



Pioneers of Psychology

Raymond E. Fancher

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In this Third Edition of *Pioneers of Psychology*, Professor Fancher again traces the evolution of this influential science through the personal triumphs and disappointments of a fascinating gallery of individuals, from Descartes, Gall, and Kant to James, Piaget, and Skinner.

Pioneers of Psychology Details

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Xander says

Excellent textbook on the development of the science of psychology. The book starts with describing the roots of psychology in ancient philosophy (Plato, Aristotle and some Islamic scholars), then outlines the true beginnings of modern day psychology with John Locke's empirical theory of knowledge and Leibniz's alternative theory of rationalism.

Psychology as a science truly started in the nineteenth century, when in Germany people like Wundt and Helmholtz connected physiology to the mind. Around this time, the first scientific methods were put to practice by men like Galton and the American experimental psychologists. This, incidentally, led to the development of interesting new statistical techniques like factor analysis (used for personality tests). Via Freud, who was more a talkative dreamer than a scientist, the book ends with the most important developments in the twentieth century.

That century saw the rise of spectacular new fields within psychology, like social psychology (to understand the atrocities of World War II), developmental psychology (Piaget's four phases of development), psychology of personality (the development of personality tests and the use of factor analysis to group certain clusters; culminating in the currently used OCEAN-test), psychology of intelligence (the debate about whether there's such a thing as general intelligence and if so, how to measure it) and the psychology of women (researching the existent and mythological psychological differences between men and women).

The most important development, though, was the discovery by Alan Turing and Claude Shannon of computing machines and information theory. These new tools were, in the 1960's, connected with the human mind, which led to the development of cognitive psychology (which itself further led to modern day neuroscience, in a way).

This book deals with hundreds of pioneers of psychology and spans 650 pages. Hence, it is practically impossible to summarize any piece of it in a simple review. The main strength of the book lies in the fact that the authors connect all the theories of psychology to the scientists who came up with these ideas. The authors give descriptions of the personal lives of these men (and surprisingly, more women than expected) and relate the theories to significant life events of their intellectual parents, and to the general Zeitgeist in which these theories arose. This choice makes it much easier for the reader to grasp the continuous historical progress of psychology, and link key ideas to particular persons and events.

Besides this obviously superb choice, the book is written in a very clear and concise style - which makes it a true pleasure to read this book!

The only point of critique is the meager role that evolutionary psychology plays in the book. It is shortly mentioned at the end in the chapter on Darwin and the implications of his theory of evolution by natural selection, but this does no right to the value of evolutionary psychology.

Evolutionary psychologists try to explain the psychological mechanisms that psychologists propose as theories of the human mind. The human brain is an organ, just like the rest of our body is composed of organs, and hence it has been under millions of years of evolutionary pressure by natural selection. In other words: the human mind is shaped by evolution. To explain psychological mechanisms (for example, the fact that we succumb so easily to domination by others) we need to look at the adaptive value of these

mechanisms, in light of our ancestral history.

In this sense, evolutionary psychology - a relatively new field within science - is the foundation of all of psychology. This could have been worked out more and better. (Steven Pinker's *How the Mind Works* (1997) is an excellent, albeit slightly outdated introduction to this scientific domain).

Nevertheless, I should not end this review on a bad note. I have learned a lot about psychology, philosophy, history and artificial intelligence because of reading this book. I can only end this review by recommending it to anyone interested in these subjects.

Kim Sasso says

Geeky, perhaps, but I actually read this book cover to cover and enjoyed it immensely. I love thinking!

Ives says

One boring week, I decided to pick up a book about psychology. This book showed and explained every theory, as of why things work the way they do. I found interesting pictures as well as diagrams that label the brain, and sections of the brain; which piece control what part of the mind, and so much more. Then, as interesting as it all seemed, I felt like reading this was better than sitting doing nothing for a couple days.

Molly says

I REALLY appreciated learning more about theories in psychology contextualized by the people and times that prompted them. I sold this book after my history and systems class, wish I had kept it.

Oana Bogdescu says

I had this book for my History of Psychology course at the University and it is really helpful to get familiar with the concepts and the basics of Psychology. I found it interesting and relaxing.

Stephen says

This book has taken several steps away from the "great man" method of history telling during its three revisions and this incarnation is greatly helped by the addition of a younger scholar as an author (Ms. Rutherford). There are some startling revelations about psychology in its infancy within these pages, and their fingers are long -- sometimes reaching all the way into the present. But I won't spoil the fun. Read it!

