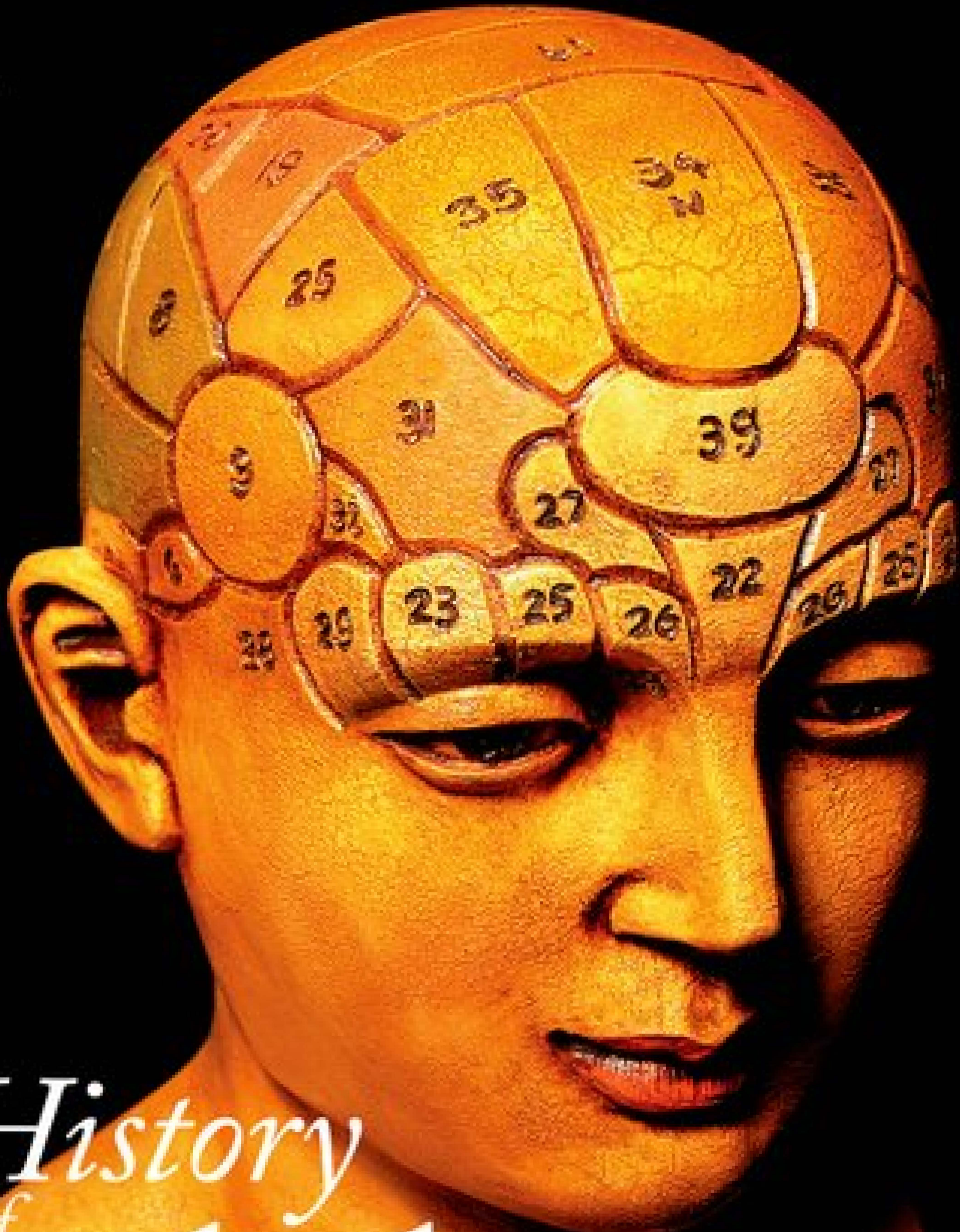


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A History
of
Psychology

Fourth Edition

John G. Benjafield

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Preface to the Fourth Edition



Psychologists do not always appreciate the extent to which history is a research discipline. Just as other areas of psychology are rapidly changing fields that frequently require new texts, so may the results of historical research require not only subtle but even profound changes in the way we view the nature of psychology. It is not simply that over time new facts are discovered which change our understanding of psychology, although that is surely a part of it, but that the different areas of psychology are reframed in ways which allow us to see both their past and future possibilities anew.

The first chapter concerns psychology and history and outlines some of the different ways in which one might approach the history of psychology. This will be of particular benefit to psychology students who may not have taken a history course before and need some context for such an endeavour. All chapters have been revised and include new references, a total of 175 in all. These not only provide additional coverage of existing topics but also present new research that bears on important issues that have previously been neglected. A few of these topics are listed below.

- A new discussion of Averroes, a Spanish Muslim who elaborated upon Aristotle's work and kept it alive for later scholars
- More material on the history of black psychology
- The belief that the mind and the brain are coextensive, which has become much less controversial than it was in the nineteenth century
- The importance of Ebbinghaus as a historian of psychology
- The historical relevance of music for psychology
- An extended discussion of the use of metaphor in psychology
- The revival of craniometry, which is the attempt to relate intelligence to the size of the skull
- A more extensive consideration of the reasons why James Mark Baldwin left Johns Hopkins
- A review of evidence bearing on Watson's use of "Little Albert" as an experimental subject
- A section on the study of Skinner's personality in relation to his work
- The continuing relevance of Milgram's work on obedience
- An expansion of the section on qualitative methods
- Sensory deprivation experiments done at the University of Saskatchewan
- A review of research on the Baldwin effect and evolution
- How the past is never fixed but always changing, as different ways of understanding it emerge, for example, the variety of ways in which the case of Phineas Gage has been construed

- New evidence suggesting that Kuhn's work on scientific revolutions is not as solid as once thought
- The importance of interdisciplinary and transnational research

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CHAPTER 1

Psychology and History



Questions to Consider

Chapter 1 will outline the reasons why one needs to understand the history of psychology in order to understand psychology itself. Before we begin, here are three famous quotations about history for you to ponder.

