Theories of Personality

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To our teachers and friends

Gordon W. Allport

Henry A. Murray

Edward C. Tolman

Preface

In spite of the deepening interest of psychologists in personality theory, there is no single source to which the student can turn for a survey of existing theories of personality. The present volume is intended to correct this shortcoming. It provides compact yet comprehensive summaries of the major contemporary theories of personality written at a level of difficulty that is appropriate for undergraduate or graduate instruction. From this book the student can secure a detailed overview of personality theory and at the same time he can prepare himself to read original sources with more appreciation and greater facility. It is our hope that this volume will serve a function in the area of personality similar to that served by Hilgard's *Theories of Learning* in the area of learning.

What theories should be included in a volume on personality theory? Although it is not easy to specify precisely what a theory of personality is, it is even more difficult to agree as to what are the most important of these theories. As set forth in the first chapter, we are willing to accept any general theory of behavior as a theory of personality. In judging importance we have relied primarily upon our evaluation of the degree of influence the theory has had upon psychological research and formulation. Also involved in this complex judgment is the matter of distinctiveness. When two or more theories have appeared to us to be very similar, we have either treated them in a single chapter or selected one theory to focus upon to the exclusion of the others. Given

these broad criteria of importance and distinctiveness, there will probably be little objection to the particular theories we have elected to include in the volume. There may be less unanimity, however, concerning our decision to omit certain theories from consideration. Notable among the omissions are McDougall's Hormic Theory, Role Theory, Guthrie's Contiguity Theory, Tolman's Purposive Behaviorism, and some of the recently developed positions such as David McClelland's, Julian Rotter's, and George Kelly's.

We originally planned to include both McDougall's Hormic Theory and Role Theory but limitations of space forced us to reduce the number of chapters and these were the theories we judged to be most expendable. Hormic Theory was omitted because its influence is somewhat more indirect than in the case of the other theories. Although we regard McDougall as a theorist of great importance, his contemporary impact is largely mediated by more recent theorists who have borrowed features of his theory. Role Theory, it seems to us, is less systematically developed than most of the other positions we elected to include. It is true that the theory contains a leading idea of considerable value and importance but this idea has not as yet been incorporated into a network of concepts which deal comprehensively with human behavior. Guthrie and Tolman were omitted in favor of Hull's reinforcement theory simply because there has been less extensive research application of these theories outside of the area of learning. McClelland, Rotter, and Kelly were not included because of their recency and because, in some respects, their positions resemble theories or combinations of theories that we have included.

Having decided upon what theories to include, we were still faced with the problem of how to organize and describe these positions. Some consistency in mode of presentation seemed desirable; yet at the same time we wished to preserve the integrity of the individual theories. Our compromise consisted of providing general categories in terms of which the theories could be described while permitting ourselves a good deal of latitude within these categories so as to present each theory in the manner that seemed most natural. Even these general categories were not adhered to rigidly. In some instances new ones were necessary in order to represent a particular theory adequately, and in one or two cases it seemed advisable to combine categories. Typically, however, each theory is introduced with an Orientation section which recounts briefly the personal history of the theorist, outlines the main lines of influence upon the theory, and provides a summary of the salient features of the theory. Next the reader

will find a section on the Structure of Personality in which are included the concepts designed to represent the acquisitions or enduring portions of personality. Following this is a section on Dynamics of Personality which sets forth the motivational or dispositional concepts and principles espoused by the theorist. Then comes a section on Development of Personality which deals with growth and change as represented by the theory. A section on Characteristic Research and Research Methods follows, in which representative investigations and empirical techniques are presented. There is a concluding section entitled Current Status and Evaluation which outlines briefly the present state of the theory and summarizes the major contributions of the theory as well as the chief criticisms it has elicited. At the end of each chapter is a brief list of Primary Sources which represents the most important of the original sources concerning the theory. All of the publications referred to in the text are brought together in a final section at the end of each chapter entitled References.

