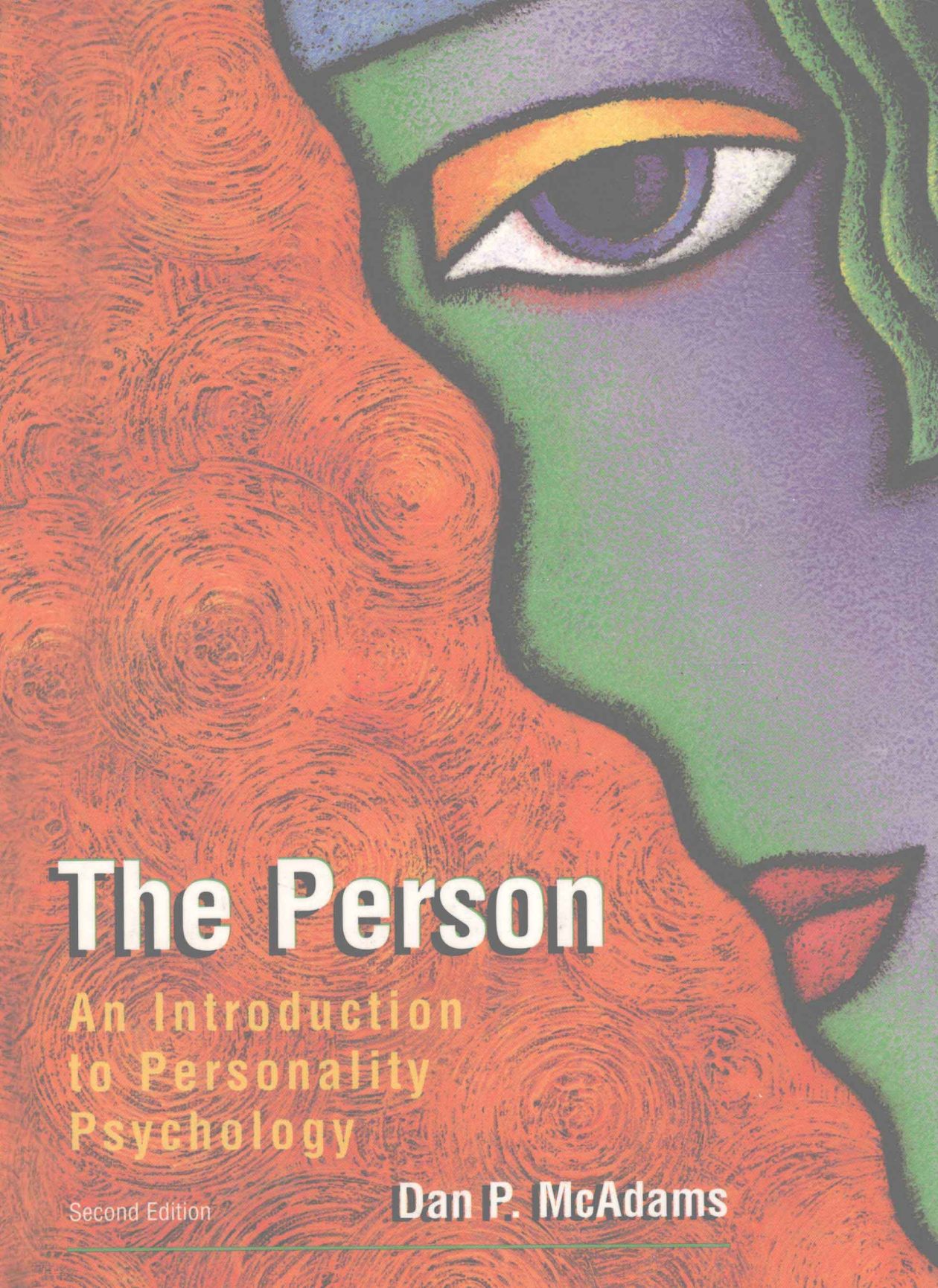
The Person
An Introduction to Personality Psychology
Second Edition
Dan P. McAdams

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Second Edition

Dan P. McAdams
Northwestern University

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Preface

There is nothing more interesting to persons than persons. And there is nothing more important. Personality psychology is first and foremost the scientific study of the person. Over 50 years ago, both Gordon Allport and Henry Murray challenged psychologists to put the person at the center of their investigations—to take the individual human being as the scientific unit of analysis. Since then, personality psychology has developed in many directions and has extended through many phases. In the late 1960s and '70s, when many questioned the scientific need for a study of the person, the discipline lost some of its early favor. But today, in the middle of the 1990s, personality psychology is more vital than ever. My goal in this book is to impart some of that vitality, to talk to you about the best and the brightest in theory and research that personality psychology has to offer.

