A Universal Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation

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By

Roger Wood

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DEDICATION

For

Erin, Logan, Oscar, James and Callum

May your lives be extraordinary, now and always:

lives filled with love, happiness, joy, confidence, motivation,

contentment, fulfilment, pleasure

and

an unstinting sense of adventure.

April 2020

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Roger Wood is a Senior Lecturer in Education at Oxford Brookes University, having previously been a Senior Lecturer at Bishop Grosseteste University and a Lecturer (Research) in Education at the University of Aberdeen. Prior to his university teaching and research career, Dr. Wood was a headteacher and teacher for 23 years.

Dr. Wood's primary research focuses upon strategies for enhancing children's engagement with Science and STEM through University-initiated approaches to supporting the career-long professional learning and confidence of primary science teachers. This places an emphasis upon enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the factors and strategies that influence children's engagement with primary science education (including STEM). Impacts include the development of University and school-based strategies that enhance trainee and qualified teachers' confidence when embedding inquiry-based learning approaches to science education within their own classrooms. A further important impact will be a highly burgeoned knowledge of the key elements of University teacher education programmes that have positive influences upon teachers' use of inquiry-based learning (IBL) within inquiry-based science education (IBSE), and, in consequence, children's improved engagement with Science (including STEM).

Dr. Wood is a scientist and Chartered Biologist by background. His work in science education, conservation and primatology has led to his election to a number of Fellowships including the Royal Society of Biology, the Royal Scottish Society of Arts, and the Linnean Society. He is a Fully Registered Teacher with the General Teaching Council for Scotland and a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Since September 2016, Dr. Wood has been a Board Member with the chimpanzee conservation charity, the Jane Goodall Institute UK.

Dr. Wood's philosophy-informed research focuses upon interpreting and understanding outcomes of human philosophizing, including confidence-informed social motivation and the impact upon the context-based endeavours of children, adolescents and teachers. This includes identifying teacher behaviours and methods that enhance students' motivation for and engagement with school-based formal and informal learning.

PREFACE

A Universal Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation
or
'Everything becomes Obvious and Nothing makes Sense'

People will read this book for a wide variety of different reasons. One of these reasons will be to gain a more informed understanding of the universal influencers and interpretation-forming variables that inform human decisions and action. However, in life there are no answers or truly predictable human responses! Instead, there are only the interpretations that we form and the decisions that we then make based upon such interpretations. This is the simple premise that underpins all human living and the lives that we are immersed in. It may be that individuals, having read this preface or, maybe, just this paragraph, will interpret and decide that the book is not for them. However, I hope that curious readers will bear with PCISM as a novel way of understanding interpretations that lie at the heart of all human experience. There are no definitive answers, as there are no answers: therefore, this book is not about providing answers. This is because answers are formed by individuals: these are only regarded as answers when an individual has such levels of trust and motivation underpinning them that the decisions are reflected in an individual's actions and responses.

Essentially, within PCISM, confidence has been approached as a philosophical interpretation and perception that is predictive of and influential upon motivation, familiarity and expectation through observable human behaviour. All human life is experienced and judged through the interpretations we form based upon where we currently are, in relation to where we feel we should be, would like to be or need to be. In order to keep the cognitive perceptions and associated emotional thwarters at bay, we are more likely to want to deliberately create lives for ourselves which centralise activities, people and possessions that are put in place to maintain

an antithesis to sadness and heartbreak. Yet, because of other people, our pets, our homes and the lives that we occupy, there are numerable sources of sadness and heartbreak. The happy life (whether viewed from eudaimonic or hedonic perspectives), including a sense of wonder and purpose within such a life, focuses upon where we are in terms of *places*. Such places exist as both physical (geographical) and mental realities (within the perceptions and projections of the mind).

Life is open-ended and consists of moments of experience that happen simultaneously but separately, with varying degrees of substantive influences and impacts. I believe that we are all individuals living in the present as a means of evolving their own story. With such a perspective in mind, I have developed PCISM as a means of enabling us to focus more readily upon the universal factors that underpin all individuals' lived experience. Therefore, whilst we are all different in terms of the experiences that inform our self-understanding, we are bound together by four universal factors, or influencers, that are inseparable from all human lived experience. These universal influencers are confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation. These are universal philopsychlical influencers that inform all human interpretations of social contexts and the activities that constitute the nature of such contexts. We are both energized and constrained by the power of these philopsychlical influencers as they are the source of all our interpretations. These interpretations, in turn, inform our subsequent linguistic responses, decision-making and non-verbal behaviours, alongside our interpretation of others' responses to our own decisions, responses and behaviours.