- In 1916, Henry Ford (1863–1947), the car manufacturer, said: “History is more or less bunk. It’s tradition. We don’t want tradition. We want to live in the present and the only history that is worth a tinker’s dam is the history we make today.” Can we afford to ignore history and just live in the present?
- “History doesn’t repeat itself, but it does rhyme” is a saying attributed to the American author Mark Twain (1835–1910). Might current events always resemble events in the past? Is there ever anything completely new? Does contemporary psychology often “rhyme” with older psychologies?
- “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it,” said the Spanish-American philosopher George Santayana (1863–1952). Will the errors of the past inevitably recur if we are ignorant of history? Might psychology go down blind alleys precisely because we are ignorant of our past mistakes?

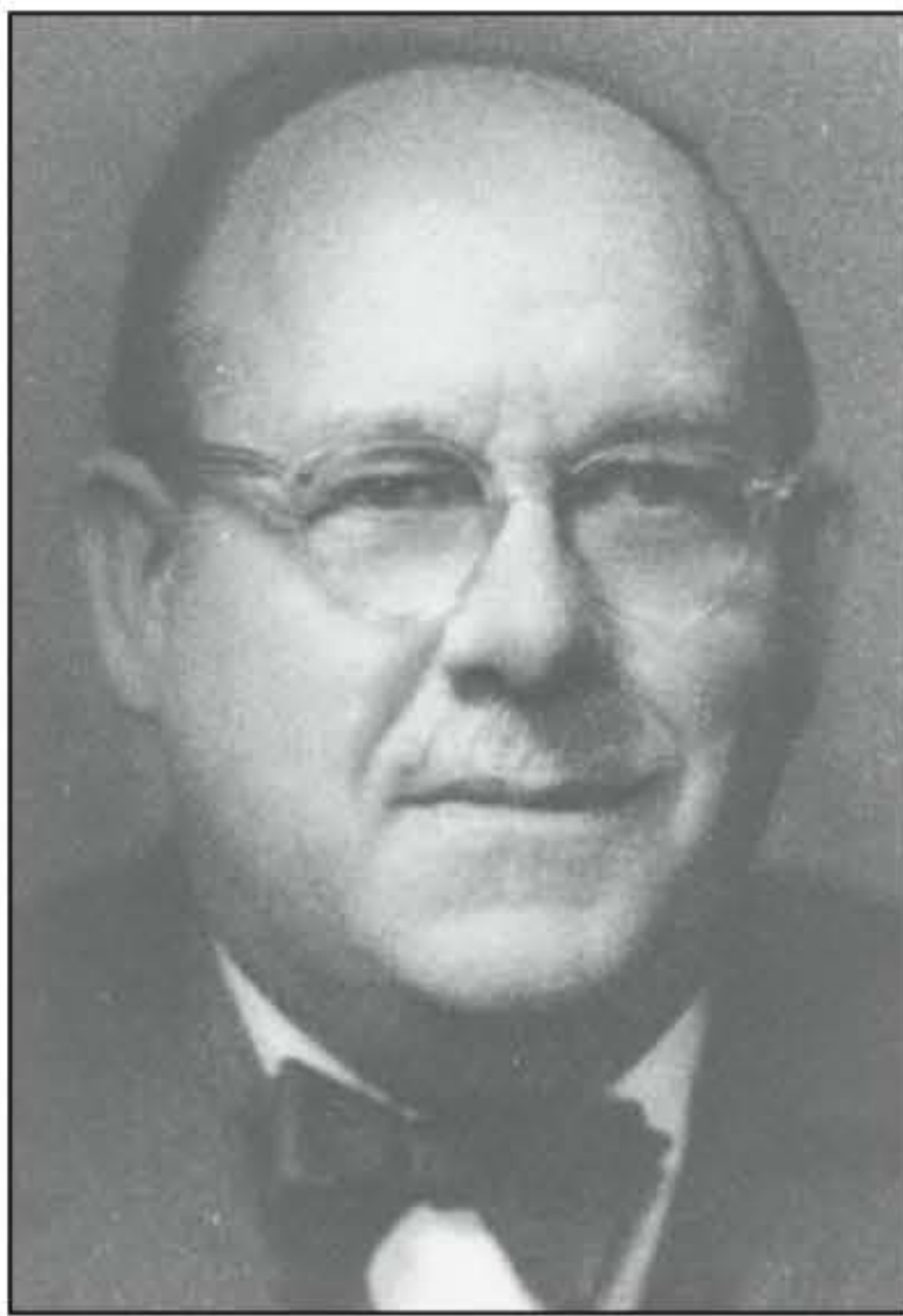
Introduction

This book is not like the ones you read in other psychology courses. Rather than being about a specific aspect of psychology, such as personality or cognition, this book is about psychology as a whole. Moreover, it is concerned not only with contemporary psychology, but also with its past. At first the history of psychology may seem straightforward;

indeed, some people imagine that once the history of a subject has been written, there never needs to be another, with the possible exception of periodic updates. However, the history of any discipline is much more involved than one might at first imagine. The reason a text like this requires revision is that history is a research discipline like any other. Just as other areas of psychology are rapidly changing fields that require new texts regularly, so the results of historical research may require not only subtle but even profound changes in the way we view the history of psychology. For not only are new facts discovered that change our understanding of psychology, but the different areas of psychology are constantly being reframed in ways that allow us to see their past anew.

Studying the History of Psychology

Just as one can study the history of any subject, so one can study the history of history. The name for such investigations is **historiography**. Historiographers examine the variety of



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ways in which historians have written history. Our first task is to review some of the approaches that historians have taken to try to make sense of their subject matter. We will see that there is more than one way of looking at the history of psychology.

The most influential modern history of psychology was written by **Edwin G. Boring** (1886–1968). In the view of some historians, Boring's (1929, 1950b) history "continues to dominate the historiography of psychology (with some revisions)" (Hatfield 1997). Boring's history concerned itself primarily with the growth of the scientific, experimental side of psychology since the nineteenth century. However, he noted that it was impossible to understand these developments without placing them in their own historical context. He found it necessary, therefore, to begin his history before the nineteenth century, and we will follow his example.

Person or "Zeitgeist"?