We have attempted to present each theory in a positive light, dwelling upon those features of the theory that seem to us most useful and suggestive. Although we have included a brief critique of each theory it has not been our primary intention to evaluate these theories. Rather, we have attempted to present them in expository terms that will demonstrate what they are good for or what promise they hold for the individual who adopts them. The length of a chapter does not reflect our judgment of the relative importance of the theory. Each theory is written in what seemed to us the smallest number of pages necessary to represent its essential features accurately and comprehensively. The reader will observe that in some chapters there appears to be more detailed and personal information concerning the theorist and the development of his theory than in other chapters. This was determined solely by availability of information. In those instances where we knew a good deal about the theorist, we decided to include as much of this information as seemed vital even though this would result in some chapters appearing more personalized than others.

In the preparation of this volume we sought and received invaluable assistance from a number of colleagues. It is with deep gratitude and appreciation that we acknowledge the personal contribution made by many of the theorists whose work is presented here. They clarified our thinking upon a number of points and made numerous suggestions both as to form and content which greatly improved the manuscript. Whatever merit this book possesses must be attributed in large measure to the meticulous care with which each of the following theorists read

and criticized the chapter devoted to his theory: Gordon W. Allport, Raymond B. Cattell, H. J. Eysenck, Kurt Goldstein, Carl Jung, Neal E. Miller, Gardner Murphy, Henry A. Murray, Carl Rogers, Robert R. Sears, and William Sheldon. In addition to illuminating comments concerning the chapter dealing with his own theory, Gordon Allport provided us with penetrating criticisms and generative suggestions concerning all of the remaining chapters. He also used many of the chapters in his undergraduate and graduate courses and provided us with the comments and suggestions of these students. We are greatly indebted not only to these Harvard and Radcliffe students but also to many students at Western Reserve University who read and commented upon the chapters. We are pleased to acknowledge our further indebtedness to the following individuals, each of whom read and improved by their suggestions one or more chapters in this book: John A. Atkinson, Raymond A. Bauer, Urie Bronfenbrenner, Arthur Combs, Anthony Davids, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Eugene L. Hartley, Ernest Hilgard, Robert R. Holt, Edward E. Jones, George S. Klein, Herbert McClosky, George Mandler, James G. March, A. H. Maslow, Theodore M. Newcomb, Helen S. Perry, Stewart E. Perry, M. Brewster Smith, Donald Snygg, S. S. Stevens, Patrick Suppes, John Thibaut, Edward C. Tolman, and Otto A. Will, Jr. We are indebted to Heinz and Rowena Ansbacher for providing us with page proof of their book *The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler* prior to its publication. It was very helpful to us in writing the section on Adler's theory of personality. In the final preparation of the manuscript we received invaluable assistance from Virginia Caldwell, Marguerite Dickey, and Kenneth Wurtz.

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CALVIN S. HALL
GARDNER LINDZEY

Contents

1.

The Nature of Personality Theory

The main purpose of this book is to present an organized summary of the major contemporary theories of personality. In addition to providing a digest of each theory we shall also discuss relevant research and give an over-all evaluation of the theory. Before proceeding with this task, however, something should be said about what personality theories are as well as how the various personality theories can be distinguished from one another. Further, there is an obligation to place these theories in a general context, relating them to what has gone on historically in psychology as well as locating them in the contemporary scene.

In this introductory chapter we shall commence with a very general and somewhat informal outline of the role of personality theory in the development of psychology, followed by a discussion of what is meant by the term personality and by the term theory. From these considerations it is an easy step to the question of what constitutes a personality theory. We shall also consider very briefly the relation between personality theory and other forms of psychological theory. In conclusion we shall present a number of dimensions by means of which personality theories can be compared with one another. These dimensions can be considered to represent the major theoretical issues in this area.

PERSONALITY THEORY AND THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY

A comprehensive view of the development of personality theory must surely begin with conceptions of man advanced by the great

classical scholars such as Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle. An adequate account would also be obligated to deal with the contributions of dozens of thoughtful individuals, for example, Aquinas, Bentham, Comte, Hobbes, Locke, and Machiavelli, who lived in the intervening centuries and whose ideas are still to be detected in contemporary formulation. It is not our intention here to attempt any such general reconstruction. Our goal is much more limited. We shall merely consider in broad terms the general role personality theory has played in the development of psychology during the past six or seven decades.