We are constantly physically and cognitively immersed in the current moment in time. We are never physically in the past or future but only in the present. However, in terms of perceived experiences and accompanying guiding interpretations, *philopsychlical* hermeneutics is an extension of Hans-Georg Gadamer's theory of philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960). PCISM is an extension of Gadamer's ideas in two very important ways. The first is that philopsychlical hermeneutics includes the constant reciprocal interplay between philosophical interpretations (hermeneutics) and psychological influences (mental and physiological), and the impact of these upon human endeavour and knowledge. The second is that the interpretations that we form, as central to philopsychlical hermeneutics, and our resultant intentions, emotions and actions are inextricably linked to confidence and social motivation. Both confidence and social motivation provide a sense of perspective and prejudice in relation to the interpretation-laden and perception-fuelled experiences that we call upon as the basis of guiding our contextual actions.

a. Human life: Everything becomes obvious and nothing makes sense!

Rovelli (2016) asserts that we are obsessed with ourselves. This obsession encompasses our history, philosophy, our actions, and the actions of others. Central to this obsession is the desire to understand and, potentially guide or control our actions and achievements or satisfy our needs and drives, whether partially or fully. To date, research that has investigated motivation has done so from the perspective of psychology. However, two omissions are obvious when considering the ideas and assertions made by the authors of such texts. The first is that confidence, as *both* an overarching psychological *and* philosophical construct, is ignored as the fundamental influencer of individual engagement in social contexts. This includes an individual's interactions, participation and sustained involvement within the specific and temporally current social context. The second omission is that confidence is rarely, if ever, considered as a philosophical driver and influencer of motivation, nor is the impact of motivation in terms of the influence upon an individual's required behaviours when confidence levels are low.

The philosophy of confidence and motivation has been largely neglected. However, the combined influence of confidence and motivation lies at the heart of all human behaviour, engagement with activities, investment in social relationships, and decision-making: these are made ever more influential through senses of familiarity and expectation. Inspired by, and further to, the writings of Gadamer and Heidegger, I have developed the idea of *philopsychlical hermeneutics* as a means of informing human understanding of how people engage in philosophizing in its most informal sense, in terms of how this is used to influence human experience at the individual level (otherwise known as PCISM).

A gap emerged in Gadamer and Heidegger's writings, in that neither of them discuss the impact that confidence and motivation have upon individual interpretations in the moment and within the cumulative story of our past experiences. To date, the concept and actuality of confidence as a universal informant of motivation across the whole of an individual's lifespan experiences, both in solitude and within social contexts, has not been as fully developed as it might be. In the main, prior research has focused upon self-confidence as a social psychological construct that has been stimulated by variables within specific contexts. However, I contend that confidence is a universal human philosophical construct as it is an outcome of interpretations of a current or forthcoming event that are based upon prior experiences and the understanding gained from these.

Interpretations are, as such, thoughts, ideas and perceptions rather than true psychological reactions and responses.

As confidence is both an outcome and an informer of an individual's motivated activity, inactivity or avoidance of specific actions, it is posited that confidence will be more easily understood if it is approached as a *philosophical* function of the human mind. In contrast, the view remains that motivation is a *psychological* response to the multiple possibilities that confidence presents as being more feasible in the form of actions that are more likely to result in desired goals, needs and wishes being satisfied. In response, PCISM, synonymously as philopsychlical hermeneutics, integrates several key factors that universally influence how we interpret the context that we are currently experiencing within the present moment. These factors are the catalysts of an individual's propositions, together with their underpinning, assigned meaning, importance and intentions.

Lived philosophizing is essential for the development of an informed and meaningful human existence by the individual, as it is something that we are constantly engaged in throughout our lives. Through lived, natural philosophizing, we try to understand and make sense of our self-identity, our actions, success, capabilities, relationships and every other aspect of our lives as it being lived and through reflection upon how it has been lived. Such reflection and interpretations lead to and from propositions that, in turn, result in actions that are used to affirm our decisions and understanding. As with all philosophical propositions, and the resultant activity or responses, there is the potential for these to be misleading (Russell, 1912). That is, the individual making the proposition may form a proposition based upon their misunderstanding of, for example, others' actions, incorrect information, or through the use of induction to make links between the gaps in their knowledge. Interpretation is, therefore, about applying meaning as a means of transforming propositions into understanding. This understanding is the basis of intention. Such intentions and resultant intentional acts are the basis for perceiving reality as it is believed to be. Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) argued that all humans have the need for a strong sense of 'reality' as opposed to countless subsisting non-existent variables (Grayling, 1996, p. 24). Such innumerable variables, neither seen nor tangible, have the potential to cause confusion and anxiety, and, therefore, resultant inactivity.

The study of pure philosophy, in its academic, debated sense, is, to paraphrase G.H. Hardy (1877-1947), like pure mathematics: useless, or at best, harmless. However, I regard academic philosophy as having a much higher and more important function than spawning unanswerable debate for its own sake. Given that all human individuals are constantly making