Boring recognizes two approaches to history. One approach emphasizes the role of the creative individual in moving history along. On this account, the history of psychology is primarily the stories of those outstanding people who have contributed to it and changed it by doing so. However, it is impossible to neglect the role that "prevailing ideologies and/or the socioeconomic situation of the period" play in shaping ideas (Mayr, 1991: 123). In addition to the contribution that an original thinker makes, it is necessary to understand each person's work in relation to the cultural context within which it takes place. This cultural context is called the **Zeitgeist**, or "spirit of the times," a concept that Boring attributes to the great German poet, philosopher, and naturalist, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832). Whether an important idea is the result of one person's originality or the inevitable outcome of forces acting within the culture at that time can be quite controversial (e.g., Boring, 1950a). Was the theory of evolution, for example, the product of Darwin's genius, or would someone else have produced it anyway, given the way ideas were developing in nineteenth-century Europe? We will need to be attentive to this kind

of question and give due credit to the *person* where it is due, as well as acknowledging the role of the *Zeitgeist*.

Ixion's Wheel or Jacob's Ladder?

In addition to Boring's *person-Zeitgeist* distinction, there are other constructs that have been used to represent historical processes. The distinguished historian Frank Manuel (1965: 4; Lewis, 2003) calls one such construct the *progressive* versus the *cyclical*: "on the one hand the historical world seen as movement either to a fixed end, or to an indefinite end that defines itself in the course of the progression, history as novelty creating and always variant; on the other hand circularity, eternal recurrence, return to the beginning of things, sheer reiteration or similar recapitulation." Manuel (1965: 4) suggests that Ixion and Jacob be taken as personifications of this polarity. Ixion was a figure in ancient Greek mythology who was condemned to rotate forever on a wheel of fire. In the Bible (Genesis 28:12), Jacob "dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reached to heaven." Manuel (*ibid.*, 5–6) asks us to consider whether history is "like Ixion in Hades tied to a perpetually revolving wheel" or like "Jacob dreaming of the ladder that reaches up to the heavens?"

Progress in any discipline, including psychology, cannot be taken for granted. Psychology may not always get better and better; sometimes it is cyclical. An idea may go out of fashion for a while, then be forgotten, and finally come back again as a "new" idea. Daniel Berlyne (1975: 79) puts it this way:

That many disputes now dividing psychologists are essentially rehashes of debates that have gone on for centuries, or for some cases for millennia, is hardly an original observation. In psychology, as in clothing, there is a limited number of possibilities. Nether garments must be based on the trousers principle, the skirt principle, or the loin cloth principle, and in each case, there is a finite number of discriminable gradations between floor length and zero. There is continuous oscillation among the possible alternatives, but there has to be some passage of time before what was once grotesquely frumpish can reappear as the refreshingly unconventional.

A knowledge of the history of psychology should put us in the position of being able to detect those parts of the current psychological scene that are genuinely novel and those parts that are recapitulations of previous ideas (Boring, 1950b: ix).

Of course, it is entirely possible that psychology both progresses *and* is cyclical. Ideas may keep being "rediscovered," but at the same time those ideas may be understood in progressively more sophisticated ways. A *spiral* may be a useful symbol of such a process (e.g., Piaget, 1971: 124–5) in which ideas recur, but at higher and higher levels. The ideas of people from the past will be reconsidered again and again by people in the present. Modern thinkers "have the advantage of time and can choose prototypes from a greater array of models. Moderns can learn from many more sources than could ancients, and though nature is no more prolific in genius . . . in one generation than in its predecessor, sheer accumulation of examples itself becomes an advantage" (Manuel, 1965: 66–7). Of course, in order to take advantage of the wisdom provided by earlier examples we need to become aware of them, and promoting such awareness is one of the goals of this book.

The New History of Psychology

Histories such as Boring's were superseded somewhat by the emergence of what **Laurel Furomoto** (1989: 11) called the **new history of psychology**:

Whereas traditional history portrayed the scientist as an objective fact finder and neutral observer, the new history emphasized the notion that scientists often operate in a subjective fashion, under the influence of a variety of extra-scientific factors. Also . . . the new history rejected the traditional view of scientific activity as a continuous progression from error to truth, and opted instead for a model that depicts scientific change as a shift from one world view to another—world views that are linked to theoretical commitments involving esthetic as well as metaphysical considerations.

Furomoto drew attention to philosophers and historians of science whose work was responsible for a thoroughgoing reconsideration of the nature of these disciplines. In what follows we will consider the views of some of these more recent approaches to the history of psychology.

The New History of Science

Discussions of psychological research methods towards the end of the twentieth century tended to emphasize the complexity of the research process more than had been the case in earlier discussions (e.g., Pedhazur, 1997). Many acknowledged that the facts may not speak for themselves, but may need to be understood from within a particular theoretical framework. Pedhazur (*ibid.*, 769), for example, pointed out that it is entirely possible for different theories all to be consistent with the same data. Being consistent with the data is no guarantee of the validity of a theory. In fact, an investigator's theory may, at least partially, determine how the data will be interpreted.

Many historians and philosophers of science have argued that the process of scientific inquiry contains a subjective aspect. Among the most influential of these scholars was **Thomas Kuhn** (1922–96). In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* ([1962] 1970), after reviewing the historical development of established sciences such as physics, Kuhn concludes that the development of these disciplines had not been smooth. It was *not* that they had simply grown and developed by accumulating data that guided the development of an adequate theory. On the contrary, scientific disciplines appeared to develop discontinuously—during long periods almost all workers in a discipline had the same beliefs about the methods, data, and theory that were appropriate for their discipline. However, at certain critical junctures, radical upheavals occurred and entire scientific communities changed their minds about what the proper methods, data, and theory should be for their discipline. The set of fundamental beliefs that guide workers in a scientific discipline is called a **paradigm**. Revolutionary periods occur in which a new paradigm is emerging and an old paradigm is being overthrown. One such revolution was the controversy surrounding the emergence of Darwin's theory of evolution in the nineteenth century.

