Praise for
50 Psychology Classics

"At long last a chance for those outside the profession to discover that there is so much more to psychology than just Freud and Jung. *50 Psychology Classics* offers a unique opportunity to become acquainted with a dazzling array of the key works in psychological literature almost overnight."

Dr Raj Persaud
Gresham Professor for Public Understanding of Psychiatry

"This delightful book provides thoughtful and entertaining summaries of 50 of the most influential books in psychology. It's a 'must read' for students contemplating a career in psychology."

VS Ramachandran MD PhD, Professor and Director, Center for Brain and Cognition, University of California, San Diego

"A brilliant synthesis. The author makes complex ideas accessible and practical, without dumbing down the material. I found myself over and over thinking, 'Oh, that's what that guy meant.'"

Douglas Stone, lecturer on law at Harvard Law School and co-author of **Difficult Conversations**

"Intelligent, engaging, and crisp ... will appeal to anyone who is seeking to understand themselves, partners, colleagues, or bosses better."

Wendy Taylor, **The Age**

"Butler-Bowdon writes with infectious enthusiasm ... he is a true scholar of this type of literature."

USA Today

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Preface
Second edition

When *50 Psychology Classics* was first published in 2007, the simple aim was to provide "Insight and inspiration from 50 key books."

To date, the book has sold over 100,000 copies in English, and gone into 15 languages, including German, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, Hungarian, Korean, Romanian, Swedish, Japanese, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Estonian, Arabic, and Turkish. It has been a popular audiobook, listened to in gyms and on bus and train journeys to work, and found a place on college reading lists which aim to equip students with a basic knowledge of the history of psychology, its major names and their contributions.

The book's success came as a surprise, but perhaps it shouldn't have; everyone on the planet has an interest in learning what makes themselves and others tick. Whether you're a psychologist or not, human nature is fascinating to us all, and my book is a small attempt to make the insights of psychology available to people who may never study it formally.

My attention to the key books is a departure from most introductions to psychology, which commonly focus on important ideas or people. Yet precisely because the classics seem daunting to the non-professional reader, a good commentary which addresses the significant ideas, says something about the context in which the work was written, and also provides information on the author, will always be useful. Reading its important books offers a great foundation in any discipline; simply put, we need some awareness of what has gone before. Trainee therapists, for instance, should at least have skimmed Carl Rogers' *On Becoming A Person*, cognitive psychology students should have read Albert Ellis, sex researchers must be familiar with the work of Kinsey, personality testers need to take in the writings of Briggs Myers, and doctoral candidates in conditioning or obedience must by

familiar with Pavlov's *Conditioned Reflexes*, and Milgram's *Obedience to Authority*, respectively.

This revised edition has nine new chapters, including two on important psychologists who were not featured in the first edition —Gordon Allport and Albert Bandura—along with commentaries on more recent writings—by Carol Dweck, Temple Grandin, Stephen Grosz, Daniel Kahneman, and Walter Mischel—that have added to our stock of psychological knowledge since the original *50 Psychology Classics* was written. As with the first edition, my selections are to some extent unorthodox. Susan Cain, for instance, is not a psychologist, yet her book has done more to bring the issue of introversion into the public mind than any writing before. Neither is Leonard Mlodinow an academic psychologist, rather a physicist who nevertheless has important things to say on the unconscious mind. Yet these choices remind us that psychology is not owned by psychologists, any more than economics is owned by economists.

As a discipline, psychology is, of course, constantly changing and advancing through research, and academic journals are the main record of this evolution. Yet a book is a uniquely powerful way to get inside a subject and discover it in depth, and this intimate way of learning is what inspired me in the writing *50 Psychology Classics*. I hope that for you, too, it opens doors into other minds and ideas.

Tom Butler-Bowdon, 2017

Acknowledgments

Each book in the *50 Classics* series has been a major effort, involving thousands of hours of research, reading, and writing. Beyond this core work, the series is made successful thanks to the team at Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

I'm very grateful for the editorial input of Nicholas Brealey and Sally Lansdell in NB's London office, which has made *50 Psychology Classics* a better book. Thanks also for the efforts with international rights to ensure that the book will be read by as many people as possible around the world.

Many thanks also to Patricia O'Hare and Chuck Dresner in the Boston office for their commitment to this book and to the *50 Classics* series, and for increasing its profile in the United States.

Finally, this book could obviously not have been written without the wealth of remarkable ideas and concepts expressed in the classic books covered. Thank you to all the living authors for your contributions to the field.

Introduction

In a journey that spans 50 books, hundreds of ideas, and over a century in time, *50 Psychology Classics* looks at some of the most intriguing questions relating to what motivates us, what makes us feel and act in certain ways, how our brains work, and how we create a sense of self. Deeper awareness in these areas can lead us to self-knowledge, a better understanding of human nature, improved relationships, and increased effectiveness—in short, to make a real difference to your life.

50 Psychology Classics explores writings from such iconic figures as Freud, Adler, Jung, Skinner, James, Piaget, and Pavlov, and also highlights the work of contemporary thinkers such as Seligman, Kahneman, Dweck, and Gilbert. There is a commentary devoted to each book, revealing the key points and providing a context of the ideas, people, and movements surrounding it. The blend of old and new titles gives you an idea of writings that you should at least know about even if you are not going to read them, and newer, really practical titles that take account of the latest scientific findings.

The focus is on "psychology for nonpsychologists," books everyone can read and be enlightened by, or that were expressly written for a general audience. In addition to psychologists, the list includes titles by neurologists, psychiatrists, biologists, communications experts, and journalists, not to mention a dockworker, an expert in violence, and a novelist. As the secrets of human behavior are too important to be defined by a single discipline or point of view, we need to hear from such an eclectic collection of voices.

The book does not focus primarily on psychiatry, although works by psychiatrists such as Oliver Sacks, Erik Erikson, R. D. Laing, and Viktor Frankl are included, plus some by famous therapists including Carl Rogers, Fritz Perls, and Milton Erickson. *50 Psychology Classics* is less about fixes to problems than supplying general insights into why people think or act as they do.

Despite the inclusion of some titles relating to the unconscious mind, the emphasis is also not on depth psychology, or concepts of the psyche or soul. Some of the best popular writers in this area, including James Hillman (*The Soul's Code*), Thomas Moore (*Care of the Soul*), Carol Pearson (*The Hero Within*), and Joseph Campbell (*The Power of Myth*), have been covered in *50 Self-Help Classics* and *50 Spiritual Classics*, which explore books on the more transformational and spiritual sides of psychology.

The list of 50 psychology classics does not claim to be definitive, just to range over some of the major names and writings. Every collection of this type will be to some extent idiosyncratic, and no claims are made to cover the various fields and subfields in psychology comprehensively. Here we are seeking basic insights into some of the most intriguing psychological questions and concepts, and a greater knowledge of human nature.

The rise of a science

"Psychology is the science of mental life." William James

As the early memory researcher Hermann Ebbinghaus (1850–1909) wrote, "Psychology has a long past, but only a short history." He meant that people have been thinking about human thought, emotion, intelligence, and behavior for thousands of years, but as a discipline based on facts rather than speculation psychology is still in its infancy. Even though he made his statement a hundred years ago, psychology is still considered young.