Köksal Kök says

okuduğum en a??r ilk 5 kitaptan biri.

gayet akademik, doyurucu, her psikoloji öğrencisinin, hatta psikolojiye ilgi duyan herkesin okuması gereken çok çok değerli bir kitap. zaten say?n yard?ml?, hep kaliteli kitaplar? çevirir. psikolojinin tarihsel gelişimi, babalar?, bilimsel yolculuğu ad?m ad?m günümüze doğru anlat?l?r.

ilk 5;

- Suç ve Ceza (crime and punishment),
 - Sefiller (Les Misérables),
 - Kavgam (Mein Kampf),
 - ?u Ç?lg?n Türkler (Those Crazy Turks),
 - Sözler, (The Words), 1200 sayfa, (evet bildiğimiz büyük k?rm?z? kitap).
 - Leviathan (Hobbes). (galiba 6 oldu).
-

Travis says

I heartily recommend Raymond Fancher's "Pioneers of Psychology" for anyone interested in a theoretically-oriented history of the discipline (and if that isn't your interest, then this may not be the book for you--but that wouldn't be the book's fault).

Fancher's book is divided into 13 chapters. The first four cover modernist philosophers of mind like Descartes, Locke and Leibniz, review early brain anatomists from Gall to Penfield, and then return to philosophy with an excellent chapter on Kant, Helmholtz and Fancher. The middle chapters chronicle the beginnings of experimental and Gestalt psychology, the influence of Darwin and the beginnings of evolutionary psychology, the contributions of Galton and William James, the principle figures and discoveries of behaviorism, and wrap up with a chapter on mesmerism, hypnotism and its early practitioners and applications. The last three chapters tackle Freudian psychoanalysis, developmental psychology, and artificial intelligence. In short, the book covers a good chunk of ground.

Each chapter is uniform in length (about 35-40 pages) and typically begins with an anecdotal and biographical approach to the principle figure(s) addressed in the chapter. This strategy makes for engaging reading, even if it somewhat breaks up the linearity of the developments and milestones subsequently covered by the remainder of the chapter. It also limits the details Fancher can address to what can be surveyed in the remaining 25 or so pages of each chapter. In most cases this isn't a problem, but a few of the chapters would have benefited by adding a bit more discussion at the end, even if it resulted in a chapter or two being longer than the rest. The chapters on Freud and Darwin in particular end up omitting or truncating material that is really crucial to a balanced understanding. For example, Freud's metapsychology is given short shrift, as is the role of genetics in evolutionary biology. The book's arrangement into topical chapters also artificially mixes up the actual chronology of developments, resulting (for instance) in a discussion of behaviorism that precedes that of psychoanalysis, even though the latter movement preceded (and influenced) the former.

Minor criticisms aside, however, I thought Fancher does a very admirable job in covering historical that could have read like a mere laundry list figures and achievements, but doesn't; most of the material is

presented in so compelling a fashion that it is interesting even when the reader already knows many of the details. And unlike many historians of psychology, Fancher has an excellent grasp of the philosophical texts and figures he discusses. I would have loved to see a final chapter bringing the history of psychology up to date with discussions of, say, existential psychology, contemporary quantificational research methods, narrative therapy, current controversies in the discipline, current trends toward medicating mental health, and the politicization of psychology--especially since what is at present the final chapter (on AI) reads more like an appendix than a conclusion.

In sum, I thought the book to be an excellent philosophical history of psychology (and a nice companion to Daniel Robinson's "An Intellectual History of Psychology," which focuses on pre-Modern philosophical developments and says relatively little about the scientific developments upon which Fancher focuses). And for a survey text, I thought it was admirably entertaining as well. It was certainly clearly-written and impeccably researched. It should thus appeal to novice and professional alike.

Kimberly says

This was the textbook for my history of psychology class. It was mostly interesting. I'll wait and see how I did in the class and then maybe my rating will change.

Joel says

An impressively interesting description of how psychology emerged and formed into a science of its own. Without losing a good amount of gripping detail, the book offers a comprehensive explanation of how the science was extracted over the course of centuries, from other disciplines like philosophy and physiology. This is all thanks to the biographical presentation of the key influencers of the history as it is told by this author. As I expected when choosing the book, it did provide a firm foundation for understanding why psychology is what it is today, and how to study further. I dearly recommend it for anyone interested in psychology and the history of science in general.

Dave Richard says

Text for History/Systems of Psychology.

Kayla Lakings says

School

Ken carlson says

very insightfull particularly love Decartes's biography and the theory of Behaviorism.