Kuhn argues that paradigms shape the scientist's view of the world. There can be *paradigm clashes* in which fundamentally different ways of interpreting the data exist. Kuhn likens this state of affairs to cases in which we can see different patterns in the same

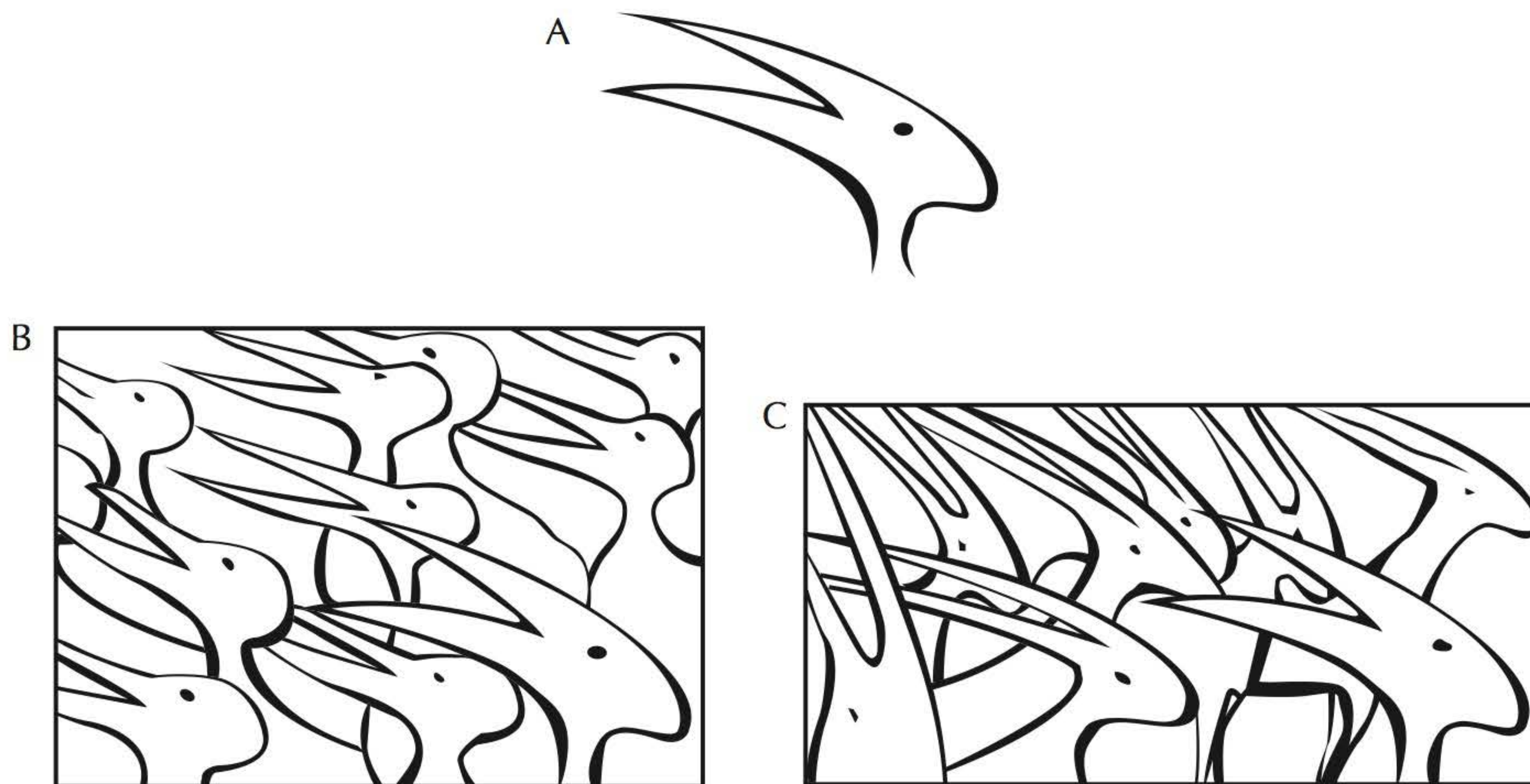


Figure 1.1 Is it a bird or an antelope?

Source: Norwood Russell Hanson, *Patterns of Discovery*, © 1958 Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

situation. A good example comes from the work of N.R. Hanson. Consider Figure 1.1A. What is it—a bird or an antelope? If we view Figure 1.1A in relation to Figure 1.1B, we can see the similarity between it and a bird. As Hanson (1969: 13) points out, it is difficult to see it as an antelope when its similarities to all the other “birds” in Figure 1.1B are so evident. However, if we view Figure 1.1A in relation to Figure 1.1C, it looks different and its similarity to an antelope becomes clear. What was formerly the “beak of a bird” is transformed into the “horns of an antelope.” Hanson’s demonstration is intended to make the following point. The two contexts are analogous to two different theories. Each of the “theories” suggests a different interpretation of the same fact. Each “theory” is equally consistent with the data. In general, the theoretical context within which we interpret data may determine how those data are seen. Conflicting interpretations of the same data are entirely possible, perhaps even inevitable.

A related point can be made by adapting an example of Paul Feyerabend (1970: 220). Consider Figure 1.2. Imagine that the horizontal line represents the range of data that psychologists have considered relevant or potentially relevant. “Data” here means any phenomena that any psychologist has ever used to support his or her theory. Thus, this range includes intelligence tests, psychotherapy sessions, developmental studies, the behaviour of animals in mazes, computer simulations, and much else besides. In other words, it includes the entire gamut of phenomena that you have encountered in your other psychology courses and that we will review in this book. Obviously, what are legitimate data from the viewpoint of one theory are not necessarily legitimate data from the viewpoint of another theory. Thus, the various theories we will review overlap somewhat with respect to the phenomena they attempt to explain, but each theory also tends to specialize in certain phenomena and to neglect others. This state of affairs is represented in Figure 1.2 by T_1 through T_4 , which stand for four different psychological theories. Each theory attempts to explain a different range of data, and no single theory explains all