It emerged from two other disciplines, physiology and philosophy. German Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) is seen as the father of psychology because he insisted it should be a separate discipline, more empirical than philosophy and more focused on the mind than physiology. In the 1870s he created the first experimental psychology laboratory, and wrote his huge work *Principles of Physiological Psychology*.

As Wundt is read today only by those with a specialized interest, he is not included in the list of classics. American philosopher William James (1842–1910), however, also considered a "founding father" of modern psychology, is still widely read. The brother of novelist Henry James, he trained in medicine and then transferred to philosophy, but like Wundt felt that the workings of the mind deserved to be a separate field of study. Building on a theory by

German neuroanatomist Franz Gall that all thoughts and mental processes were biological, James helped to spread the remarkable idea that one's self—with all its hopes, loves, desires, and fears—was contained in the soft gray matter within the walls of the skull. Explanations of thoughts as the product of some deeper force such as the soul, he felt, were really the realm of metaphysics.

James may have helped define the parameters of psychology, but it was Sigmund Freud's writings that really made it a subject of interest to the general public. Freud was born 150 years ago, in 1856; his parents knew he was bright, but even they could not have imagined the impact his ideas would have on the world. On leaving school he was set to study law, but changed his mind at the last minute and enrolled in medicine. His work on brain anatomy and with patients suffering from "hysteria" led him to wonder about the influence of the unconscious mind on behavior, which sparked his interest in dreams.

Today, it is easy to take for granted how much the average person is familiar with psychological concepts such as the ego and the unconscious mind, but these and many others are all—for better or worse—Freud's legacy. Many of the titles covered in *50 Psychology Classics* are by either Freudians or post-Freudians, or mark themselves out by being anti-Freud. It is now fashionable to say that Freud's work is unscientific, and his writings literary creations rather than real psychology. Whether this is accurate or not, he remains far and away the most famous person in the field, and although psychoanalysis—the talking therapy he created to peep into a person's unconscious—is now much less practiced, the image of a Viennese doctor drawing out the deepest thoughts of his couch-lying patient is still the most popular image we have when we think of psychology.

As some neuroscientists have intimated, Freud may be due for a comeback. His emphasis on the major role of the unconscious in shaping behavior has not been proved wrong by brain imaging techniques and other research, and some of his other theories may yet be validated. Even if not, his position as psychology's most original thinker is not likely to change.

The reaction to Freud came most obviously in the form of behaviorism. Ivan Pavlov's famous experiments with dogs, which showed that animals were simply the sum of their conditioned responses to environmental stimuli, inspired behaviorism's leading exponent B. F. Skinner, who wrote that the idea of the

autonomous person driven by an inner motive was a romantic myth. Instead of trying to find out what goes on inside a person's head ("mentalism"), to know why people act as they do, Skinner suggested, all we need to know is what circumstances caused them to act in a certain way. Our environments shape us into what we are, and we change the course of our actions according to what we learn is good for our survival. If we want to construct a better world, we need to create environments that make people act in more moral or productive ways. To Skinner this involved a technology of behavior that rewards certain actions and not others.

Emerging in the 1960s, cognitive psychology used the same rigorous scientific approach as behaviorism but returned to the question of how behavior is actually generated inside the head. Between the stimulation received from the environment and our response, certain processes had to occur inside the brain, and cognitive researchers revealed the human mind to be a great interpreting machine that made patterns and created sense of the world outside, forming maps of reality.

This work led cognitive therapists such as Aaron Beck, David D. Burns, and Albert Ellis to build treatment around the idea that our thoughts shape our emotions, not the other way around. By changing our thinking, we can alleviate depression or simply have greater control over our behavior. This form of psychotherapy has now largely taken the place that Freudian psychoanalysis once assumed in treating people's mental issues.

A more recent development in the cognitive field is "positive psychology," which has sought to reorient the discipline away from mental problems to the study of what makes people happy, optimistic, and productive. To some extent this area was foreshadowed by pioneering humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow, who wrote about the self-actualized or fulfilled person, and Carl Rogers, who once noted that he was pessimistic about the world, but optimistic about people.

In the last 30 years, both behavioral and cognitive psychology have been increasingly informed by advances in brain science. The behaviorists thought it wrong to merely surmise what happened inside the brain, but science is now allowing us to see inside and map the neural pathways and synapses that actually generate action. This research may end up revolutionizing how we see ourselves, almost certainly for the better, because while some

people fear that the reduction of human beings to how the brain is wired will dehumanize us, in fact greater knowledge of the brain can only increase our appreciation of its workings.

Today's sciences of the brain are enabling us to return to William James's definition of psychology as the "science of mental life," except that this time we are able to advance knowledge based on what we know at the molecular level. Having evolved partly out of the field of physiology, psychology may be returning to its physical roots. The irony is that this attention to minute physicality is yielding answers to some of our deepest philosophical questions, such as the nature of consciousness, free will, the creation of memory, and the experience and control of emotion. It may even be that the "mind" and the "self" are simply illusions created by the extraordinary complexity of the brain's neural wiring and chemical reactions.

What is the future of psychology? Perhaps all we can be certain of is that it will become a science more and more based on knowledge of the brain.

A quick guide to the literature

Part of the reason psychology became a popular field of study is that its early titans, including James, Freud, Jung, and Adler, wrote books that ordinary people could understand. We can pick up one of their titles today and still be entranced. Despite the difficulty of some of the concepts, people have a deep hunger for knowledge on how the mind works, human motivation, and behavior, and in the last 20 years there has been something of a new golden age in popular psychology writing, with authors such as Daniel Goleman, Steven Pinker, Martin Seligman, and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi fulfilling that need.

Below is a brief introduction to the titles covered in *50 Psychology Classics*. The books are divided into seven categories that, although unconventional, may help you to choose titles according to the themes that interest you most. At the rear of this book you will find an alternative list of "50 More Classics." Again, this is not a definitive list, but it may assist in any further reading you wish to do.

Each chapter begins with brief quotes from the book in question which aim to capture its essence, convey an important theme, or give a sense of the author's style. The "nutshell" and "similar vein"

features provide a quick insight into each book and how it fits into the psychology literature.

Behavior, biology, and genes: A science of the brain

Louann Brizendine, *The Female Brain*
Temple Grandin, *The Autistic Brain*
William James, *The Principles of Psychology*
Alfred Kinsey, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*
Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of the Child*
Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate*
V. S. Ramachandran, *Phantoms in the Brain*
Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*

For William James, psychology was a *natural* science based on the workings of the brain, but in his era the tools to study this mysterious organ properly were not adequate to the task. Now, with technological advances, psychology is gaining many of its insights from the brain itself rather than from the behavior it generates.

This new emphasis on brain science raises uncomfortable questions regarding the biological and genetic bases of behavior. Is the way we are relatively unchangeable, or are we a blank slate ready to be socialized by our environments? The old debate over "nature vs nurture" has gained new energy. Genetic science and evolutionary psychology have demonstrated that much of what we call human nature, including intelligence and personality, is wired into us in the womb or at least hormonally influenced. For cultural or political reasons, Steven Pinker notes in *The Blank Slate*, the major role that biology plays in human behavior is sometimes denied, but as knowledge increases this will become increasingly difficult to maintain. Louann Brizendine's book, for example, the result of many years' study of the effects that hormones have on the female brain, brilliantly shows the extent to which women can be shaped by their biology at different stages in life. And Temple Grandin's book on autism shows how the condition has shifted over time from being seen as the product of "parental aloofness" to greater understanding of its neurological and genetic causes. As a result, treatment of autistic children has changed utterly; where once they were seen as strange, antisocial beings who needed institutionalization, now autistic traits can be recast as differences

or even strengths, instead of weaknesses, and even be put to good use in the world of work.