To begin with, let us examine some relatively recent sources of influence upon personality theory. A tradition of clinical observation beginning with Charcot and Janet but including most importantly Freud, Jung, and McDougall has done more to determine the nature of personality theory than any other single factor. In a moment we shall examine some of the effects of this movement. A second path of influence stems from the Gestalt tradition and William Stern. These theorists were tremendously impressed with the unity of behavior and consequently were convinced that the segmental or fragmented study of small elements of behavior could never prove enlightening. As we shall discover, this point of view is deeply embedded in current personality theory. There is also the more recent impact of experimental psychology in general and learning theory in particular. From this avenue has come increased concern with carefully controlled empirical research and a better understanding of the nature of theory construction. A fourth determinant is represented by the psychometric tradition with its focus upon the measurement and study of individual differences. This source has provided increasing sophistication in measurement and the quantitative analysis of data. There are numerous other paths of influence upon personality theory including experimental genetics, logical positivism, and social anthropology but none of these seems, thus far, to have had such far-reaching implications as the four determinants we have just outlined.

The specific background out of which each of the theories presented in this book emerged is briefly discussed in the following chapters. General discussions of the development of contemporary personality theory will be found in Allport (1937), Boring (1950), MacKinnon (1944), MacKinnon and Maslow (1951), and Murphy (1949). The current status of personality theory and research is summarized in a series of chapters appearing in the *Annual Review of Psychology* (Bronfenbrenner, 1953; Child, 1954; Eysenck, 1952; MacKinnon, 1951; McClelland, 1956; Nuttin, 1955; Sears, 1950).

Let us turn now to some of the distinctive features of personality theory. Although this body of theory is manifestly a part of the broad field of psychology, still there are appreciable differences between personality theory and research and research and theory in other areas of psychology. These differences are particularly pronounced in regard to the early development of personality theory, and exist in spite of a great deal of variation among personality theories themselves. The individual differences between personality theories imply that almost any statement that applies with detailed accuracy to one theory of personality will be somewhat inaccurate when applied to certain other theories. In spite of this, there are modal qualities or central tendencies which inhere in most personality theories and it is upon these that we shall focus in our discussion.

Granted that there are important congruences in the streams of influence which determined the early paths of general psychology and of personality theory, still there are significant differences. It is true that Darwin was a potent factor in the development of both positions and it is also true that physiology of the nineteenth century had its influence upon personality theorists as well as a marked effect upon general psychology. Nevertheless the broad flavor of the factors influencing these two groups during the past three quarters of a century has been distinguishably different. While the personality theorist was drawing his leading ideas primarily from clinical experience, the experimental psychologist was paying heed to the findings of the experimental laboratory. Where the names Charcot, Freud, Janet, McDougall, and Stern are in the forefront of the work of early personality theorists, we find Helmholtz, Pavlov, Thorndike, Watson, and Wundt cast in a comparable role in experimental psychology. The experimentalists derived their inspirations and their values from the natural sciences while personality theorists remained closer to clinical data and their own creative reconstructions. One group welcomed intuitive feelings and insights but scorned the trappings of science with its restriction upon the imagination and its narrow technical skills. The other applauded the rigor and precision of delimited investigation and shrank in distaste from the unrestrained use of clinical judgment and imaginative interpretation. In the end it was clear that early experimental psychology had little to say concerning problems of interest to the personality theorist and that the personality theorist had little respect for problems of central importance to the experimental psychologist.

It is well known that psychology developed in the late nineteenth

century as the offspring of philosophy and experimental physiology. The origin of personality theory owes much more to the medical profession and to the exigencies of medical practice. In fact, the early giants in this area (Freud, Jung, and McDougall) were not only trained in medicine but practiced as psychotherapists. This historical link between personality theory and practical application has remained evident throughout the development of psychology and provides an important distinction between this brand of theory and certain other types of psychological theory.

Consistent with what we have said thus far are two generalizations concerning personality theory. First, it is clear that *personality theory has occupied a dissident role in the development of psychology.* Personality theorists in their own times have been rebels. Rebels in medicine and in experimental science, rebels against conventional ideas and usual practices, rebels against typical methods and respected techniques of research, and most of all rebels against accepted theory and normative problems. The fact that personality theory has never been deeply embedded in the mainstream of academic psychology has had several important implications. On the one hand, it tended to free personality theory from the deadly grip of conventional modes of thought and preconceptions concerning human behavior. By being relatively uninvolved in the ongoing institution of psychology it was easier for personality theorists to question or reject assumptions which were widely accepted by psychologists. On the other hand, this lack of involvement also freed them from some of the discipline and the responsibility for reasonably systematic and organized formulation which was the heritage of the well-socialized psychologist.