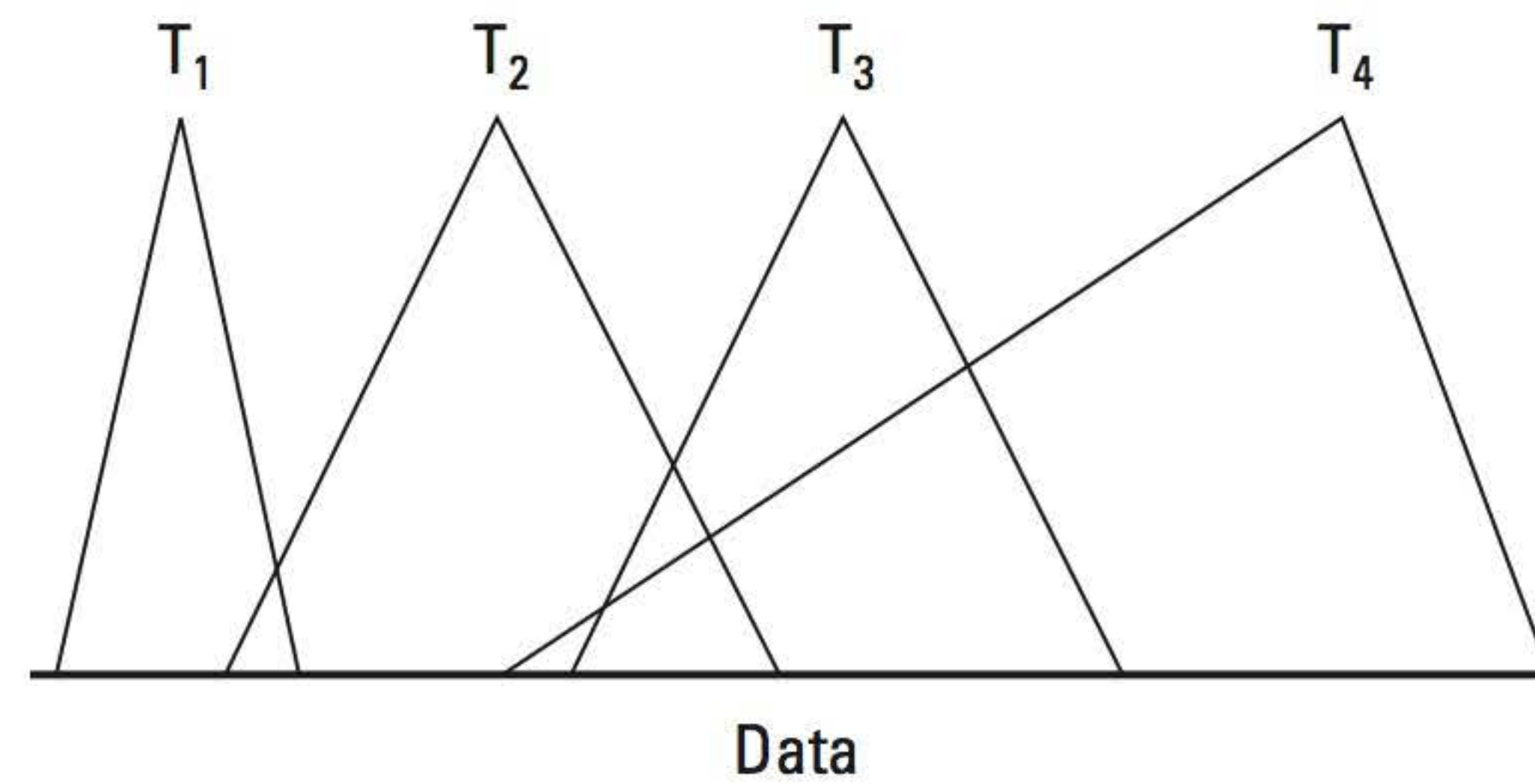


Figure 1.2 Different theoretical viewpoints in psychology

the data. T_1 through T_4 are not intended to represent any particular psychological theories, and I could have made the diagram more complex by adding additional overlapping points of view. The general idea is simply that no theory extends across the entire range and different theories compete to explain some of the same data.

Another important feature of the history of psychology brought out by Figure 1.2 is that some theories (for example, T_1 and T_4) do not overlap at all, meaning that what one theory explains is not regarded as data by the other theory and vice versa. This state of affairs has often existed in the history of psychology. For example, as we shall see in Chapter 8, for behaviourists, introspection did not yield “real” data, of which the observation of behaviour was seen as the sole source. This example points to what has been a recurrent problem in psychology, which is the specification of the boundaries of the discipline in terms of what is “in” and what is “out.” This issue is examined in Box 1.1.

It is not incumbent on psychology, of course, to explain everything that anyone who has ever imagined herself or himself to be a psychologist has wanted explained. From a Kuhnian perspective, the establishing of a single paradigm means that a discipline becomes a *normal science* in which the workers share a united view of what constitutes the suitable problems and methods for their discipline. This inevitably means that certain data are regarded as illegitimate. One interesting question is whether psychology has ever had a paradigm. Another is whether psychology *should* have a paradigm (cf. Ash 207: 198). These are questions you should be asking yourself as we consider alternative theoretical viewpoints.

Feminism and the Psychology of Women

Feminism is not a single point of view but has many different aspects. Beginning with classic texts such as *The Second Sex* ([1949] 1989) by **Simone de Beauvoir** and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), the perspectives of women were brought to bear on every aspect of contemporary culture, including psychology. There are several important ways in which feminism and the women’s movement changed the history of psychology. One of the most far-reaching contributions of feminist scholarship was to identify “distortions and biases” in psychology (Banister et al., 1994: 122). One iconic figure in this regard, as Herman recounts (Herman, 1995: 281), was Naomi Weisstein,

... a Harvard trained experimental psychologist who ... had been intensely frustrated by her own educational and professional experience in psychology. ... Denied the use

Box 1.1 ∞ Psychology's Territories

Paul Baltes (2007) points out that the history of a discipline is both internal and external. On the one hand, it involves events that go on inside the discipline itself, but it also involves "social, institutional and professional contexts" (ibid., xi). This means that the study of the history of psychology is interdisciplinary, involving not only history and psychology, but also disciplines as diverse as sociology and neuroscience. The history of professional organizations, such as the American and Canadian Psychological Associations as well as the International Union of Psychological Sciences, also provides insight into the social context in which psychology has developed.

