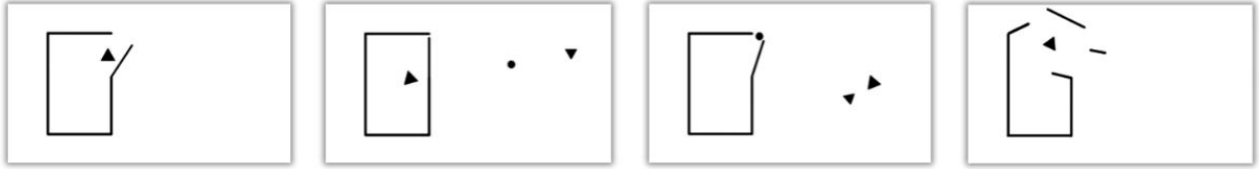


“An Experimental Study of Apparent Behavior”



In 1944, Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel carried out a famous experiment. They created a short film with some simple moving shapes: a big triangle, a small triangle, a circle and a rectangle. The shapes moved around a screen in various ways.

They showed the short film to 35 people and asked them to write down what happened.

Most people did not just describe the shapes and their movements. Instead, they created stories, giving the shapes human-like personalities and emotions. For example, most people said that:

- The rectangle was a house.
- The small triangle and the circle were together in some way – as friends or partners, for example.
- The two triangles had a fight.
- The big triangle chased the small triangle and the circle.
- The big triangle was aggressive and violent.

The experiment shows that humans have a natural instinct for storytelling. We create stories to make sense of abstract or uncertain situations.

We also see inanimate objects as if they are characters in those stories, especially when the objects' movements suggest interaction.



Questions

According to the experiment, humans have a natural instinct for storytelling. We create stories to make sense of abstract or uncertain situations.

- Can you think of a situation when we might do this?
- Can you think of a situation when this instinct could be an advantage?
- Can you think of a situation in which this instinct could create problems?