conscious efforts to understand and make sense of their lived experiences, both within the current moment and through reflection upon past events, and the meaning and value inextricably emerging from and informing such interpretations, simultaneous with the knowledge and endeavours underpinning and leading to such experiences, there is a place for *genius* in philosophy. The *genius* of philosophy is that it has universality in terms of informing an understanding of all branches of human knowledge and endeavour. This sense of genius can enable us to be more aware of the impact that confidence and social motivation have upon an individual's thoughts, propositions, perceptions and interpretations. Confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation are dynamic, with the potential to change from one instance to the next within the context currently being experienced or about to be experienced, influencing, in turn, stability across an individual life span. The importance of perceived confidence as the central informant of all human action is that it impacts upon our motivation to engage in or avoid activity and social interaction within *all* human contexts. Confidence informs motivation, with both being impact-rich outcomes of an individual's interpretations and understanding, allied with a sense of trust in themselves, of others and of the resources available to them within the current moment and future endeavours. Such confidence-informed motivation can both facilitate and inhibit action and activity, as these are accompanied by cognitive and affective responses. Therefore, hermeneutics are central to all human philosophy and philosophizing as hermeneutics encapsulate the interpretations that inform all human knowledge and endeavour. On this basis alone, hermeneutics may prove to be the most effective universal philosophical lens that we currently have for understanding individual human interaction in social contexts. Hermeneutics are grounded in human experience, even when an individual is trying to evaluate and develop knowledge and beliefs which are beyond their own direct experience. That is, vicarious experiences are interpreted hermeneutically, whether from the individual's or others' perspective.

b. Overview of the chapters

At various points throughout this book, various key terms are introduced and defined within PCISM: these are initially identified with italics. Although the Figures within this book are presented as linear pathways for the sake of simplicity, it is acknowledged that the cognitive processes including the accompanying affect and affect-driven responses are entirely nonlinear and incredibly complex.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 form the fulcrum of this book. The three chapters present a detailed overview of the proposed novel Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation (PCISM) which has evolved as an extension of philosophical hermeneutics (see Chapter 2). Not only does PCISM rest upon the principles of philosophical hermeneutics as the dominant school of philosophical thought and tradition, it also draws upon philosophy of mind. This includes concepts such as cognition, social cognition, affect, schemas of interpretation and perception, causation and autonomy. PCISM centres upon the premise that, at the core of all human interpretation, there are essential informants and drivers of all human endeavour, action, perceived fulfilment, contextual and life satisfaction: these are confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation.

As the first three chapters outline the key tenets of PCISM, particularly the universal influence of confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation interpretations upon human behaviour, there are a limited number of references. Where it has been appropriate to do so, I have provided references for the key research and theories that led me to PCISM. However, I have, in addition to the References, included a bibliography of the key texts consulted during the development of the PCISM theory. In contrast to much, if not all, of the research discussed in Chapter 1, I have explicitly presented confidence and motivation as hermeneutic interpretations that are influenced by and influencers of contextual immersion and participation. This first chapter presents some of the ways in which both confidence and motivation have been defined and presented within the research corpus. The key point to bear in mind throughout this chapter is that, to date, both confidence and motivation have been presented as *psychological states and outcomes*, i.e. an individual is confident and motivated. Motivation and confidence are often regarded as energizers and thwarters of action and behaviour. Therefore, they are, implicitly or otherwise, presented as outcomes rather than processes leading to action or inaction. With this idea of *outcomes* in mind, I discuss what confidence and motivation invariably 'look like' within social contexts: the observable and spoken indicators of positive and negative levels of confidence and motivation. In this way, I have outlined an understanding of how confidence and motivation can be influenced by the individual, and by other humans that the individual has prior experience of. This leads to a focus upon *some* of the key indicators, influences and influencers and influences that appear to have an impact upon confidence and social motivation in contextual settings. The discussion in Chapter 1, together with Chapter 2, helps to reveal the background that led me to create and develop the Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation (PCISM: Chapter 3). Chapters 3 and 4 assert

and discuss the significance of the philosophical impact of confidence and motivation upon interpretations that both inform and are informed by in-context perceptions.

In Chapters 2 and 3, it is asserted that PCISM is both an integral part and a natural extension of hermeneutics, which, in turn, informs the nature of pragmatic activity. That is, that at the epicentre of PCISM, there are the four essential informants and drivers of all human perception, interpretation and endeavour: confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation. Confidence, as a concept viewed through the lens of PCISM, is discussed further in Chapter 2. It is prudent, at this stage, to state that confidence has been approached as a cognitive and emotive state of mind that influences and is influenced by our experiences during moments of solitude and within all social-contextual experiences. Therefore, human individuals rely upon the conscious and subconscious analysis of numerous cognitive and contextual variables (including people and setting) as the philosophical basis for confidence and motivation. Chapter 2 charts the shift from psychological to philosophical perspectives that individual children bring to bear upon making motivation-driven and allied confidence-informed decisions within every single lived experience. Chapter 3 develops these ideas further by moving towards a philosophy of social motivation that is underpinned by confidence, familiarity and expectation in social contexts.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the key philosophers whose writing led to the formation and development of PCISM. The intention, within the chapter, is not to provide a detailed discussion of the key messages within, in particular, the philosophical writings of Gadamer and Heidegger. Such detailed overviews and discussions are the focus of other innumerable published philosophy texts. Instead, the purpose of Chapter 4 is to provide an insight into which aspects of Gadamer and Heidegger's philosophies, in particular, have informed and underpin the key tenets of PCISM. If you are looking for an overview of the philosophies of any of the aforementioned, there are plenty of excellent books that may be consulted (see References and Bibliography). Instead, Chapter 4 highlights how PCISM has evolved from the key principles of hermeneutics, particularly the processes central to Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics and Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology. The resultant discussion of PCISM has been approached with the intention of synthesizing common philosophical ideas that can inform our enhanced understanding of universal influences upon human behaviour across all social contexts. These are the key influences that people draw from when engaged in conscious and subconscious lived (informal) philosophizing.