Today's neuroscience suggests that the self is best understood as a sort of illusion that the brain creates. The remarkable writings of Oliver Sacks, for instance, show that the brain continually works to create and maintain the feeling of an "I" that is in control, even if there is in fact no part of the brain that can be identified as the locus of "self feeling." Neuroscientist V. S. Ramachandran's work with phantom limbs seems to confirm the brain's remarkable ability to create a sense of cognitive unity even if the reality (of many selves, and of many layers of consciousness) is more complex.

Jean Piaget never did any laboratory work on the brain, but grew up studying snails in the Swiss mountains. He applied an early genius for scientific observation to the study of children, noting that they progress along a definite line of stages according to age, assuming there is adequate stimulation from their environments. Equally, sex researcher Alfred Kinsey, also originally a biologist, sought to shatter the taboos surrounding male and female sexuality by pointing out how our mammalian biology drives our sexual behaviors.

The work of both Piaget and Kinsey suggests that while biology is always a dominant influence on behavior, environment is critical to its expression. Even amid the new findings on the genetic or biological basis of behavior, we should never conclude that as human beings we are determined by our DNA, hormones, or brain structure. Unlike other animals we are aware of our instincts, and as a result may attempt to shape or control them. We are neither nature nor nurture only, but an interesting combination of both.

Tapping the unconscious mind:
Intelligence of a different kind
Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*
Gavin de Becker, *The Gift of Fear*
Milton Erickson (by Sidney Rosen), *My Voice Will Go With You*
Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*
Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink*
Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*
Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*
Leonard Mlodinow, *Subliminal*

Psychology involves more than the rational, thinking mind, and our ability to tap into our unconscious can yield a vast store of wisdom. Freud tried to show that dreams are not simply meaningless hallucinations, but a window into the unconscious that can reveal suppressed wishes. To him the conscious mind was like the tip of an iceberg, with the submerged bulk providing the center of gravity in terms of motivation. Jung went further, identifying a whole sub-rational architecture (the "collective unconscious") that exists independent of particular individuals, constantly generating the customs, art, mythology, and literature of culture. For both Jung and Freud, greater awareness of "what lies beneath" meant someone was less likely to be tripped up by life. The unconscious was a store of intelligence and wisdom that could be accessed if we knew how, and their great task was reconnect us to our deeper selves.

As therapy, "depth" psychology has been no more than moderately successful, and tends to be only as effective as the insights or techniques of particular practitioners. Milton Erickson, for instance, a famous hypnotherapist, had the motto "It is really amazing what people can do. Only they don't know what they can do." He also understood the unconscious to be a well of wise solutions, and enabled his patients to tap into it and regain forgotten personal power.

As a bridge between the conscious and the unconscious, intuition is a form of wisdom that we can cultivate. This is chillingly demonstrated in Gavin de Becker's *The Gift of Fear*, which provides many examples of our natural ability to know what to do in critical life-or-death situations—as long as we are prepared to listen to and act on our internal voice. Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* also highlights the power of "thinking without thinking," showing that an instant assessment of a situation or person is often as accurate as one formed over a long period. While obviously logic and rationality are important, smart people are in touch with all levels of their mind, and trustful of their feelings even when the origins of those feelings seem mysterious.

Jung and Freud looked into the mysteries of the unconscious as best they could, but today medical technology is providing a clearer understanding of this aspect of the brain and its processes. The unconscious mind is not a spiritual reality, physicist Leonard Mlodinow argues, but has a firm physiological basis, developed in the brain for survival long before civilization emerged. Indeed, as

Daniel Kahneman has shown, our intuition—which evolved to protect us from harm—works well in some situations and contexts, but not in others. We are "a machine for jumping to conclusions" and those conclusions are often wrong. In revealing two quite different ways in which we think: "fast" (System 1) and "slow" (System 2), Kahneman's research has the potential to liberate us from thinking biases which result in wrong judgements and superficial reasoning. Racial prejudice, for instance, seems deeply rooted in the human mind, thanks to our focus on visual differences. Yet as Gordon Allport showed in his seminal work on the psychology of racism, education and contact with other groups can inform us that these differences are literally skin deep. We do not need to be prisoner of the way our minds work; reasoning can be more powerful than instinctive reactions.

Thinking better, feeling better: Happiness and mental health

David D. Burns, *Feeling Good*
Albert Ellis & Robert Harper, *A Guide to Rational Living*
Daniel Gilbert, *Stumbling on Happiness*
Stephen Grosz, *The Examined Life*
Fritz Perls, *Gestalt Therapy*
Barry Schwartz, *The Paradox of Choice*
Martin Seligman, *Authentic Happiness*
William Styron, *Darkness Visible*

For many years, psychology was surprisingly little interested in happiness. Martin Seligman has helped to raise the subject to serious study and observation, and his "positive psychology" is revealing through science the sometimes unexpected recipes for mental wellbeing. Barry Schwartz's distinction between maximizers and satisficers has given us the counterintuitive insight that restricting our choices in life can actually lead to greater happiness and satisfaction, and Daniel Gilbert's book points out the surprising fact that, although humans are the only animals who can look into the future, we often make mistakes in terms of what we think will lead to happiness. The fascinating insights of each of these books show that the achievement of happiness is never as simple a matter as we would like.

The cognitive psychology revolution has had a dramatic impact on mental health, and two of its major names are David D. Burns

and Albert Ellis. Their mantra that thoughts create feelings, not the other way around, has helped many people to get back in control of their lives because it applies logic and reason to the murky pool of emotions. Yet their work has many implications for achieving happiness generally, in that most of us can literally "choose" to be happy, if we understand the mind's thought–emotion mechanism. Finally, Daniel Gilbert's work on 'anticipation states' has shown that, due to the way our brains work, our predictions of how we will feel in certain situations are frequently wrong, including levels of happiness. What we think will make us happy in the future is not necessarily what actually does.

This is not the view of psychoanalysts such as Stephen Grosz, who believe that some issues are so deeply buried that it takes many sessions for their nature to be revealed. Psychoanalysis has long been unfashionable as a psychological cure, yet as Plato said, "An unexamined life is not worth living." Peeling away the layers of our being can reveal things that a course of cognitive psychology treatment may not.

William Styron's classic account of his own battle with depression indicates that the causes of the condition are often mysterious and can strike anyone. He notes that it remains the cancer of the mental health world: We are close to finding a cure, but not close enough for those who do not respond quickly to drugs or therapy.

Why we are how we are:
The study of personality and the self
Albert Bandura, *Self-Efficacy*
Isabel Briggs Myers, *Gifts Differing*
Susan Cain, *Quiet*
Carol Dweck, *Mindset*
Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther*
Hans Eysenck, *Dimensions of Personality*
Anna Freud, *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence*
Karen Horney, *Our Inner Conflicts*
R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self*
Walter Mischel, *The Marshmallow Test*

The ancients commanded us to "know thyself," but in psychology this quest takes on many aspects. Eysenck's work on the extraverted and neurotic dimensions of personality paved the way

for many other models, with contemporary psychologists commonly assessing people according to the "Big Five" personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. More recently, Susan Cain's book has put a spotlight on introversion, particularly the qualities of introverts in the work place. As appealing as it may be in our society, extroversion has become "an oppressive standard," preventing millions of quieter people from expressing their natural personality and power. Her book has allowed them to "come out" as introverts and be proud of it. Today, we can take myriad tests to determine our "personality type," and while it is wise to be skeptical of their validity, some can provide genuine insights. The best known of the modern forms is the inventory originally created by Isabel Briggs Myers.

