

systems include the steam engine governor, created by James Watt (1736–1819), and the thermostat, invented by Cornelis Drebbel (1572–1633), who also invented the submarine. James Clerk Maxwell (1868) initiated the mathematical theory of control systems.

[Control theory](#)

A central figure in the post-war development of **control theory** was Norbert Wiener (1894–1964). Wiener was a brilliant mathematician who worked with Bertrand Russell, among others, before developing an interest in biological and mechanical control systems and their connection to cognition. Like Craik (who also used control systems as psychological models), Wiener and his colleagues Arturo Rosenblueth and Julian Bigelow challenged the behaviorist orthodoxy (Rosenblueth *et al.*, 1943). They viewed purposive behavior as arising from a regulatory mechanism trying to minimize “error”—the difference between current state and goal state. In the late 1940s, Wiener, along with Warren McCulloch, Walter Pitts, and John von Neumann, organized a series of influential conferences that explored the new mathematical and computational models of cognition. Wiener’s book *Cybernetics* (1948) became a bestseller and awoke the public to the possibility of artificially intelligent machines.

[Cybernetics](#)

Meanwhile, in Britain, W. Ross Ashby pioneered similar ideas (Ashby, 1940). Ashby, Alan Turing, Grey Walter, and others formed the Ratio Club for “those who had Wiener’s ideas before Wiener’s book appeared.” Ashby’s *Design for a Brain* (1948, 1952) elaborated on his idea that intelligence could be created by the use of **homeostatic** devices containing appropriate feedback loops to achieve stable adaptive behavior.

[Homeostatic](#)

[Cost function](#)

Modern control theory, especially the branch known as stochastic optimal control, has as its goal the design of systems that minimize a **cost function** over time. This roughly matches the standard model of AI: designing systems that behave optimally. Why, then, are AI and control theory two different fields, despite the close connections among their founders? The answer lies in the close coupling between the mathematical techniques that were familiar to the participants and the corresponding sets of problems that were encompassed in each world view. Calculus and matrix algebra, the tools of control theory, lend themselves to systems that are describable by fixed sets of continuous variables, whereas AI was founded in part as a way to escape from these perceived limitations. The tools of logical inference and computation allowed AI researchers to consider problems such as language, vision, and symbolic planning that fell completely outside the control theorist’s purview.

### 1.2.8 Linguistics

- How does language relate to thought?

In 1957, B. F. Skinner published *Verbal Behavior*. This was a comprehensive, detailed account of the behaviorist approach to language learning, written by the foremost expert in the field. But curiously, a review of the book became as well known as the book itself, and served to almost kill off interest in behaviorism. The author of the review was the linguist Noam Chomsky, who had just published a book on his own theory, *Syntactic Structures*. Chomsky pointed out that the behaviorist theory did not address the notion of creativity in language—it did not explain how children could understand and make up sentences that they had never heard before. Chomsky’s theory—based on syntactic models going back to the Indian linguist Panini (c. 350 BCE)—could explain this, and unlike previous theories, it was formal enough that it could in principle be programmed.

[Computational linguistics](#)

Modern linguistics and AI, then, were “born” at about the same time, and grew up together, intersecting in a hybrid field called **computational linguistics** or **natural language**