   Chapter 5 discusses PCISM as a practical tool for enabling a greater understanding of the broader horizons of human knowledge and endeavour (further to Grayling, 2008). By knowledge, I mean the breadth and depth of knowledge that an individual believes that they hold about themselves *combined* with the social experiences that they use as a basis for forming meaning (interpretation and understanding) and allied meaningfulness (the significance of the resultant sense of motivation, intention and self-attributes).

c. A few other thoughts and interpretations

   PCISM brings confidence and motivation together, further to philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960, 1976), as the basis of a unified theory that also includes familiarity and expectation. During the development of PCISM, my thinking and ideas have repeatedly come back to the principle that there is a central element to all human interpretation and associated behaviours and responses. This element is perceived confidence at both the individual and social level, in the form of the development of confidence within the moment of specific social scenarios and across whole developmental trajectories. My ideas have been informed by the writings of numerous philosophers and psychologists, each of whom have suggested and developed theories that have been tested and applied time after time in different social contexts. By presenting PCISM as an extension of philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer, 1960, 1965, 1976) that has an emphasis upon the interpretation of human experience through the lenses of confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation, I am aware that I risk being accused of stating the obvious in terms of seeking a new understanding of the influence of confidence upon social motivation and vice-versa. However, it can be useful to make more explicit what is known to many of us and which can become more evident and wide-spread in our understanding by making certain key points more obvious! As the subtitle of this book makes clear, when it comes to interpreting and understanding human nature, in life "Everything becomes Obvious and Nothing makes Sense"!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The initial ideas for the Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation (Peakism) and Philopsychlical Hermeneutics emerged in January 2017. Although the key ideas and themes emerged from a chance conversation, the resultant theory, tenets and diagrams have been influenced by many years of prior academic debate and the reading of philosophical texts.

The ideas blossomed and were fine-tuned during several visits to the University of Cambridge in 2017, with the majority of the research and the initial written development of ideas being undertaken at the University of Cambridge and Bishop Grosseteste University. The further development of ideas and the final writing stages were a key feature of my tenure at the University of Aberdeen. Further research, proofreading and editing, all of which took almost 12 months, has influenced my teaching and work at Oxford Brookes University. As a result, therefore, this theory has emerged and developed from an extremely well-travelled set of ideas and draft manuscripts!

The writing of this book was spawned by my doctoral research at the University of Birmingham and continued research thereafter. However, the acquisition of most of the content for this book has been due to numerous enjoyable hours in the University of Cambridge Library. Such visits have inspired my sense of academic pleasure, joy, interest and enjoyment, whether exploring the bookish mazes on the fourth and sixth floors of the South Wing or engaging in further reflection during many happy hours spent in the Tea Room!

The ability to gain access to all of the books and resources that I needed was due to the extremely helpful librarians within the libraries of the University of Cambridge, Bishop Grosseteste University, the University of Aberdeen, Oxford Brookes University, and the Bodleian Library at the University of Oxford. Thank you.

Much of my research, writing and editing has been carried out in blissful academic isolation and rumination! However, as always, my family have continued to encourage my work, and have remained as the source of my inspiration, pride, love, fulfilment and contentment throughout this path on my own and their learning journey.
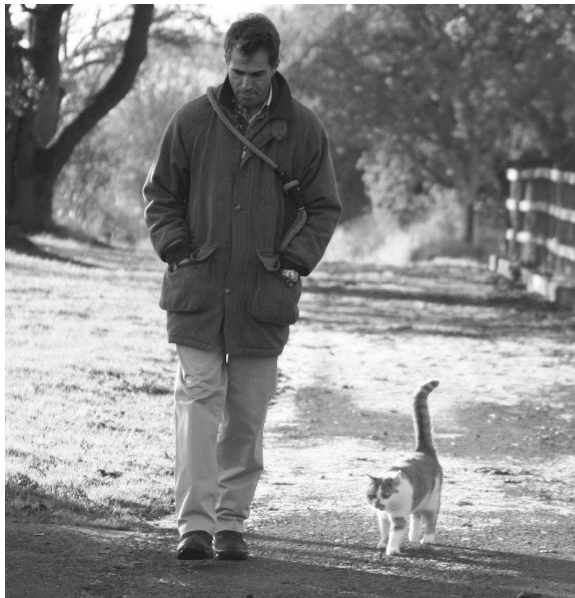
The author on another reflective walk with Slow Thinker's Cat (otherwise known as Charlie)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCING PCISM AND PHILOPSYCHLICAL HERMENEUTICS

1.1 The four universal influencers of human behaviour: confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation.

The *Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation* (abbreviated to PCISM: pronounced *Peakism*) centres upon three key universal ideas. The first is that human individuals constantly philosophize about their experiences and contexts through their interpretation of a combination of different perceptions. The second is the important influence that place, people (both present and absent) and activities have upon our sense of context. The third is that there are four *philopsychlical* influencers central to all human interpretations and human experience: these are *confidence, motivation, familiarity* and *expectations*.