Of course, who we are at one point in our life may be different from who we are at another. Erik Erikson coined the term "identity crisis," and in his compelling psychobiography of religious reformer Martin Luther, he conveys both the pain of uncertain identity and the power that comes when we finally know who we are.

Human beings sometimes have to cope with what seem like competing selves. Anna Freud took up where her father left off in focusing on the psychology of the ego, noting that humans do just about anything to avoid pain and preserve a sense of self, and this compulsion often results in the creation of psychological defenses. Neo-Freudian Karen Horney believed that childhood experiences resulted in our creation of a self that "moved toward people" or "moved away from people." These tendencies were a sort of mask that could develop into neurosis if we were not willing to move beyond them. Underneath was what she called a "wholehearted," or real, person.

Most of us do have a strong sense of self, but as R. D. Laing showed in his landmark work on schizophrenia, some people lack this basic security and attempt to replace the vacuum with false selves. Most of the time we take it for granted, but it is only when it is lost that we can fully appreciate our brain's ability to create the feeling of self-possession, or be comfortable with who we are.

Albert Bandura talks of a "self-system," comprising a person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills. How we end up performing in life is not simply due to the skills we have or the nature of our environment, but is the result of beliefs we develop about

ourselves. "Self-efficacy" is the belief in our capacity to shape the world and make things happen.

Carol Dweck developed the related concept of "mindset". Her research points to two fundamentally different ways of seeing intelligence, ability and success: people with a "growth" mindset see life in terms of fulfilling their potential; those with a "fixed" mindset are concerned with proving they are smart or talented. The growth and fixed mindsets can be seen as basic psychological domains, like introversion and extroversion, yet Dweck's point is that recognizing them in ourselves provides a space in which we can change. Continual reinvention and discovery is the only thing that will keep us relevant, engaged, and valuable to others.

One other important aspect of the self is willpower. Everyone is eager to have more of it, Walter Mischel noted, because it seems so important to life success. *The Marshmallow Test* is an account of his research into the science of self-control, which is linked to emotional stability as much as work achievement. Some people have it more innately than others, but it is something we can learn. If Descartes said, "I think, therefore I am," Mischel's motto is "I think, therefore I can *change* what I am."

Why we do what we do:
Great thinkers on human motivation

Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature*
Viktor Frankl, *The Will to Meaning*
Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer*
Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*
Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*
Ivan Pavlov, *Conditioned Reflexes*
B. F. Skinner, *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*

Alfred Adler was a member of Freud's original inner circle, but broke away because he disagreed that sex was the prime mover behind human behavior. He was more interested in how our early environments shape us, believing that we all seek greater power by trying to make up for what we perceive we lacked in childhood —his famous theory of "compensation."

If Adler's theory of human action relates to power, concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl's brand of existential psychology, "logotherapy," posits that the human species is uniquely made to seek meaning. It is our responsibility to look for

meaning in life, even in the darkest times, and whatever the circumstances we always have a vestige of free will.

Yet as amateur psychologist Eric Hoffer wrote in *The True Believer*, people allow themselves to be swept up in larger causes in order to be freed of responsibility for their lives, and to escape the banality or misery of the present. And Stanley Milgram's famous experiments showed that, given the right conditions, human beings exhibit a frightening willingness to put others through pain in order to be seen kindly by those in authority. Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow, on the other hand, identified a minority of self-actualized individuals who did not act simply out of conformity to society but chose their own path and lived to fulfill their potential. This type of person was as representative of human nature as any mindless conformist.

While poets, writers, and philosophers have long celebrated the inner motive that guides autonomous human behavior, B. F. Skinner defined the self simply as "a repertoire of behavior appropriate to a given set of contingencies." There was no such thing as human nature, and conscience or morality could be boiled down to environments that induced us to behave in moral ways. Skinner's ideas built on the work of Ivan Pavlov, whose success in conditioning dogs' behavior also brought into question the freedom of human action.

Despite these vast differences in understanding motivation, together these books provide remarkable insights into why we do what we do, or at least what we are capable of doing—both good and bad.

Why we love the way we do:
The dynamics of relationships

Eric Berne, *Games People Play*
John M. Gottman, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*
Harry Harlow, *The Nature of Love*
Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK—You're OK*
Carl Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*

Love has traditionally been the domain of poets, artists, and philosophers, but in the last 50 years the terrain of relationships has increasingly been mapped by psychologists. In the 1950s, primate researcher Harry Harlow's legendary experiments replacing the real mothers of baby monkeys with cloth ones

proved the extent to which infants need loving physical attention in order to become healthy adults. Remarkably, this sort of touching went against the child-rearing views of the time.

More recently, marriage researcher John M. Gottman looked at another aspect of relationship dynamics and found that the conventional wisdom on what makes long-term romantic partnerships work is often wrong. The most valuable information on how to maintain or save relationships comes from scientific observation of couples in action, right down to the microexpressions and apparently inane comments seen in everyday conversations.

Pop psychology pioneers Eric Berne and Thomas Harris understood our close personal encounters as "transactions" that could be analyzed according to the three selves of Adult, Child, and Parent. Berne's observation that we are always playing games with each other is perhaps a cynical view of humanity, but by becoming aware of those games we have the chance to move beyond them.

The contribution of humanistic psychology to better relationships is recognized by the inclusion of Carl Rogers, whose influential book reminds us that relationships cannot flower if they don't have a climate of listening and nonjudgmental acceptance, and that empathy is the mark of a genuine person.

Working at our peak:
Creative power and communication skills
Robert Cialdini, *Influence*
Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativity*
Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind*
Daniel Goleman, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*

Debates rage in the academic world over the true nature of intelligence, but in working life we are interested in its application. Two of the outstanding titles in this area, by Daniel Goleman and Howard Gardner, both suggest that intelligence involves much more than straight IQ. There are an array of "intelligences" of an emotional or social nature that can together be a decisive factor in how well a person does in life.

One of the decisive factors in success in business, as in life, is the ability to persuade. Robert Cialdini's landmark work on the psychology of persuasion is a must-read if you are involved in marketing, but also of interest to anyone who wishes to

understand how we are made to do things we would not normally choose to do.

Another component of work success is creativity. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's influential *Creativity*, based on a systematic study, shows why creativity is central to a rich, meaningful life, and why many people do not achieve their full flowering until their later years. Most importantly, the book provides many features of the creative person that we can emulate.

Psychology and human nature

"The science of human nature … finds itself today in the position that chemistry occupied in the days of alchemy."
Alfred Adler

"Everyone has a theory of human nature. Everyone has to anticipate the behavior of others, and that means we all need theories about what makes people tick."
Steven Pinker

William James defined psychology as the science of mental life, but it could equally be defined as the science of human nature. Some 80 years after Alfred Adler made the remark above, we still have a long way to go in terms of creating a rock-solid science that could match the certainty of, say, physics and biology.

