

Popular Iconic Figures tackling the Secrets of Human Nature

By Moira Russell (Author) dated: 26/6/09

There are so many philosophers, psychologists, professors, authors, writers and specialists that provide theories about human nature and what motivates us, what makes us feel and act in certain ways and ultimately how we create our ideal self. Deeper awareness of our ideal self can lead to enriched self-knowledge and greater success in life. These chosen iconic figures focus is on "psychology for the non- psychologists". Here are some of the popular figures and details of their work:

1. **Martin Seligman** is currently professor of psychology at University of Pennsylvania. In 1998 he was elected president of the American Psychological Society. Past presidents included Abraham Maslow. For the first 30 years of his career, he worked on feelings of helplessness and pessimism and this led him to research optimism and positive emotion and how their role in psychology. He is now known as the founder of "positive psychology". He has authored 200 academic articles and 20 books, including, "Learned Optimism", "Authentic Happiness: Using the New Positive Psychology to Realize Your Potential for Lasting Fulfilment" and "What You Can Change and What You Can't" which have a significant impact for the virtues of positive psychology and provide suggestions for leading a meaningful life.

2. **Abraham Maslow** originated humanistic psychology, where humans have free-will and ability to fulfil their potential. Maslow argued that once our basic needs are met, we have 'higher' needs. This was his famous "hierarchy of needs" – food, water, oxygen to spiritual and psychological fulfilment (self-actualization). Maslow started a revolution in psychology by focussing on the study of healthy, creative and contented people, a ground-breaking approach at the time (1940s/50s). In the competitive times for business during the 1960s, he was approached and advised large organisations on work environments, in essence, suggesting that if staff are permitted to be more creative and fulfilled, in turn shall be more productive and successful. Over a quarter of his book "The Farther Reaches of Human Nature" is devoted to creativity. Other key works include, "Motivation and Personality" and "Towards a Psychology of Being".

3. **Robert E Thayer** a professor of psychology at California State University has been studying the subject of mood since the 1970s and is considered the foremost expert on the subject. He suggests that moods are more important than daily activities, status, even relationships, because everything we experience is affected by our good or bad moods. He was persuaded by his students to write a book on the practical application of his theory, "The Origin of Everyday Moods: Managing Energy, Tension, and Stress". This book provides practical advice on how develop your self-knowledge regarding your moods and how they are influenced so as to be able to choose more positive ways regulating your moods. His other books include, "The Biopsychology of Mood and Arousal" and "Calm Energy: How People Regulate Mood with Food and Exercise".

4. **Daniel Gilbert** a professor of psychology at Harvard University has written numerous influential articles on social psychology and authored books, such as, "Stumbling on Happiness, " and "Confessions of a Spoon-digger". As a child Gilbert loved to pore over a book of optical illusions such as the Necker Cube and the famous vase/faces pictures. What amazed him was how easy it was for the eyes and the brain to be fooled. As a psychologist, he was interested in the regular mistakes that our brains make when filling in the gaps to provide us with a quick picture of reality. In "Stumbling on Happiness" Gilbert concluded that we spend most of our time doing things that we hope will make us happy in the future, but our understanding of that future is far from reliable. His book does attempt to reveal the source of happiness, rather it tells us what science has discovered, thus allowing us to make our own informed decisions about our happiness.

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