The balance between these four universal *philopsychlical* informants has energizing and thwarting influences upon psychological responses and decisions-making. *Our interpretations are entirely philosophical.* These lead to psychological and physiological responses, which influence the extent to which we trust or mistrust our philosophical interpretations. Central to these philosophical interpretations and resultant responses are the influence of places and peoples. The combined influence of places and people upon our experiences is reciprocally an influencer of and influenced by our inseparable confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectations.

The four philopsychlical influencers are, as such, thoughts, ideas and perceptions rather than true psychological reactions and responses. In terms of the assertion that confidence is both an outcome and an informant of an individual's motivated activity, inactivity or avoidance of specific actions, it is posited that confidence will be more easily understood if it is approached as a *philosophical* function of the human mind. To date, the concept of confidence as a universal informant of motivation across the whole of an individual's lifespan experiences, both in solitary and social

contexts, has not been as fully developed as it might be. In the main, prior research has focused upon self-confidence as a psychological construct that has been stimulated by variables within specific social contexts. However, I contend that confidence is a universal philosophical construct as it is an outcome of interpretations of a current or forthcoming event that are based upon prior experiences and the understanding gained from these. In contrast, the wider view remains that motivation is a *psychological* response to the multiple possibilities that confidence presents as being more feasible, in the form of actions that are more likely to result in desired goals, needs and wishes being satisfied.

Integral to the extent to which human life is regarded as being fulfilling and meaningful is our ability and willingness to learn from our own and others' experiences. This learning is founded upon the interpretation of the knowledge and endeavours central to our experiences. In turn, experiences are inextricably linked to activities and the contexts within which these activities take place. Interpretations build upon knowledge that we form independently and which we gain from human and non-human others, whether as individuals or groups. These interpretations, and resultant decisions made, lead to cycles of experience. These cycles both change and develop into patterns of routine according to expectations and familiarity with such contexts. All human knowledge and activity can be measured by variant levels of engagement and detachment: these levels are based upon perceptions that fundamentally depend upon one's familiarity and expectations within an individual context. These, in turn, inform an individual's confidence and motivation: these are energized or tempered by impressions, influences and importance of people, contexts and activities.

Moments within the individual life are never permanent in nature. Nor do the socially contextual experiences that take place in an individual's life last forever, even if such moments are interpreted as being fairly repetitive, routine or predictable. Individual lives, our engagement with others, and our experiences within different contexts are *open-ended* and extremely variant in their *substantive* nature. Transient aspects include interpersonal relationships, the presence of others, and the activities that we undertake in different contexts. The only contextual factor that appears to have any sense of longer-term stability is the physical place in which activities and our relationships with others are located. By the physical place, I mean the geography and the landscape more than the buildings that an individual finds themselves in at any moment and for any given (if known) period of time.

The novel term *philopsychlical hermeneutics* is synonymous with PCISM, with both terms being used interchangeably and simultaneously as one and the same. By *hermeneutics*, I assert that all human life and experience is inescapably informed by perceptions and allied interpretations. Such interpretations, together with associated and influential expectations, are *philopsychlical* (pronounced *fillo-cyclical*). That is, we encounter, engage with and understand our contexts through interpretations that are, simultaneously, both philosophical and psychological, each being reciprocally cyclical in their influence. A *philopsychlical* influencer (or informant) consists of a combination of philosophical interpretations of contexts and experiences which lead to and are reciprocally informed by psychological responses. Philosophical interpretations are, therefore, products of the cumulative experiences and moments that constitute human consciousness, whereas psychological reactions are, in the main, physiological in their impact, in that they are noticeable through our emotions and how we physically feel.

The development of PCISM was approached with three key principles in mind. The first is that we do not choose a life: we live a life, and, hopefully, are able to choose how we live that life. The second is that every human individual may exceed their own and others' expectations of themselves. The third is that our expectations of others are invariably greater that those expectations we hold about ourselves. These points are discussed later through the joint lenses of PCISM and philopsychlical hermeneutics.

Philosophy and the act of philosophizing should have an impact upon improving our informed interpretations and understanding of the priorities and problems of human life, including the nature of how our perceptual experiences form and are informed (Overgaard et al., 2013). When considering philosophical questions regarding human knowledge and endeavour, we are engaging in meta-philosophical thinking about why such questions may be relevant and of value to human lived experience (further to Overgaard et al., 2013, p. 5). That is, the extent to which the nature of the philosophical questions being asked are influenced by and are influencers of the *pathways* and *permissions* that an individual perceives within a specific social context. These pathways and permissions may or may not exist in reality: however, they are informed by possibilities and probabilities that begin and end with other individuals and groups.