In the meantime, we all need a personal theory of what makes people tick. To survive and thrive, we have to know who and what we are, and to be canny about the motivations of others. The common route to this knowledge is life experience, but we can advance our appreciation of the subject more quickly through reading. Some people gain insights from fiction, others from philosophy. But psychology is the only science exclusively devoted to the study of human nature, and its popular literature—surveyed in this collection—aims to convey this vital wisdom.

1927

Understanding Human Nature

"It is the feeling of inferiority, inadequacy and insecurity that determines the goal of an individual's existence."

"One motive is common to all forms of vanity. The vain individual has created a goal that cannot be attained in this life. He wants to be more important and successful than anyone else in the world, and this goal is the direct result of his feeling of inadequacy."

"Every child is left to evaluate his experiences for himself, and to take care of his own personal development outside the classroom. There is no tradition for the acquisition of a true knowledge of the human psyche. The science of human nature thus finds itself today in the position that chemistry occupied in the days of alchemy."

In a nutshell

What we think we lack determines what we will become in life.

In a similar vein
Erik Erikson *Young Man Luther* (p 100)
Anna Freud *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence* (p 114)
Sigmund Freud *The Interpretation of Dreams* (p 120)
Karen Horney *Our Inner Conflicts* (p 180)

CHAPTER 1

Alfred Adler

In 1902 a group of men, mostly doctors and all Jewish, began meeting every Wednesday in an apartment in Vienna. Sigmund Freud's "Wednesday Society" would eventually become the Vienna Psychoanalytical Society, and its first president was Alfred Adler.

The second most important figure in the Viennese circle, and the founder of individual psychology, Adler never considered himself a disciple of Freud. While Freud was an imposing, patrician type who had come from a highly educated background and lived in a fashionable district of Vienna, Adler was the plain-looking son of a grain merchant who had grown up on the city's outskirts. While Freud was known for his knowledge of the classical world and his collection of antiquities, Adler worked hard for better working-class health and education and for women's rights.

The pair's famous split occurred in 1911, after Adler had become increasingly annoyed with Freud's belief that all psychological issues were generated by repressed sexual feelings. A few years earlier Adler had published a book, *Study of Organ Inferiority and Its Psychical Compensation*, which argued that people's perceptions of their own body and its shortcomings were a major factor in shaping their goals in life. Freud believed human beings to be wholly driven by the stirrings of the unconscious mind, but Adler saw us as social beings who create a style of life in response to the environment and to what we feel we lack. Individuals naturally strive for personal power and a sense of our own identity, but if healthy we also seek to adjust to society and make a contribution to the greater good.

Compensating for weakness

Like Freud, Adler believed that the human psyche is shaped in early childhood, and that patterns of behavior remain remarkably constant into maturity. But while Freud focused on infantile

sexuality, Adler was more interested in how children seek to increase their power in the world. Growing into an environment in which everyone else seems bigger and more powerful, every child seeks to gain what they need by the easiest route.

Adler is famous for his idea of "birth order," or where we come in a family. Youngest children, for instance, because they are obviously smaller and less powerful than everyone else, will often try to "outstrip every other member of the family and become its most capable member." A fork in the developmental path leads a child either to imitate adults in order to become more assertive and powerful themselves, or consciously to display weakness so as to get adult help and attention.

In short, every child develops in ways that best allow them to compensate for weakness; "a thousand talents and capabilities arise from our feelings of inadequacy," Adler noted. A desire for recognition emerges at the same time as a sense of inferiority. A good upbringing should be able to dissolve this sense of inferiority, and as a result the child will not develop an unbalanced need to win at the expense of others. We might assume that a certain mental, physical, or circumstantial handicap we had in childhood was a problem, but what is an asset and what is a liability depends on the context. It is whether we *perceive* a shortcoming to be such that matters most.

The psyche's attempt to banish a sense of inferiority will often shape someone's whole life; the person will try to compensate for it in sometimes extreme ways. Adler invented a term for this, the famous "inferiority com-plex." While a complex may make someone more timid or withdrawn, it could equally produce the need to compensate for that in overachievement. This is the "pathological power drive," expressed at the expense of other people and society generally. Adler identified Napoleon, a small man making a big impact on the world, as a classic case of an inferiority complex in action.

How character is formed

Adler's basic principle was that our psyche is not formed out of hereditary factors but social influences. "Character" is the unique interplay between two opposing forces: a need for power, or personal aggrandizement; and a need for "social feeling" and togetherness (in German, *Gemeinschaftsgefühl*).

The forces are in opposition, and each of us is unique because we all accept or reject the forces in different ways. For instance, a striving for dominance would normally be limited by a recognition of community expectations and vanity or pride is kept in check; however, when ambition or vanity takes over, a person's psychological growth comes to an abrupt end. As Adler dramatically put it, "The power-hungry individual follows a path to his own destruction."

When the first force, social feeling and community expectation, is ignored or affronted, the person concerned will reveal certain aggressive character traits: vanity, ambition, envy, jealousy, playing God, or greed; or nonaggressive traits: withdrawal, anxiety, timidity, or absence of social graces. When any of these forces gains the upper hand, it is usually because of deep-seated feelings of inadequacy. Yet the forces also create an intensity or tension that can give tremendous energy. Such people live "in the expectation of great triumphs" to compensate for those feelings, but as a result of their inflated sense of self lose some sense of reality. Life becomes about the mark they will leave on the world and what others think of them. Though in their mind they are something of a heroic figure, others can see that their self-centeredness actually restricts their proper enjoyment of the possibilities of life. They forget that they are human beings with ties to other people.

Enemies of society

Adler noted that vain or prideful people usually try to keep their outlook hidden, saying that they are simply "ambitious," or even more mildly "energetic." They may camouflage their true feelings in ingenious ways: To show that they are not vain, they may purposely pay less attention to dress or be overly modest. But Adler's piercing observation of the vain person was that everything in life comes down to one question: "What do I get out of this?"

Adler wondered: Is great achievement simply vanity put in the service of humankind? Surely self-aggrandizement is a necessary motivation in order to want to change the world, to be seen in a good light? His answer was that it isn't. Vanity plays little part in real genius, and in fact only detracts from the worth of any achievement. Really great things that serve humanity are not spurred into existence by vanity, but by its opposite, social feeling.

We are all vain to some extent, but healthy people are able to leaven their vanity with contribution to others.

Vain people, by their nature, do not allow themselves to "give in" to society's needs. In their focus on achieving a certain standing, position, or object, they feel that they can shirk the normal obligations to the community or family that others take for granted. As a result, they usually become isolated and have poor relationships. So used to putting themselves first, they are expert at putting the blame on others.

Communal life involves certain laws and principles that an individual cannot get around. Each of us needs the rest of the community in order to survive both mentally and physically; as Darwin noted, weak animals never live alone. Adler contended that "adaptation to the community is the most important psychological function" that a person will master. People may outwardly achieve much, but in the absence of this vital adaptation they may feel like nothing and be perceived as such by those close to them. Such people, Adler said, are in fact enemies of society.

Goal-striving beings

A central idea in Adlerian psychology is that individuals are always striving toward a goal. Whereas Freud saw us as driven by what was in our past, Adler had a teleological view—that we are driven by our goals, whether they are conscious or not. The psyche is not static but must be galvanized behind a purpose—whether selfish or communal—and continually moves toward fulfillment of that. We live life by our "fictions" about the sort of person we are and the person we are becoming. By nature these are not always factually correct, but they enable us to live with energy, always moving toward something.

