired us to produce our text.

Furthermore, psychological bodies of knowledge, such as theories of mental processes, are as much social institutions as the university system, parliamentary democracy, and financial systems are, because the relevant collectives of people attribute institutional status to them (Kusch, 1999). Consequently, theories of mental processes are subject to influence from social institutions other than academic disciplines. Thus, our historical account of psychological thought and practice includes societal influences.

Text structure and chapter content

Our intellectual approach informs the text's structure and content. We proceed chronologically from ancient civilizations to the nineteenth century, but when describing Psychology, we divide our coverage into natural-science and human-science domains. Furthermore, we devote an entire chapter each to applied and professional psychology, the history of psychologists' ideas about how to conduct research, and current reflections on Psychology's philosophy and history. Thus, our approach is more philosophical and critical than the standard account.

The *content* of our twelve chapters is as follows. In **Chapter 1** we discuss the diverse meanings for the terms "history," "psychology," "science," and "philosophy." Then in **Chapters 2** and **3** we review how scholars in previous civilizations up to the nineteenth century dealt with psychological ideas. However, we caution our readers that modern psychological terms and concepts are not linear extensions of centuries of previous "psychological" thinking. We describe in **Chapter 4** the philosophical and scientific context for the discipline's formal emergence.

In **Chapters 5**, **6**, and **7** we discuss the development of natural-science Psychology. But our approach, although chronological, is thematic, because our interest is in comparing different schools of thought. Also, our scope is international, because natural-science and human-science Psychology took different forms in different nations.

Students in a history of Psychology course commonly ask, "How did Psychology get to be this way?" We believe that, to best appreciate the origins of psychological ideas and practices, they need a sense of the "big picture" of the discipline's *present* status. Thus, Chapter 7 also contains a review of the current state of natural-science Psychology to enable students to integrate what they have been learning about Psychology in other courses and then situate that learning in historical and philosophical context.

In **Chapter 8** we cover applied and professional psychology, although nearly all Psychology has practical intentions. In this chapter we describe historical applications of Psychology to industry, business, the military, education, and mental health, as well as newer specialty areas such as community, environmental, and health psychology.

Then we address human-science psychologies: psychoanalysis in **Chapter 9** and hermeneutic, phenomenological, existential, humanistic, and transpersonal psychologies in **Chapter 10**. Historically, human-science psychologies have been marginalized relative to natural-science psychologies. Despite their marginalization, human-science psychologies remain relevant to any scholarly account of the discipline's past, present, and anticipated

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Frontmatter
More Information

future. This is the case particularly for some international psychologists who have not found behaviourism and neobehaviourism convincing and who preferred psychoanalysis and humanistic-existential psychologies.

The heart of Psychology always has been its claim to be a legitimate science, grounded in empirical research. Accordingly, we devote **Chapter 11** to a historical review of the multiple foundations of human and animal research in Psychology. We describe the origins of the relationship between investigators and animal subjects and research participants, research methods, and quantitative and qualitative methods.

We conclude in **Chapter 12** by returning to the present, where we reflect on the value of critical, philosophical, feminist, and postcolonial perspectives for the future of scientific and professional Psychology. In addition, we review the conceptual themes of the preceding chapters and discuss our concluding theme, Psychology as a problematic science. We end by encouraging student reflection on the discipline's future.

Educational intent

Although the historical and philosophical issues that we discussed above are central to how we wrote and structured this text, its *educational* purpose takes priority. By "education" we mean instructors fostering students' active learning about the past, present, and anticipated future of Psychology's diverse contexts, thought, and practice. Consequently, we attempt to avoid training or indoctrination in "one best way" to think and behave as a psychologist. Our intention is to provide instructors and students with intellectually respectable stimulation to facilitate student reflection and critical consciousness about the field and yet to avoid the pitfalls of dogmatism.

Besides encouraging student-readers to engage in critical thinking about Psychology, we adopt international perspectives rooted in respect for human diversity. In our account, we strive to contextualize the story of Psychology by describing its diverse theories, concepts, and terms, and varied applications to research and community practice. Thus, we resituate women in science and Psychology, and adopt a multicultural scope. We trust that women and students from culturally diverse backgrounds will recognize their heritage, at least partially. However, given the limits of our knowledge, our approach is the story of primarily Western cultures' attempts to explain psychological experience scientifically.

Pedagogical features

Here we explain the pedagogical features that we employed.

Context and background

Throughout this textbook we frequently use the key terms "context" and "background." *Context* refers to both material substances and immaterial phenomena that interact with and influence the activities of individuals, groups, societies, and cultures. Material substances include social institutions, such as governmental sources of and eligibility criteria for research funding. Immaterial phenomena include culturally shared assumptions, such as the strong preference in the Western world over several centuries for scientific "facts" and against philosophical, spiritual, and religious knowledge.

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Frontmatter
More Information

Background refers to substances and phenomena with which individuals, groups, societies, and cultures have not interacted. The artificial background (e.g., a sunny beachfront) introduced by a portrait photographer does not interact with the subject of a portrait, but an actual background, that is, the *context*, clearly influences the individuals situated within it.

Structure and style

We follow the same organization in each chapter: **outline** and **introduction**, including specific **chapter aims**; two **boxes** in which we provide case examples; two images that convey context not easily accessible in words; **thematic review** of the significant historical issues and philosophical ideas discussed; **chapter summary**; **sample essay questions**; and **recommended reading**, including online resources.

At the end of the text are a **Timeline** depicting the societal and scientific contexts, the institutionalization of Psychology, and the principal schools of thought, a **Glossary**, **References**, **Name index**, and **Subject index**.

By using **bolded** section-headings and suggesting questions or issues for **small-group discussion**, two per chapter, we signal some of the important issues that link individuals and contexts. Furthermore, in sections where we discuss a particular issue or historical figure we provide a critical review of what we have just described, entitled **Section conclusion**. In addition, where relevant, we discuss the relation of the issue or historical figure to gender, ethnocultural, and ethical–political matters.

Whenever the name of a key figure whose work we describe at some point in the text appears for the first time, we **bold** that person's name. We provide the individual's years of birth and death when we first identify them.

We employ **Canadian English** (e.g., "behaviour") rather than US spelling.

In addition, we use "USA" as a noun and "US" as an adjective rather than "America" and "American," because there are dozens of nations in the Americas. We also use the term "European and Anglo-American nations" rather than "Western culture" to be more precise in our characterizations.

We use the term *sic*, which means "thus," in brackets to indicate where an original text includes language that in current discourse is questionable practice.

Lastly, in the **References** we include an author's, editor's, or translator's first given-name so as to recognize women's contributions where possible.

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