Figure 1.1 The four universal *philopsychlical* influences upon all human behaviour through philosophical interpretations and psychological responses

Confidence-Informed Social Motivation

Philopsychlical Hermeneutics
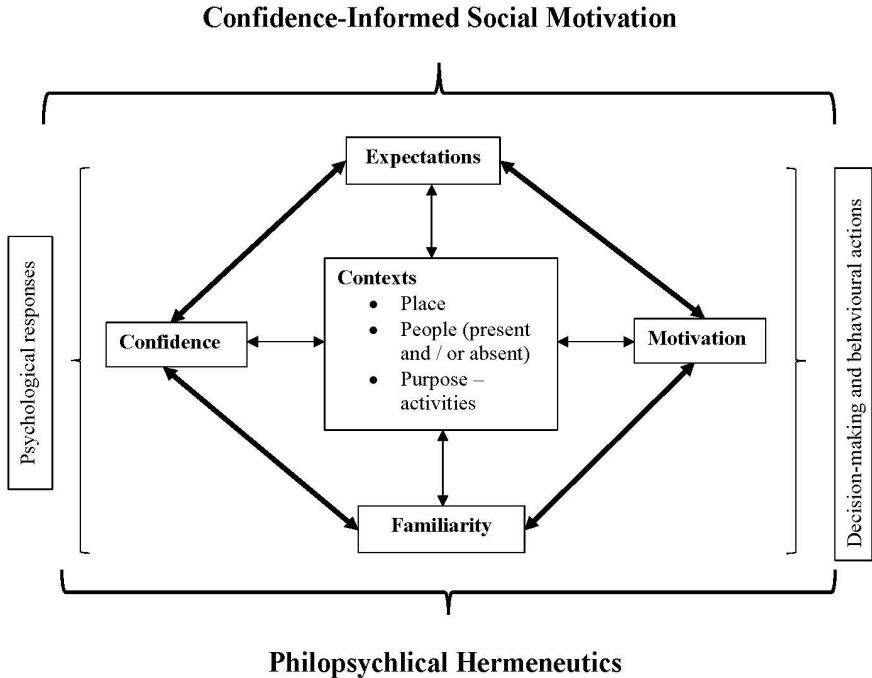
Interpretation is central to academic philosophical debate, whether it is regarding how to understand an idea that a philosopher has presented or the dynamics underlying a specific context. Every individual may interpret a written text, artwork or human incident in a variety of different ways. This depends upon our prior experience, beliefs and perceptions, as well as the different meanings and significances that emerge to challenge our ideas and understanding. Interpretation is unique to the individual but has the potential to be 'normalized' within the society or groups that an individual is socially involved in. Whilst universals exist in our knowledge of contexts beyond the confines of the human mind, all such knowledge is a product of ideas and understanding that have emerged from the mind. Ideas are interpreted and reinterpreted in the light of our understanding of phenomena, and, in turn, are assimilated to form new thinking. These include, for example, within science, where methods and analysis

processes are adopted and developed for universal use. However, much of our knowledge in science is based upon interpreting the unseen or the undetectable, and, therefore, may be viewed as nothing more than widely held beliefs. Such beliefs emerge from one or more human minds, and are interpreted through the perceptions, from, for example, observations and measures, that we are aware of and focus upon. Through interpretation, we seek to create order and balance within our thinking and the phenomena that we seek to explain and understand. This includes interpretations and behaviours that one or more human philosophisers are *comfortable* with within the confines of specific contexts. *Comfortable* refers to the extent to which interpretations and behaviours match the norms that one holds or expects based upon prior numerous, reinforced events. We can no more define *normality* than we can pinpoint what the mind, reality, meaning, and purpose are.

Confidence exists as a cognitive and affective continuum throughout the human lifespan, including opposing positive and negative extremes: these inform and influence the extent to which a human individual believes that s/he holds an informed opinion about what they believe. As individual natural philosophers, we innately engage in philosophical musing about our experiences and we interpret these as a basis for informing our understanding. From our own hermeneutic deliberations and reflection, we develop our subjective knowledge (as information that we feel we know as justified reasons or truths based upon common sense and universalities) and experience (or know-how). Human individuals rely upon their own beliefs, sense of truth, ethics and morals, and opinions, as they regard these as justified: this justification is informed by experience and the wisdom of their own interpretations, as well as instinct and self-reinforcing cognitive and affective strategies. As such, rather than gaining philosophical insights through the writing of key philosophers, the majority of human individuals conduct their lives through a combination of cognitive and affective coping strategies which include interpretations, experience, inference, inductive filling of gaps in their knowledge and understanding, imperatives, desired and needs. Indeed, central to all such approaches to natural, everyday lived philosophy are the development of opinions, optimism, a sense of familiarity and expectations: these are based upon the resultant perceived confidence and its translation into and through motivation. Essentially, these may be regarded as an individual's 'lived' or 'grounded' theories produced as a result of philosophical reflection, deliberation and ultimate interpretation (further to Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Whitehead (2008, 2009)). The 'theories' that an individual develops, in the form of cognitive frameworks for interpreting,

understanding and explaining lifeworld and worldview phenomena (Heidegger, 1927, 1938), and the extent to which these are regarded as truths and beliefs will influence prior, current and future confidence and motivational drivers of endeavour.