It is this very fact of goal directedness that makes the psyche almost indestructible and so resistant to change. Adler wrote: "The hardest thing for human beings to do is to know themselves and to change themselves." All the more reason, perhaps, for individual desires to be balanced by the greater collective intelligence of the community.

Final comments

In highlighting the twin shaping forces of personal power and social feeling, Adler's intention was that by understanding them we would not be unknowingly shaped by them. In the vignettes of

1954

The Nature of Prejudice

"It required years of labor and billions of dollars to gain the secret of the atom. It will take a still greater investment to gain the secrets of man's irrational nature. It is easier, someone has said, to smash an atom than a prejudice."

"When people confuse racial with ethnic traits they are confusing what is given by nature and what is acquired through learning. The confusion has serious consequences … for it leads to an exaggerated belief in the fixity of human characteristics. What is given by heredity can be changed only gradually. What is learned can … be completely altered in one generation."

In a nutshell

Racial prejudice seems deeply rooted in the human mind, thanks to our focus on visual differences. Education and contact with other groups can inform us that these differences are literally skin deep.

In a similar vein
Daniel Kahneman *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (p 198)
Leonard Mlodinow *Subliminal* (p 238)

CHAPTER 2

Gordon Allport

In the mid-1950s, Harvard psychology professor Gordon Allport noted that the mass media, tourism, and international trade were bringing humans closer together. Instead of a new feeling of the brotherhood of man, however, this closeness was just as often provoking friction and prejudice. We had created the atom bomb, he noted, yet "We have not yet learned how to adjust to our new mental and moral proximity." If the human race was to survive, social science must match the rate of progress in the physical sciences.

Though Allport's 1937 book *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* made his name in psychology, *The Nature of Prejudice* became a social science classic relevant to a variety of disciplines, and was cited by both Martin Luther King Jnr and Malcolm X. Sixty years on, it is still a benchmark work in any serious study of prejudice.

The work had particular relevance in the American civil rights struggle. It was published just before the Supreme Court's May 1954 decision in the case *Brown v. Board of Education*, which ordered the desegregation of American schools "with all deliberate speed." Though Allport naturally welcomed the decision, he believed it should have come with a firm deadline and executive order for implementation. Part of the reason for doing so, he wrote in the preface to the 1958 edition, is because people will accept an executive *fait accompli* if it is consistent with their consciences, even if it does not suit their prejudices. As the Kennedy administration intuited, on issues of social justice, like racial equality, it is the role of government to lead; public opinion will eventually come round.

Not who you think I am

Allport begins the book by recounting a famous 1948 study by S. L. Wax. Wax wrote letters to 100 Canadian resorts, with each letter being identical and asking for reservations on the same date. The only difference was that one letter was from "Mr Lockwood" and the other from "Mr Greenberg". To the Mr Lockwood letters, 95 percent of the resorts replied, and 93 percent offered accommodation. To the Mr Greenberg letters, 52 percent of the resorts replied, and only 36 percent offered accommodation. The resort management knew nothing about the senders of the letters other than their names. It was apparent that "Mr Greenberg" was not evaluated as a person, only as a member of an assumed group (Jews).

Allport defines "prejudice" as "an aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group, and is therefore presumed to have the objectionable qualities ascribed to the group." If people are antagonistic to Nazis as a group then they are not really prejudiced, since there is overwhelming evidence of the Nazis' evil in nearly all cases. But antagonism to Jews is prejudice because while an individual Jew you may know may not be to your liking, there is no evidence of universal negative Jewish qualities. "The net effect of prejudice," Allport writes, "is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage not merited by his own misconduct."

Humans "overcategorize" as a short cut to save time. Prejudice, both good and bad, is an easy way to assess people quickly without having all the knowledge required. But such prejudgments turn into prejudices "if they are not reversible when exposed to new knowledge." A sign of when people are not allowing new information to contradict their prejudices is when they get emotional. There is a cost to having our cherished views suddenly dismantled.

People like us

Humans fall very easily into ethnic prejudice for two reasons, Allport says: 1) we are very prone to generalization and overcategorization; 2) hostility to other groups comes naturally to us.

Human beings naturally tend to stick to those similar to themselves. This is partly a matter of convenience—we tend to have our best friends living nearby; they become better friends if

we see can see them often. We are also naturally drawn to people who are similar, partly because it involves less effort. If we know that others share similar views or assumptions, we don't have to reinvent the wheel each time we strike up a relationship. There is the comfort and shared values of being part of a religious group, and even something as simple as a class reunion can be very enjoyable because you are all the same age, grew up in the same place, and were exposed to the same songs, movies and so on. Why go out of our way to make friends with foreigners? Why invite the janitor to play bridge with us? We can't see him enjoying the witty repartee; it's just too difficult.

Foreshadowing the work of Daniel Kahneman, Allport notes that irrational categories are made in our minds as easily as rational categories. In fact more easily, because a prejudice is usually fueled by emotion. It is easy to establish a whole category of "Frenchmen" based on one bad encounter in Paris, and yet hard to dismantle that initial categorization even after having had neutral or positive encounters with other French people. One device that works particularly well, in an insidious way, is to accept that "there are some good Jews/Chinese/Blacks," which allows the exception not to break the prejudice about "the majority." It even allows for people to protest that "some of my best friends are Jews/Chinese/Blacks" without affecting the underlying prejudice.

Allport refers to what Spinoza called "love-prejudice" (and what is today called the "halo effect"), that is, seeing a person or a place or an idea in an overly rosy light. But believing that our spouse or our child can do no wrong tends not to have any social ill-effects, while "hate-prejudice" does. Allport identifies five levels of prejudice:

- ❖ Antilocution—Voicing a prejudice, usually among like-minded friends.
- ❖ Avoidance—Taking steps to avoid contact with a disliked group, even if it is inconvenient.
- ❖ Discrimination—Active attempts to exclude members of a group from employment, education, housing, hospitals, churches, clubs, and so on.
- ❖ Physical attack—When prejudice is mixed with strong emotion, acts of violence can occur.
- ❖ Extermination—Lynchings, pogroms, massacres, genocide.

The airing of verbal prejudices may not seem too bad on the surface, Allport says, but it lays the groundwork for actual discrimination and physical violence. There is a natural progression, Allport remarks, "from verbal aggression to violence,

from rumor to riot, from gossip to genocide." By the time violence breaks out, there "has been a long period of categorical prejudgment" and verbal complaint against the minority which, combined with the economic failure of the in-group, creates the perfect conditions for an assault on the out-group perceived to be the cause of it all. Usually an incident that would normally go unnoticed (such as an arrest of a black man by a white policeman) becomes inflated in importance, and sparks off a riot.

Prejudice and "race"

Textbooks in Allport's time showed the different white, black, brown, and yellow "races of man" as if there was something unutterably different between them. Allport was ahead of his time in noting that the word and concept of "race" is an anachronism. Whatever their appearance, all humans have the same DNA, and nearly all people who appear "Caucasian," for instance, have some African or Asian ancestry.