A second generalization is that *personality theories are functional in their orientation.* They are concerned with questions that make a difference in the adjustment of the organism. They center about issues of crucial importance for the survival of the individual. At a time when the experimental psychologist was engrossed with such questions as the existence of imageless thought, the speed with which nerve impulses traveled, specifying the content of the normal-conscious-human-mind, deciding whether there was localization of function within the brain, the personality theorist was concerned with why it was that certain individuals developed crippling neurotic symptoms in the absence of organic pathology, the role of childhood trauma in adult adjustment, the conditions under which mental health could be regained, and the major motivations that underlay human behavior. Thus, it was the personality theorist, and only the personality theo-

rist, who in the early days of psychology dealt with questions which to the average person seem to lie at the core of a successful psychological science.

The reader should not construe what has just been said as an indictment of general psychology and a eulogy of personality theory. It is still not clear whether the path to a comprehensive and useful theory of human behavior will proceed most rapidly from the work of those who have aimed directly at such a goal, or whether it will eventually owe more to the efforts of those who have focused upon relatively specific and delimited problems. The strategy of advance in an empirical discipline is never easy to specify and the general public is not usually considered an adequate final court for deciding what problems should be focused upon. In other words, while it is a statement of fact that personality theorists have dealt with issues which seem central and important to the typical observer of human behavior, it remains to be seen whether this willingness to tackle such issues will prove to advance the science.

As we have implied, there is no mystery concerning why personality theories were broader in scope and more practical in orientation than the formulations of most other psychologists. The great men of academic psychology in the nineteenth century were figures such as Wundt, Helmholtz, Ebbinghaus, Titchener, and Külpe who carried out their work within university settings with few pressures from the outside world. They were free to follow their own intellectual inclinations with little or no compulsion to deal with what others considered important or significant. In fact, they were largely able to define what was significant by their own values and activities. By contrast the early personality theorists were practitioners as well as scholars. Faced with the problems of everyday life, magnified by neurosis, it was natural that they should address themselves to formulations which had something to contribute to these problems. A set of categories for the analysis of emotions which could be applied by trained subjects in a laboratory setting was of scant interest to a therapist who daily observed the operation of emotions that were hampering, disabling, and even killing fellow humans. Thus, the strong functional flavor of personality theories, their concern with problems of significance to the survival of the organism, seems a natural outgrowth of the setting in which these theories developed.

It is clear that *personality theorists* have customarily *assigned a crucial role to the motivational process.* At a time when many psychologists ignored motivation or attempted to minimize the contribution

of such factors in their studies, the personality theorist saw in these same variables the key to understanding human behavior. Freud and McDougall were the first to give serious consideration to the motivational process. The wide gap between the arena of life and the theory developed by laboratory psychologists is pictured by McDougall as he justifies his attempts to develop an adequate theory of social behavior (which was more of a theory of personality than it was a theory of social behavior):

> The department of psychology that is of primary importance for the social sciences is that which deals with the springs of human action, the impulses and motives that sustain mental and bodily activity and regulate conduct; and this, of all the departments of psychology, is the one that has remained in the most backward state, in which the greatest obscurity, vagueness, and confusion still reign (McDougall, 1908, pp. 2–3).

Thus, variables that were primarily of nuisance value to the experimental psychologist became a matter for systematic study and focal interest on the part of the personality theorist.

Related to this interest in the functional and motivational is the personality theorist's conviction that *an adequate understanding of human behavior will evolve only from the study of the whole person.* Most personality psychologists insisted that the subject should be viewed from the vantage of the entire functioning person in his natural habitat. They pleaded strongly for the study of behavior in context, with each behavioral event examined and interpreted in relation to the rest of the individual's behavior. Such a point of view was a natural derivative of clinical practice where the entire person presented himself for cure and where it was indeed difficult to limit consideration to one sense modality or a limited array of experience.