Where thinking and behaviour deviate from what we usually expect within the contexts, cultures and traditions that we occupy, this causes us to become uncomfortable as it is a form of deviation from the balance and order that we seek. An individual's perceived reality revolves around the beliefs that they hold about what balance and order looks, sounds and feels like. This leads to expectations about themselves, other human agents (both as individuals and as culture-context groups) and the nature of the context (including past, present and future). Whilst many have asserted that there are no such universal certainties as normality, reality, meaning and purpose across the human species, this does not deter or prevent individuals from evolving their own sense of reality, through the need for normality, meaning and purpose. That is, as individuals, we feel more comfortable about our confidence and motivation within our social contexts when interpretations of our own and others' behaviour match closely with what we believe to be reality. The sense of reality is reinforced when the daily events within such contexts match our expectations and interpretations. This may lead to an individual's more pragmatic behavioural response to doing what an individual perceives to be the *right* thing to do in the contextual circumstances. This perception of what is *right* emerges from a combination of interpretations relating to the expectations that an individual has about themselves, of others, the context they are immersed in, prior experience of the same or similar contexts and activities, and the nature of desired or necessary outcomes.

Interpretations, whether of our own lived experiences or of others' experiences, are essentially practical, in that they lead to actions and decisions that build upon existing cognitive schema. By forming these interpretations, and acting upon them, we are not necessarily following any methodology. Indeed, the more we recognise the subjective and prejudicial underpinning of hermeneutic cognition, the more we may realise that everything is obvious to an individual but that also nothing truly makes universal sense when observed and interpreted. One of the challenges faced when developing PCISM and philopsychlical hermeneutics was to identify and discuss the key interpretive and principles that influence the formation of propositions and their translation from thought to verbal and non-verbal actions via intentions. At the heart of PCISM and philopsychlical hermeneutics, such key principles combine within and as part of the dynamic, immersive fluxes that constitute what we come to

know as the 'life' that each of us is living. Addressing such a challenge has led to the gradual emergence and unravelling of some of these key principles: these underpin PCISM, as a means of discussing how humans, universally, as individuals and as groups, constantly interpret themselves, others and contexts. The key point is that interpretation of ourselves and our contexts is ongoing, and is both conscious and subconscious. The conscious is often made aware through philosophical deliberation whilst the subconscious is underpinned by psychological influences.

1.2 A summary of the Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation (PCISM) and Philopsychlical Hermeneutics

As stated, the purpose of this book is to introduce the *Philosophy of Confidence-Informed Social Motivation*. This is abbreviated to *PCISM* (pronounced *Peakism*). Herein, I have presented and discussed a novel philosophy of confidence-informed social motivation that has been developed as an extension of Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. As human individuals, we have an innate sense of philosophy in common. That is, we are all natural philosophers in that we are innately philosophical about our experiences and we have a need to interpret these as a basis for informing our understanding. From our own hermeneutic deliberations and reflection, we develop our subjective knowledge (as information that we feel we know as justified reasons or truths based upon common sense and universalities) and experience (or know-how).

This book presents and discusses a novel philosophical theory of social motivation through an extension of hermeneutics. This theory is unique in that discusses the central importance of confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation as the basis of all human knowledge and endeavour. It presents a unified philosophical theory of confidence-informed endeavour that may be applied universally within *all* domains of human action and motivation. The philosophical principles and arguments within the philosophy of confidence-informed social motivation may be applied across all domains of human knowledge and endeavour. These include, but are not limited to, relationships, education, psychology, mental health and psychotherapy, medicine and health care, sports and physical activity, goals, and health and well-being. Although it is asserted that this theory may be applied across all domains of human endeavour and knowledge, its strongest appeal is likely to be within the realms of social and developmental psychology, humanistic studies, and branches of philosophy

such as philosophy of mind, metaphysics, epistemology, and, of course, hermeneutics and pragmatism,

Whilst the term PCISM emerged naturally during the development of the theory, it is apt in that the individual will function at a peak philosophical and reciprocal psychological intensity when s/he perceives that their confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation levels are consistently high. Confidence and motivation influence each other and work together as a dynamic combination of philosophical interpretations and psychological reactions. These are informed by reciprocal interpretive feedback. Within the term *philopsychlical*, all four are recognised as universal informants and influences upon ongoing human behaviour within all social contexts – *philo*(sophical) *psych*(ological) (cyc)*lical*. The central aim of PCISM is for it to be universally applied across all domains of human knowledge, behaviour and endeavour as a means of enhancing our further understanding of the universal economics of human behaviour (see Chapter 5).

