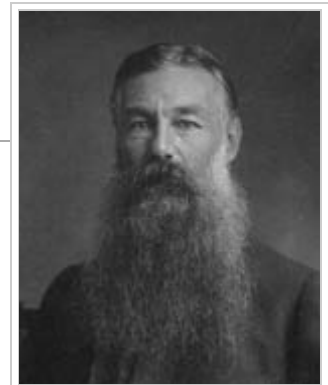


# C. Lloyd Morgan

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**Conwy Lloyd Morgan**, FRS <sup>[1]</sup> (6 February 1852 – 6 March 1936) was a British ethologist and psychologist. He is best remembered for the experimental approach to animal psychology now known as "Morgan's canon".



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## Life

Lloyd Morgan was born in London and studied at the Royal School of Mines and subsequently under T. H. Huxley. He taught in Cape Town, but in 1884 joined the staff of the then University College, Bristol as Professor of Geology and Zoology, and carried out some research of local interest in those fields. But he quickly became interested in the field he called "mental evolution", the borderland between intelligence and instinct, and in 1901 moved to become the college's first Professor of Psychology and Education.

As well as his scientific work, Lloyd Morgan was active in academic administration. He became Principal of the University College, Bristol, in 1891 and consequently played a central role in the campaign to secure it full university status. In 1909, when, with the award of a Royal Charter, the college became the University of Bristol, he was appointed as its first Vice-Chancellor,<sup>[2]</sup> an office he held for a year before deciding to become Professor of Psychology and Ethics until his retirement in 1919.<sup>[3]</sup> He was president of the Aristotelian Society from 1926 to 1927. He died in Hastings.

Following retirement, Morgan delivered a series of Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews in 1921 and 1922. In them he discussed the concept of emergent evolution.

## Ethology

### Morgan's canon

As a specialised form of Occam's razor, Morgan's canon played a critical role in the growth of behaviourism in twentieth century academic psychology. The canon states *In no case may we interpret an action as the outcome of the exercise of a higher mental faculty, if it can be interpreted as the exercise of one which stands lower in the psychological scale.* For example, an entity should only be considered conscious if there is no other explanation for its behaviour. As the study of animal cognition has become popular, a disciplined use of Lloyd Morgan's canon has become important.

W.H. Thorpe commented as follows:

"The importance of this was enormous... [but] to the modern ethologist dealing with higher animals and faced as he is with ever-increasing evidence for the complexity of perceptual organization... the very reverse of Morgan's canon often proves to be the best strategy".<sup>[4][5][6]</sup>

The development of Morgan's canon derived partly from his careful observations of behaviour. This provided cases where behaviour that seemed to imply higher mental processes could be explained by simple trial and error learning (what we would now call operant conditioning). An example is the skilful way in which his terrier Tony opened the garden gate, easily understood as an insightful act by someone seeing the final behaviour. Lloyd Morgan, however, had watched and recorded the series of approximations by which the dog had gradually learned the response, and could demonstrate that no insight was required to explain it.

## Instinct versus learning

Morgan carried out extensive research to separate, as far as possible, inherited behaviour from learnt behaviour. Eggs of chicks, ducklings and moorhens were raised in an incubator, and the hatchlings kept from adult birds.<sup>[1]</sup> Their behaviour after hatching was recorded in detail. Lastly, the behaviour was interpreted as simply as possible. Morgan was not the first to work on these questions. Douglas Spalding in the 1870s had done some remarkable work on inherited behaviour in birds.<sup>[7]</sup> His early death in 1877 led to his work being largely forgotten until the 1950s, but Morgan probably knew of it.

## Quotations

- Given two different minds and the same facts, how different are the products! – *Animal Life and Intelligence* (<http://www.archive.org/stream/animallifeintel00morgiala>), page 335

## Legacy

He invented the Lloyd's rod, used to educate dogs in Germany and in the south of Chile {{citation needed}}

## Books

- *The springs of conduct: an essay in evolution.* (1885). Kegan Paul, London.
- *Animal biology.* (1887). Rivington, London.
- *Animal sketches.* [1891]. Arnold, London.
- *Introduction to comparative psychology.* (1894). Routledgethommies, London.
- *Psychology for teachers.* (1894). Arnold, London.
- *Habit and instinct.* (1896). Arnold, London.
- *Animal behaviour.* (1900). Arnold, London.
- *Animal life and intelligence.* (1890–91; 1891) Arnold, London.
- *The interpretation of nature.* (1906).
- *Instinct and experience.* (1912). Methuen, London.
- *Emergent evolution.* (1923). Henry Holt and Co., ISBN 0-404-60468-4, online version (<http://www.giffordlectures.org/Browse.asp?PubID=TPEMEV&Cover=TRUE>)
- *Life, mind, and spirit.* (1925). Henry Holt
- *Mind at the crossways.* (1929).
- *The emergence of novelty.* (1933).

## References

- <sup>a</sup> <sup>b</sup> Parsons, J. H. (1936). "**Conwy Lloyd Morgan**. 1852-1936". *Obituary Notices of Fellows of the Royal Society* **2** (5): 25. doi:10.1098/rsbm.1936.0003 (http://dx.doi.org/10.1098%2Frsbm.1936.0003).
- <sup>^</sup> "Bristol University - Former Officers" (http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cms/go/statutes/records/formerofficers.html). University of Bristol. Retrieved 2007-06-22.
- <sup>^</sup> "Papers of the University of Bristol" (http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk/eadhtml/VSPOKES-ead-bristol/frames/53A0.html). Archives Hub. Retrieved 2007-06-22.
- <sup>^</sup> Thorpe W.H. 1979. *The origins and rise of ethology: the science of the natural behaviour of animals*. Heinemann, London. p28/9 ISBN 0-435-62441-5
- <sup>^</sup> Griffin D.R. 1976. *The question of animal awareness*. Rockefeller University Press, New York.
- <sup>^</sup> A similar comment was made by Edwin G. Boring in his *A history of experimental psychology*, 2nd ed 1950: chapter 10 British psychology, p474.
- <sup>^</sup> Spalding D.A. 1873. Instinct. With original observations on young animals. *Macmillan's Magazine*. **27**, 282–293.

## External links

- Lloyd Morgan Works by Conwy Lloyd Morgan (http://www.gutenberg.org/author/Conwy) at Project Gutenberg
- Biography of Lloyd Morgan (http://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Morgan/murchison.htm)
- Discussion Lloyd Morgan's canon as applied to consciousness (http://www.consciousentities.com/tactics.htm)

Preceded by <b>(None)</b>	<b>Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bristol</b> 1909	Succeeded by <b>Sir Isambard Owen</b>
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Categories: People educated at Royal Grammar School, Guildford | 1852 births | 1936 deaths | English psychologists | Ethologists | English zoologists | Academics of the University of Bristol | Vice Chancellors of the University of Bristol | Fellows of the Royal Society | Gifford Lecturers | Presidents of the Aristotelian Society

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