Psychology is both different from and similar to other subjects. Since the nineteenth century, psychology has struggled to define itself as a science with a unique subject matter. Although this effort has been partially successful, the boundaries of psychology are still somewhat porous. As Mitchell Ash (2007: 4) observes, people "think psychologically" in "every discipline that deals with human affairs." Consequently, the history of psychology necessarily includes the "meanings of psychological concepts in different disciplines" (ibid., 6) as well as the use of psychological concepts in everyday life. These different meanings of psychological concepts interact with one another in complex ways. For example, *memory* can have technical

meanings in cognitive psychology, such as *short-term memory*, *long-term memory*, and *working memory*, that may not be a part of the layperson's conception of "memory." As we explore the novel ways in which psychologists have used and created psychological concepts, you should also consider whether or not such concepts have always been improvements on non-academic ones. For example, is psychological discourse about the *self* always richer than other forms of discourse, such as religious or literary discourse (Gergen, 2007)?

[H]ighly specific, sometimes rather strange-sounding vocabularies proliferate within psychology in part to establish discursive communities linked by sophisticated sounding psychological terms deemed to be more sophisticated than and therefore superior to, "naïve" everyday psychology. . . . [I]t might be . . . useful in this context to consider the varied ways in which feedback between academic and non-academic discourses about psychical phenomena take place. . . . [T]he popularization of psychological research results and theories is only one such relationship among many. (Ash, 2007: 10)

Can you think of other ways in which academic and non-academic psychological discourses interact?

of equipment she needed for her doctoral research (because she might break it), she somehow managed to finish first in her class in 1964. Prospective employers asked "How can a little girl like you teach a great big class of men?" and "Who did the research for you?" Even in a booming job market she received no job offers. Disappointed and outraged, she found support, and a feasible explanation for her own experience, in the emergence of feminism. She became a founding member of the Chicago Women's Liberation Movement. An organized women's movement, she came to believe, was more likely to "change this man's world and this man's science" than were the empiricism and scientific reasoning she had cherished and nurtured for years.

Another landmark was the publication by Bernstein and Russo of “The history of psychology revisited: Or, up with our foremothers.” In that article, Bernstein and Russo argued that “male bias pervades the very essence of the profession—the historical definition of psychology itself” (1974: 130). They went on to demonstrate that the contributions of women to psychology had not been acknowledged and to call for changes to the psychology curriculum so that students not only would be able to “study the psychology of women, [but] also the women of psychology” (*ibid.*, 133). Furomoto (1989) calls this “compensatory history,” in the sense that it reminds us of the contributions of women that have been neglected by previous historians. In what follows we will be considering the contributions of such women as Christine Ladd-Franklin (see Chapter 4) and Mary Calkins (see Chapter 5) that were often left out of older histories.

Johnston and Johnson have explored what they call the “second generation” of eminent American women psychologists, who became psychologists after such pioneers as Ladd-Franklin and Calkins. “The members of the second generation were the students of the founding mothers and fathers who initiated the disciplinary study of psychology” (2010: 41), and includes those who received their PhD between 1906 and the end of World War II in 1945. Among the 107 members of the second generation were Edna Heidebreder, who wrote a very influential and authoritative history of psychology published in 1933, and Eleanor Gibson, an important developmental and experimental psychologist who we will consider in Chapter 13.

In their review, Johnston and Johnson found that a majority of their sample held academic positions in which they rose to senior ranks. However, “their fields of expertise did tend to cluster in certain areas of psychology that have traditionally been associated with ‘women’s interests’: developmental, clinical, and educational” (*ibid.*, 46). One study found that they were paid as much as 40 per cent less than their male counterparts. Three-quarters of the sample married, of whom over 40 per cent had children. Of course, these women had to try to balance work and family responsibilities, a task that was complicated by the emergence of “anti-nepotism rules at research universities that forbade the joint hiring of immediate family members” (2010: 52). This often resulted in women taking positions inferior to those for which they would otherwise be qualified. In Chapter 13, we will see how anti-nepotism rules influenced the career of Eleanor Gibson.

Furomoto (1989: 24) noted that an extension of such research is the “reconstruction of women’s experiences” (e.g., Scarborough and Furomoto, 1987). The describing of women’s experiences as women is a central strand of feminist scholarship (Banister et al., 1994: 122). A recurrent theme is that the psychology of women has been presented from a masculine perspective, not from the perspective of women themselves. One early response to this problem was an increase in the number of discussions of the psychology of women that were written by women (e.g., Dinnerstein, 1977; Matlin, 1987).

Kimball observes that feminist psychologists have worked within two different traditions. One tradition emphasizes the similarities between the genders and discounts the importance of differences between them. The work of Leta Stetter Hollingworth, which we will consider in Chapter 14, belongs to this tradition. The other tradition emphasized the “positive human characteristics that have been undervalued because

they are associated with women and with the symbolic feminine. Central to the concerns of this tradition are the sense of connectedness, concern with human relationships, and care giving that women, more than men, bring to human culture” (Kimball, 1994: 389).

The career of **Evelyn Fox Keller** (1985, 1995a, 1995b; Marder, 1993) is a good example of the second tradition in feminist scholarship that has influenced the history of science and of psychology. Keller received her Ph.D. in theoretical physics from Harvard at a time when it was extremely unusual for a woman to do so. She was struck not only by the relative absence of women in the sciences, but also by the fact that the style of thinking practised by scientists had a masculine origin. Keller began her analysis of the role of gender in science by quoting Simone de Beauvoir: “Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth” (Keller, 1985: 3).

The one-sidedness of masculine-oriented science is reflected in the view that science is an objective set of procedures that has the control of nature as its goal. Keller believed that traditional accounts of science tended to ignore the role played by factors such as intuition, empathy, and personal engagement. These qualities are not “actually feminine attributes,” but “they have traditionally been seen as such” (Marder, 1993: 24). There is no necessity to the traditional view of the nature of science any more than there is a necessity to traditional views of the differences between the genders.

Both gender and science are socially constructed categories. Science is the name we give to a set of practices and a body of knowledge delineated by a community, not simply defined by the exigencies of logical proof and experimental verification. Similarly, masculine and feminine are categories defined by a culture, not by biological necessity. Women, men, and science are created, together, out of a complex dynamic of interwoven cognitive, emotional, and social forces. (Keller, 1985: 3–4)

Keller argues that we need to become aware of the **science-gender system** by which our conception of gender and our conception of science mutually determine one another (1985: 8). For example, a feminist analysis of science brings out the extent to which science is a personal as well as a social process—aspects of science that tend not to appear in traditional accounts of the history of science. Keller did not mean that the successes of “masculine” science should be ignored, but that we need to acknowledge the degree to which the language and practices of science are “fueled and elaborated, and sometimes also subverted, by the more parochial social, political, and emotional commitments (conscious or not) of particular individuals and groups” (1985: 11). A feminist approach to the history of science insisted that these aspects of science be openly discussed and not dismissed as irrelevant.