By presenting PCISM as a hermeneutic philosophy that has an emphasis upon the interpretation of human experience, I am aware that I could be accused of stating the obvious by starting a new discussion regarding the factors informing our understanding of the influence of confidence upon social motivation and vice-versa. However, it is always useful to make even more explicit what is known to us and which can become ever more evident by making key points more obvious! As stated, therefore, humans are natural philosphizers who are constantly forming interpretations and expectations based upon their perceptions and prior experiences, including their familiarity with particular people and activities, and the social contexts within which these are situated.

PCISM focuses upon two key themes. The first is that it is possible for human individuals to philosophize about their experiences and contexts through the interpretation of a combination of four different influencers: confidence, motivation, familiarity and expectation. The second is the important influence of place and space upon our sense of what a context is perceived to be. Both are universal to all humans, with philosophizing being informed by a combination of people and places (both present and absent). Interpretations, whether of our own lived experiences or of others, and associated emotional responses and behavioural actions, are essentially, practical and pragmatic, in that they build upon theoretical schema that are developed by the brain. By forming these interpretations, and acting upon them, it should be said that we are not necessarily following any methodology. Indeed, the more we recognise the subjective and prejudicial underpinning of interpretive cognition, the more we may

come to realise that whilst everything seems obvious to the individual, nothing truly makes universal sense when observed and interpreted by others.

Through PCISM, I assert that there is an essential informant and driver of all human endeavour, action, perceived fulfilment, contextual and life satisfaction: that is, perceived confidence. The influence of such perceived confidence is central to the extent to which human existence moves more towards 'living' through the nature and quality of the motivation that informs an individual's involvement and immersion, or otherwise, in socially-embedded and dependent contexts and activities. The questions that we ask determine the extent to which we can begin to acquire answers that might enhance our insights and understanding of experience and ideas. Another universal idea asserted within PCISM is that all human individuals are inescapable natural philosophers as they seek to make sense of and understand their individual and *socially-interwoven* lives. Where humans as philosophers differ is in the depth, intensity and the sustained nature of their conscious philosophizing and subconscious interpretations within social contexts.

The impetus for PCISM and philopsychical hermeneutics arose from a perception that much of what has been written to date in academic philosophy revolves around ongoing debates and critiques of what the 'dead and nearly dead philosophers' may have been saying, were trying to say, or may not have been saying within their writing. However, this book is different to such texts in that it introduces an original philosophical framework that not only draws upon prior knowledge but also may enhance our understanding of the influence that human individuals' interpretation and understanding of social motivation through the impact of contextual confidence and motivation across *all* areas of human activity and endeavour.

Philosophy involves the natural human state of wanting to know more about our world: a world that has an impact upon our everyday decisions, our priorities, our motivations, and our understanding. Our innate use of philosophical approaches, whether consciously or subconsciously, including as a combination of the two, is central to our everyday lives in that it informs our knowledge and endeavours as humans. To gain a more informed understanding of our human knowledge and endeavours requires an explicit philosophical practical tool for developing more rational approaches to decision-making, deciding potential actions, and forming strategies for working towards and achieving desired outcomes. The difference from one human individual to the next lies in each of these individuals' willingness to engage in reasoning and decision-making that

may, or may not, lead to an enhanced understanding of ourselves and others within the perceived reality of our social contexts. We meet individuals who we regard as being either 'deep' or 'surface' thinkers: some appear to be more mindful than others of the need to consider ideas and actions carefully before making decisions within social contexts and similar situations. An individual's propensity to engage in thought that may be regarded as critical, reflective, logical or in-depth is neither a given nor is it predictable as a norm from one individual to the next.

The act of philosophizing, in terms of seeking to understand and justify our own actions and thinking, is often used synonymously used by individuals and businesses that claim that their way of approaching decisions and actions is based upon "my philosophy" and "our philosophy". This is something that an individual or group essentially takes ownership of based upon their guiding intentions and desired outcomes: however, such a 'philosophy' is rarely acquired from the reading of academic philosophers and philosophy texts. This returns us to the defining of philosophy as cognitive processes which are utilised to enhance our understanding and guide our behavioural intentions. Individuals' philosophical thinking guides their decision-making and choices between a range of perceived pathways (or *projected possibilities*): these emerge from experiences and their interpretation of these. Therefore, by having a stated 'philosophy' or approach that outlines how, what and why an individual works towards in terms of goals, needs, desires, there is an increased probability of being able to predict their behaviour and the interpretations underlying the decisions that influence such behaviour. That is, perceptions are in constant flux according to changes within the activity, the associated social context, and the changing presence or absence of other individuals. Truly accurate predictions are, almost inevitably, impossible as truly confident rational thought is not possible due to the range and complexity of interactions between known and unknown variables, alongside conscious and subconscious, unknown cognitive processes informing people's confidence-informing perceptions and confidence-informed responses to activities. Therefore, it would be impossible to pinpoint *absolutely all* of the informants, and the consequential facilitators and inhibitors, of confidence-informed social motivation. Ultimately, the processes that result in confidence and motivation are universal to informed human behaviour. However, the cognitive and affective perceptions that inform different individuals' responses to the same activity, including the underlying prior experiences and their interpretations that influence them, can never be reliably predicted by other social agents due to their complexity and the complex