The problem, Allport notes, is that "Even a fragment of visibility … focuses people's minds on the possibility that everything may be related to this fragment. A person's character is thought to tie in with his slant eyes, or a menacing aggressiveness is thought to be linked to dark color." It is far easier for humans to define people according to skin color than to appreciate the difference between race and ethnicity (social, cultural, or national characteristics), or between race and social caste. Yet as visual, pattern-making beings it is easy for us to wrongly assume that because two people look similar on some basic feature (skin color), they must *be* similar. In the past it was assumed that because apes were the same color as the "black race," black people must be closer to our ape cousins than white people. This ignores the fact that under their fur, most kinds of monkey have white skin, and also that most white people can grow longer and thicker hair than black people. Even in Allport's time it was known that the American Negro was genetically a long way from the "pure Negroid type," and because of his mixed descent was in fact closer to white Americans.

"Except in remote parts of the earth," Allport writes, "very few human beings belong to a pure stock; most men are mongrels (racially speaking)." The concept of "blood" has no basis in science. All blood types exist in all races, yet the idea of blood has remained a pernicious basis for "us and them" outlooks. When another group can be categorized as physiologically different, it is

aware. Allport's "contact hypothesis" was that prejudice could be reduced if different groups were made to work with each other. He pointed to mixed-race platoons in the Second World War, which soldiers were at first wary of but proved successful, and of course sporting teams which are necessarily focused on winning, not on what teammates look like. Later researchers found the same effect when homophobic people are made to work with homosexuals, and of course "mixed-race" marriage further breaks down rigid social perceptions. One researcher in this area, Thomas Pettigrew, summed up his work: "Your stereotypes about the other group don't necessarily change, but you grow to like them anyway."

Despite the "checkerboard of prejudice" across the United States at the time he was writing, Allport had cause for hope. People generally preferred kindness, friendliness and peace to animosity and war, he noted. As children become adults they develop concentric circles of loyalty to family, city, and nation. It usually stops there, but there was no reason, he believed, why they could not in the future develop a feeling of loyalty to humankind as a whole.

Gordon Allport

Born in 1897 in Indiana, Allport grew up in Cleveland, Ohio. He studied at Harvard and obtained Bachelors and Masters degrees, and received his PhD in psychology from Harvard in 1922. After being awarded a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, he studied with Gestalt psychologists in Germany, then spent a year at Cambridge University.

After a period teaching at Dartmouth College and in Istanbul, Allport returned to Harvard, where he spent the rest of his career. His specialty was the psychology of personality, and his "trait theory" and work on human drives was influential.

Allport was a president of the American Psychological Association, and directed the National Opinion Research Center. Books include Personality: A Psychological Interpretation *(1937),* The Psychology of Rumor *(1947),* The Individual and His Religion *(1950), and* Becoming: Basic Considerations for Psychology of Personality *(1955). Allport died in 1967.*

Self-Efficacy

"Beliefs of personal efficacy constitute the key factor of human agency. If people believe they have no power to produce results, they will not attempt to make things happen."

"Because of the capacity for self-influence, people are at least partial architects of their own destinies. It is not the principle of determinism that is in dispute, but whether determinism should be treated as a one-sided or a two way process."

"Self-belief does not necessarily ensure success, but self-disbelief assuredly spawns failure."

"In short, human behavior is determined, but it is determined partly by the individual rather than solely by the environment."

In a nutshell

People's beliefs about their abilities to achieve certain ends is often decisive in what they do end up achieving.

In a similar vein
Carol Dweck *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* (p 84)
Walter Mischel *The Marshmallow Test* (p 230)
B. F. Skinner *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* (p 296)

Albert Bandura

Humans started out believing that success was determined by the whims of gods. A good harvest, the health of a child, or the discovery of a new technique were external blessings that came upon one. As society and technology developed, "self-efficacy"—the individual's belief that they can achieve something specific and shape their own destiny or that of a community—became the driver of progress. Yet the fast-accelerating pace of change that we experience today, Albert Bandura noted, creates significant uncertainties that affect people's feelings about their ability to shape their futures. He therefore felt it important to examine the idea of self-efficacy in depth.

His book runs to over 500 pages, but the essential argument can be summed up in one line:

"People's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true."

If our states of mind and actions are influenced more by our beliefs than what is "objectively true," success in any endeavor will first and foremost be a mental achievement. This applies not just to our personal efforts, but to the efforts of groups trying to effect some change in society. The beliefs you have about what you can achieve affect many things, Bandura says, including:

- What course of action or life path you choose to pursue.
- How much effort you will put in to achieve a goal, how long you will persevere in the face of obstacles, and your resilience to failure.
- Whether your thoughts help you toward success, or are a hindrance.
- How much stress or depression you experience in pursuit of your goals.

The more success we have in shaping outcomes, the more our desire grows to be in a position to shape future ones. As "success

breeds success," apathy gives way to enthusiasm about possibilities. This is true for personal action, but also for collective action.

Self-made

Bandura's theory of self-efficacy was a reaction to theories of humans being largely or totally the result of environment. In *Beyond Freedom and Dignity*, B. F. Skinner wrote: "A person does not act upon the world, the world acts upon him." In fact, Bandura writes, "People are proactive, aspiring organisms who have a hand in shaping their own lives." The "contextualist perspective" says that "people adapt their actions to suit the social contexts in which they happen to find themselves", but Bandura asserts that "People are producers as well as products of social environments." Efficacious people are quick to see artificial constraints in social and political contexts, and ingenious at finding ways to change them or get around them. They are also better at using existing institutions to achieve their goals.

A person's attitudes, abilities, and cognitive skills comprise what Bandura calls the "self-system." This system plays a major role in how we perceive situations and how we behave in response to different situations, and self-efficacy is an essential part of it.

Self-efficacy beliefs are different to what psychologists call "outcome expectations." The latter are simply expectations or visions of how something will turn out, and do not necessarily involve beliefs about the self and its capacities. Outcome expectations, while they may have some positive effect on what happens ("expect the best, and you will get it," is a common motivational phrase), will be nothing next to the causal force of a self-belief—for example, that my capacities are such that I can ace the exam, win the race, or deliver the talk.

Indeed, Bandura notes that "the strength of the relationship between agency beliefs and performance increases with age." When we are young, we may have boundless optimism that good things will happen, without supporting evidence; but as we get older, we appreciate more that it is our beliefs about our capacities, based on experience and feedback, that is the best predictor of success.

Philosophy of human agency

Self-efficacy theory raised interesting philosophical questions about how people generate thoughts, conceive things in their imaginations, and devise goals and life missions which they then set about fulfilling. At the time Bandura was writing, findings in neuroscience seemed to show that free will is an illusion, yet he insisted that people are not simply "onlooking hosts of brain mechanisms orchestrated by environmental events." Rather, the brain and the body are *tools that people use* to achieve goals and forge a direction for their lives, and the intentions they form lead to changes in the brain and body that serve those ends. Moreover, people are not only influenced by their environment but by *themselves*. We choose standards of behavior, or decide on particular beliefs, that dictate how we behave. We create or choose to be in environments which will support those beliefs and help us achieve our goals.

In arguing that people are not reducible to their environmental inputs, Bandura gives the example of Johann Sebastian Bach. Bach's massive musical genius, and his prolific output, cannot be reduced to the musical instruction he received, the extent of music that had been produced before him, or events in his immediate environment. He was partly an outcome of his particular time and place, but he also *created* a whole new world of sound art, a new musical environment, that was not there before. His work was not a product, but a creation.