Psychology as a Social Construction

The notion that psychology, like other sciences, is a social construction is suggested by the approaches to history we have just considered. The paradigm concept and feminism both imply that psychology does not simply involve the objective accumulation of

knowledge, but is also driven by social processes (e.g., Gergen, 1985). As a classic text in **social constructionism** (Berger and Luckmann, 1967: 204) states:

[People are] biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for [them] the dominant and definite reality. Its limits are set by nature, but, once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world the human organism is itself transformed. In this same dialectic [people] produce reality and thereby produce [themselves].

In this context, a **dialectical process** is one in which opposing tendencies shape one another. The opposing tendencies of interest to social constructionists are the exogenic and the endogenic (Gergen, 1985: 269). **Exogenic** means “coming from outside,” and many psychologists have stressed the importance of factors external to the person as determinants of human experience. The classic example of the exogenic perspective is British empiricism. **Endogenic** means “coming from inside,” and it refers to those psychologists who believe that “humans harbor inherent tendencies . . . to think, categorize, or process information, and it is these tendencies (rather than features of the world in itself) that are of paramount importance in fashioning knowledge” (Gergen, 1985: 269). An example of such a thinker is Immanuel Kant, whom we will also consider in Chapter 3.

Social constructionists acknowledged the limitations of both the endogenic and the exogenic perspectives. They attempted to avoid the problems inherent in each by moving to a new level of discourse in which knowledge is no longer seen as “something people possess somewhere in their heads, but rather, something people do together” (ibid., 270). This means that psychological concepts are to be understood as the outcome of social processes. Box 1.2 outlines some examples of such processes from the history of psychology and race.

Psychological Research as a Social Construction

The idea that psychology is a social construction is disturbing to many people because it suggests that psychological research is not “objective.” Although social constructionists vary in the extent to which they believe that psychological research is entirely a social construction, there is no doubt that all of them believe that it is at least to some extent a social construction (Stam, 1990). Jill Morawski (1988; Morawski and Steele, 1991) has drawn attention to the importance of the social context in understanding how experiments are done.

What actually occurs in the design and execution of an experiment includes complex negotiations about what is being observed and what counts as an observation. The written account of a laboratory event is itself the product of rhetorical deftness and artful editing. What kinds of experiments are conducted depends on the research community’s customs, ethics, economics, policy interests, and even fads. What goes on in experimental laboratories is not limited solely by explicit methodological rules, but involves practical problem-solving by common-sense reasoners. Conventional histories of psychology recount none of these conditions of laboratory work. (Morawski, 1988: 73)

Box 1.2 ∞ Psychology and “Race”

The word “race” has many different meanings, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*. One meaning is inclusive, “the human race,” as distinct from other creatures. Another meaning is that race is “one of the great divisions of mankind,” referring to ethnic differences between people. As the *OED* notes, “The term is often used imprecisely; even among anthropologists there is no generally accepted classification or terminology.” The vagueness of the concept has not prevented its widespread use in the history of psychology and in many other disciplines.

Andrew Winston (2004) observed that much of the psychological discourse about “race” has taken place within the United States and has concerned the possibility of “racial” differences in intelligence, a subject we will explore in Chapters 4 and 8. Of course, variations of this topic have surfaced in other countries as well. As Thomas Teo observed, a recurrent form of investigation concerns people of “mixed race,” who sometimes are assumed to have inherited characteristics of more than one “race.” For example, Teo (2004: 100) described a Canadian study, done in the 1920s, of individuals from the Six Nations reserve in Ontario.

Although the authors pointed out that the American Indian children suffered from a language handicap, that the social status was not the same for these children, and that the results depended on the tests used in the study, they concluded that “IQ seems to rise with the admixture of white blood but the results must be interpreted with caution . . . also because the amount of white blood cannot be determined with accuracy.” This is a variation of the “it is difficult to make statements, but I make them anyway” technique . . . and the results were reported because they fitted the *Zeitgeist* and fulfilled social and academic expectations.

Variations of the concept of “race” have been with us for a very long time (Weizmann, 2004), and are likely to be with us for some time yet. For example, in their overview of the history of intelligence testing, Cianciolo and Sternberg (2004: 121) acknowledged that the concept of race may very well be scientifically meaningless, but that did not lead them to conclude that race is only a “sociological construction.” Rather, they wanted to preserve the concept of race as at least in part a “biological distinction” even though it is usually measured by “participants’ self-reports of their racial identity.” By contrast, Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Kidd (2005: 57) argued that “race is a social construction, not a biological construct, and studies currently indicating alleged genetic bases of racial differences in intelligence fail to make their point even for these social defined groups. In general, we need to be careful, in psychological research, to distinguish our folk conceptions of constructs from the constructs themselves.”

Here we have an example of the way in which concepts in psychology and concepts in everyday life can shade into one another, as discussed in Box 1.1. Garden-variety, or *folk concepts*, may seem compelling to those who have them. Thus, Francisco J. Gil-White (2001) suggested that the folk concept of “race” is an instance of the tendency on the part of “folk” to believe that every concept has an essence, that is, that every member of a category has something in common with every other member of a category. *Essentialism* “is the view that certain categories have an underlying reality or true nature that one cannot observe directly but that gives an object its identity, and is responsible for other similarities that category members share” (Gelman, 2004: 404; Gelman and Legare, 2011). To the extent that “race” is a socially constructed category, there need be no essential differences between people who are construed as belonging to different “races.”

Other scholars, such as Greenwood (1992: 139), point out that scientific research could both be a social construction and still be “true” in some objective sense.

The fact that scientific theories are themselves socially constructed is quite neutral with respect to the issue of . . . objectivity. Many theoretical concepts and models are of course socially constructed or created, in the sense that their meaning is not defined . . . by operational definitions in terms of observables. The concept of the double helical structure of DNA was not introduced by Watson and Crick to conventionally refer to something they could directly observe. This theoretical concept and its meaningful content were social in origin. Yet this does not preclude us from holding the view that Watson and Crick’s theoretical account provides a more accurate description of the real dimensions of DNA than alternative theoretical accounts, nor does it oblige us to presuppose that DNA itself (as opposed to our theoretical concept of it) is socially constructed or created.