If we accept the intent of most personality theorists to promote the study of the whole, unsegmented person, it is easy to understand why many observers have considered that *one of the most distinctive features of personality theory is its function as an integrative theory.* While psychologists in general have shown increased specialization, leading to the complaint that they were learning more and more about less and less, the personality theorist accepted at least partial responsibility for bringing together and organizing the diverse findings of specialists. The experimentalist might know a great deal about motor skills, audition, perception, or vision but he usually knew relatively little about the way in which these special functions related to one another. The personality psychologist was, in this sense, more concerned with reconstruction or integration than he was with analysis

or the segmental study of behavior. From these considerations comes the somewhat romantic conception of the personality theorist as the individual who will put together the jigsaw puzzle provided by the discrete findings of separate studies within the various specialities that make up psychology.

In broad terms, then, *what has distinguished the personality theorist from the traditional psychological theorist?* He is more speculative and less tied to experimental or measuremental operations. The stiffening brush of positivism has spread much more lightly over the personality psychologist than over the experimental psychologist. He develops theories that are multidimensional and more complex than those fashionable within general psychology and, consistently, his theories tend to be somewhat more vague and less well specified than the experimentalist's theories. He is willing to accept any aspect of behavior which possesses functional significance as legitimate data for his theoretical mill whereas most experimental psychologists are content to fix their attention upon a limited array of observations or recordings. He insists that an adequate understanding of individual behavior can be achieved only when it is studied in a broad context which includes the total, functioning person. The personality theorist sees motivation, the "why" or underlying impellents of behavior, as *the* crucial empirical and theoretical problem whereas experimentalists see this as one of many problems and deal with it by means of a small number of concepts closely linked to physiological processes.

Thus far we have proceeded as though the reader and the writers were in good agreement concerning what the term personality means. Although this may be the case, it is by no means certain and before proceeding further it seems wise to examine the meaning of this term.

WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

There are few words in the English language which have such a fascination for the general public as the term personality. Although the word is used in various senses, most of these popular meanings fall under one of two headings. The first usage equates the term to social skill or adroitness. An individual's personality is assessed by the effectiveness with which he is able to elicit positive reactions from a variety of persons under different circumstances. It is in this sense that schools which specialize in glamorizing the American female intend the term when they refer to courses in "personality training." Likewise, the teacher who refers to a student as presenting a personality problem is probably indicating that his social skills are not ade-

quate to maintain satisfactory relations with his fellow students and the teacher. The second usage considers the personality of the individual to inhere in the most outstanding or salient impression which he creates in others. A person may thus be said to have an "aggressive personality" or a "submissive personality" or a "fearful personality." In each case the observer selects an attribute or quality which is highly typical of the subject and which is presumably an important part of the over-all impression which he creates in others and his personality is identified by this term. It is clear that there is an element of evaluation in both usages. Personalities as commonly described are good and bad.

While the diversity in ordinary use of the word personality may seem considerable, it is overshadowed by the variety of meanings with which the psychologist has endowed this term. Allport (1937) in an exhaustive survey of the literature extracted almost fifty different definitions which he classified into a number of broad categories. Here we need concern ourselves with but a few of these definitions.

It is important initially to distinguish between what Allport calls biosocial and biophysical definitions. The *biosocial definition* shows a close correspondence with the popular use of the term as it equates personality to the "social stimulus value" of the individual. It is the reaction of other individuals to the subject which defines his personality. One may even assert that the individual possesses no personality but that provided by the response of others. Allport objects vigorously to the implication that personality resides only in the "responding-other" and suggests that a *biophysical definition* which roots the personality firmly in characteristics or qualities of the subject is much to be preferred. According to the latter definition, personality has an organic side as well as a perceived side and may be linked to specific qualities of the individual which are susceptible to objective description and measurement.

Another important type of definition is the rag-bag or *omnibus definition.* This definition embraces personality by enumeration. The term personality is used here to include everything about the individual and the theorist ordinarily lists the concepts he considers of primary importance in describing the individual and suggests that personality consists of these. Other definitions place primary emphasis upon the *integrative* or organizational function of personality. Such definitions suggest that personality is the organization or pattern that is given to the various discrete behaviors of the individual or else they suggest that the organization results from the person-