B. F. Skinner did not deny the ability of people to counteract their environment, to be reactive, but Bandura's point is that people go beyond mere reactiveness to be "foreactive." It was the ultimate irony, he points out, that people who deny individual agency (usually philosophers) live in political systems in which many had died to preserve that agency. They hypocritically see themselves as points of self-aware intent and agency, while the general population are mere products of their environment.

How to increase self-belief

Self-Efficacy is something more than an academic version of the self-help bestseller, *The Magic of Thinking Big*, and Bandura was careful to distinguish selfefficacy from self-esteem, a fashionable idea in the 1980s and 90s. Whereas self-esteem involves judgements we make about self-worth, self-efficacy is about judgements of personal capability. In terms of the predictive power of what people do, he says, "efficacy beliefs are highly

How People Do Harm and Live With Themselves *(2015). A 2014 study by Ed Diener and colleagues put Bandura at number one on a list of the most significant psychologists of the modern era.*

1997

The Gift of Fear

"Like every creature, you can know when you are in the presence of danger. You have the gift of a brilliant internal guardian that stands ready to warn you of hazards and guide you through risky situations."

"Though we want to believe that violence is a matter of cause and effect, it is actually a process, a chain in which the violent outcome is only one link."

"For men like this, rejection is a threat to the identity, the persona, to the entire self, and in this sense their crimes could be called murder in defense of the self."

In a nutshell

Trust your intuition, rather than technology, to protect you from violence.

In a similar vein
Malcolm Gladwell *Blink* (p 134)
Leonard Mlodinow *Subliminal* (p 238)

Gavin de Becker

"He had probably been watching her for a while. We aren't sure—but what we do know is that she was not his first victim." With this creepy line *The Gift of Fear* begins. The book outlines real-life stories of people who became victims, or almost became victims, of violence; in each case the person either listened to their intuition and survived, or did not and paid the consequences.

We normally think of fear as something bad, but de Becker tries to show how it is a gift that may protect us from harm. *The Gift of Fear: Survival Signals that Protect Us from Violence* is about getting into other people's minds so that their actions do not come as a terrible surprise. Though this may be uncomfortable, particularly when it is the mind of a potential killer, it is better to do this than to find out the hard way.

Before he was 13 Gavin de Becker had seen more violence within his own home that most adults see in a lifetime. In order to survive, he had to become good at predicting what would happen next in frightening situations, and he made it his life's work to formularize the violent mindset so that others could also see the signs. De Becker became an expert in assessing the risk of violence, charged with protecting high-profile celebrity, government, and corporate clients, and also something of a spokesperson on domestic violence.

De Becker is not a psychologist, but his book gives more insights into the nature of intuition, fear, and the violent mind than you are ever likely to read in a straight psychology text. As gripping as a good crime novel, *The Gift of Fear* may not just change your life—it could actually save it.

Intuitive security

In the modern world, de Becker observes, we have forgotten to rely on our instincts to look after ourselves. Most of us leave the

issue of violence up to the police and criminal justice system, believing that they will protect us, but often by the time we involve the authorities it is too late. Alternatively, we believe that better technology will protect us from danger; the more alarms and high fences we have, the safer we feel.

But there is a more reliable source of protection: our intuition or gut feeling. Usually we have all the information we need to warn us of certain people or situations; like other animals, we have an in-built warning system for danger. Dogs' intuition is much vaunted, but de Becker argues that in fact human beings have better intuition; the problem is that we are less prepared to trust it.

De Becker describes female victims of attacks who report: "Even though I knew what was happening leading up to the event was not quite right, I did not extract myself from it." Somehow, the attacker who helped them with their bags or got into the lift with them was able to make these women go along with what he wanted. De Becker suggests that there is a "universal code of violence" that most of us can automatically sense, yet modern life often has the effect of deadening our sensitivity. We either don't see the signals at all or we won't admit them.

Paradoxically, de Becker proposes that "trusting intuition is the exact opposite of living in fear." Real fear does not paralyze you, it energizes you, enabling you to do things you normally could not. In the first case he discusses, a woman had been trapped and raped in her own apartment. When her attacker said he was going into the kitchen, something told her to follow him on tiptoe, and when she did she saw him rifling through the drawers looking for a large knife—to kill her. She made a break for the front door and escaped. What is fascinating is her recollection of not being afraid. Real fear, because it involves our intuition, in fact is a positive feeling designed to save us.

A violent streak in everyone

De Becker debunks the idea that there is a "criminal mind" separating certain people from the rest of us. Most of us would say that we can never kill another person, but then you usually hear the caveat: "Unless I was having to protect a loved one." We are all capable of criminal thoughts and even actions. Many murders are described as "inhuman," but surely, de Becker observes, they can't be anything *but* human. If one person is capable of a particular act,

under certain circumstances we may all be capable of that act. In his work, de Becker does not have the luxury of making distinctions like "human" and "monster." Instead, he looks for whether a person may have the intent or ability to harm. He concludes, "the resource of violence is in everyone; all that changes is our view of the justification."

A chain, not an isolated act

Why do people commit violence? De Becker boils it down to four elements:

- Justification—the person makes a judgment that they have been intentionally wronged.
- Alternatives—violence seems like the only way forward to seek redress or justice.
- Consequences—they decide they can live with the probable outcome of their violent act. For instance, a stalker may not mind going to jail as long he gets his victim.
- Ability—they have confidence in their ability to use their body or bullets or a bomb to achieve their ends.

De Becker's team check through these "pre-incident indicators" when they have to predict the likelihood of violence from someone threatening a client. If we pay attention, he says, violence never "comes from nowhere." It is actually not very common for people to "snap" before they commit murder. Generally, de Becker remarks, violence is as predictable "as water coming to a boil."

What also helps in predicting violence is to understand it as a *process*, "in which the violent outcome is only one link." While the police are looking for the motive, de Becker and his team are going deeper to find the history of violence or violent intent that usually precedes the act.

The Gift of Fear includes a chapter on spousal violence, noting that most spousal murder does not happen in the heat of the moment. It is usually a premeditated decision, preceded by the husband stalking his wife and sparked by the wife's rejection. For such men, being rejected is too great a threat to their sense of self and killing their partner seems the only way to restore their identity. De Becker reveals an alarming fact: Three-quarters of spousal murders happen *after* the woman leaves the marriage.

Knowing how to pick a psychopath

The features of predatory criminals usually include:

1964

Games People Play

"[The] marital game of 'Lunch Bag.' The husband, who can well afford to have lunch at a good restaurant, nevertheless makes himself a few sandwiches every morning, which he takes to the office in a paper bag. In this way he uses up crusts of bread, leftovers from dinner and paper bags his wife saves for him. This gives him complete control over the family finances, for what wife would dare buy herself a mink stole in the face of such self-sacrifice?"

"Father comes home from work and finds fault with daughter, who answers impudently, or daughter may make the first move by being impudent, whereupon father finds fault. Their voices rise, and the clash becomes more acute … There are three possibilities: (a) father retires to his bedroom and slams the door; (b) daughter retires to her bedroom and slams the door; (c) both retire to their respective bedrooms and slam the doors. In any case, the end of a game of 'Uproar' is marked by a slamming door."

In a nutshell

People play games as a substitute for real intimacy, and every game, however unpleasant, has a particular payoff for one or both players.

In a similar vein