Thus, some social-constructionist historians of psychology focus on the social processes that determine how psychological research is conducted without claiming that the products of this research necessarily have no empirical content. This is the spirit that has animated **Kurt Danziger’s** (1987, 1990a, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2006a; 2009) very influential work (Brock, 2006a).

[T]he profound relevance of the history of a discipline for understanding the content of that discipline arises out of the recognition that *there is no such thing as a private science*. Any epistemic access to the world afforded by a science like psychology is a collective access, and the objects to which the practices of the science are directed cannot be other than social objects constructed through the interaction of real historical individuals. The norms which regulate psychological research practice are, of course, social norms and as such are the product of specific historical conditions. (Danziger, 1992: 256)

Far from detracting from the scientific content of psychology, “a measure of historical sophistication about their field would work wonders for the ability of psychologists to enrich the cultural life of their own as well as other societies. And because they would be less dependent on current fads the quality of their more technical contributions might be expected to improve as well” (Danziger, 1994: 481).

Reconciling the “Old” and “New” Histories of Psychology

The “old” and “new” histories of psychology each have their own strengths and weaknesses (Lovett, 2006). The new history of psychology has alerted us to some of the omissions of the older histories. In particular, older histories may have been guilty of **presentism**, which is the tendency to evaluate the past primarily in terms of its relevance for the present. Presentism was brought to the attention of many historians of psychology by **George W. Stocking** (1968 [1965]), who derived the idea in large part from **Herbert Butterfield** (1900–1979; 1931). Practitioners of the older style of the history of psychology have been criticized for being presentist because they may have failed to understand

earlier work in its own terms. Stocking contrasted presentism with **historicism**, which he called “the understanding of the past for its own sake” (ibid., 4). A historicist need not be a *passéist*, that is, a person who values the past more than the present. A balanced approach between presentism and historicism would not only attempt to understand the past in its own terms, but would also make use of relevant contemporary knowledge to further our understanding of the past. Indeed, Butterfield ([1957] 1965) himself noted the legitimacy of at least some presentist concerns in a complete history of science. As Nick Jardine (2003: 134–35) writes:

With Butterfield we surely should reject . . . the structuring of historical narratives as fated convergences onto present beliefs and institutions, and the uncritical projection of present values onto the past. But there is no need to throw out the baby with the bath water. These historiographical malpractices can perfectly well be avoided without a general ban on our deployment of knowledge unavailable to those whose actions we are out to interpret and explain—a ban that would altogether deprive us of the capacity to provide critical historical interpretations and informative historical explanations.

The upshot of this discussion is that when we study the history of psychology, we should first of all try to rediscover what each psychologist was attempting to accomplish. The history of psychology, like history generally, is not important simply because it lays the groundwork for what we have now. We should not regard all previous thinkers as obsolete, and we should guard against the danger of being too critical of the past. If we dwell overmuch on the weaknesses and failings of previous thinkers, we may fail to understand them, and if we do not understand them, we will lose an important part of our heritage. The great psychologists are like important works of art—by appreciating them we enrich ourselves. Earlier psychologists are still relevant, although it is up to us to connect what they had to say to our present concerns. To do this we must put aside our prejudices about what psychology should be and approach each theorist as sympathetically as we can. “This means rethinking the thought” of the psychologists we are studying, insofar as this is possible (Collingwood, 1946: 283). We should try to understand each theory on its own terms before we critically evaluate its role in the history of psychology.

Another issue that is currently being revisited is that of the *person* versus the *Zeitgeist*. As Ball (2012: 73) observed, the new history of psychology tended to privilege “social, cultural, and institutional forces” as determinants of the history of psychology. By contrast, the older histories of psychology, such as Boring’s, had laid more emphasis on the importance of individual contributions. Ball suggested that these two tendencies may be coming into balance more than they have heretofore. One of the ways in which both the individual and the historical context can be studied simultaneously involves the **historiometric method**, examples of which come from the work of **Dean Keith Simonton**. “As Simonton (1994) notes, this procedure focuses on the individual psychology of eminent individuals (or ‘geniuses’), while at the same time exploring social factors” (Ball, 2012: 75). As Simonton practises it, the historiometric method employs quantitative statistical procedures. We will consider some of Simonton’s work on Darwin and on B.F. Skinner in Chapters 3 and 9.

There is much more to say about the history of psychology. However, we will begin by exploring the period before the nineteenth century when psychology had not begun

to separate itself from other disciplines such as philosophy. We will then go on to review some of the major approaches to psychology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As we go along, we will introduce some additional ideas about the nature of history as it applies to psychology. Then, the last chapter returns to how the study of the history illuminates the nature of psychology itself.

Questions for Reflection

- What is historiography? What are some of the issues that historians have faced in dealing with their subject?
- What are paradigms? How do they influence the subject matter of a discipline?
- Discuss the role of feminism and the psychology of women in promoting the social-constructionist approach to psychology.
- What is the difference between the “old” and the “new” history of psychology? How can the two be reconciled?

Important Names, Works, and Concepts

Names and Works

Beauvoir, Simone de
 Boring, Edwin G.
 Butterfield, Herbert
 Danziger, Kurt
 Furomoto, Laurel
 Keller, Evelyn Fox

Kuhn, Thomas
The Second Sex
 Simonton, D.K.
 Stocking, G.W.
The Structure of Scientific Revolutions

Concepts

dialectical process
 endogenic
 exogenic
 feminism
 historicism
 historiography

historiometric method
 new history of psychology
 paradigm
 presentism
 science-gender system
 social constructionism

Recommended Readings

History of Psychology

An excellent source for material dealing with all aspects of the history of psychology is the “History and Philosophy of Psychology Web Resources” page maintained by

Christopher Green at <http://www.psych.yorku.ca/orgs/resource.htm>. Another promising site is the “Virtual Laboratory” at <http://vlp.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/index.html>. On the latter, see H. Schmidgen and R.B. Evans, “The virtual laboratory: A new on-line resource for the