The success of this text's first edition was due largely to (1) its unswerving focus on *the person* as an integrative theme in personality psychology, (2) its innovative organization of classical and contemporary approaches to persons around four central metaphors or goals (intrapsychic mysteries, interaction episodes, interpretive structures, and interpersonal stories), and (3) its engaging, literary style. The second edition builds on these strengths. I have sharpened even more the focus on the person. With some clarifying modifications, I have retained the innovative organizational scheme. And I have continued to try to engage, as well as challenge, my reader by framing issues in the most humanly relevant terms and drawing frequently, as I did before, on literature, biography, mythology, folklore, and other social sciences to illustrate points and to elaborate perspectives.

When I began the second edition, I figured I would make some minor changes and updates and do a little reorganizing. I am amazed now at how wrong I was! Because I received some tremendously helpful feedback on the first edition and because my thinking and the field of personality psychology have both evolved in the past few years, I found myself undertaking a major revision—as exciting and involving as writing the book the first time, but more exhausting and time consuming than I ever imagined. The end result is a second edition that is clearer, more tightly organized, and easier to assimilate than its predecessor. Every chapter has been updated and rewritten, many extensively so. Theorists have been regrouped in ways that are more familiar to most readers. And each of the book's four major sections has been revamped to make a clearer and, I think, more convincing case for why I present material in the way I do.

Those familiar with the first edition will notice many significant changes. Under "Intrapsychic Mysteries," I have now grouped Freud and Jung together in a long opening chapter (Chapter 2) that also includes a host of other psychodynamically oriented theories (Horney, Fromm, object-relations, ego psychology, Kohut), each presented in historical context. I have brought together material on the psychoanalytic case study and psychoanalytic research, previously scattered throughout

the book, into a single, integrative chapter on "discovery and proof" in psychoanalysis. I have expanded considerably my treatment of sociobiology and evolutionary personality psychology, in accord with the rising influence of these approaches, and I have highlighted Bowlby and Ainsworth's seminal work on mother–infant attachment, as an example of personality/developmental psychology from an evolutionary point of view. With the wide acceptance of the Big Five model of personality traits, trait psychology has never been stronger than it is today, warranting the expanded coverage I have given to traits in this second edition. In the domain of cognitive personality psychology, new approaches emphasizing life tasks and strivings, self-determination, and the situated nature of purposive human behavior have gained considerable currency in the past few years, and I now feature these more prominently.

In addition, the last few years have witnessed an upsurge of creative theorizing and discussion concerning the role of stories and story making in personality. My fourth large section on "Interpersonal Stories," therefore, has been completely revamped to describe a number of very new approaches focusing on life narratives and to make clearer why theorists such as Henry Murray, Erik Erikson, Alfred Adler, and Silvan Tomkins belong together as classic contributors to the psychology of interpersonal stories. The key to understanding this is to realize, as I do more clearly now than I did before, the way in which each of these theorists focuses on the human life *situated in time*. Lives over time are made sensible through stories, narratives that provide beginnings, middles, and endings to explain "what leads to what," where it all came from "in the beginning," and how it all will "turn out" in "the end."

At the end of this writing odyssey, I am happy with the way this second edition has turned out. I am also extremely thankful to those who have contributed to the second edition. In particular, I would like to thank Richard Ryan, Randy Larson, Laura King, and Elaine Donelson for their thoughtful, painstaking, and sometimes brutal critiques of the first edition and my prospectus for this one. I trust that they were paid well for their efforts. Todd Heatherton and Carolin Showers provided invaluable advice in their reviews of the first edition, published in *Contemporary Psychology*. I would like to thank Eve Howard, my editor, for encouraging me to stay with this project, even when it mushroomed beyond what I thought I could handle. And I am still indebted to the editor of my first edition, Marcus Boggs, for his guidance, support, and friendship. My wife, Rebecca Pallmeyer, has given me unconditional support from beginning to end. Over the past couple of years, I have had many conversations with many people about personality psychology, and many of those have influenced my writing of the second edition. I cannot remember everybody to thank. Those who stand out in my mind for their helpful suggestions, however, include Irv Alexander, Michael Apter, Jack Block, Rae Carlson, Paul Costa, Keith Davis, Rodney Day, Ed de St. Aubin, Bob Emmons, David Funder, Harrison Gough, Gunhild Hagestad, Ravenna Helson, Hubert Hermans, Oliver John, Jane Loevinger, Jeff McCrae, Dan Ogilvie, Bill Revelle, Mac Runyan, Jeff Singer, M. Brewster Smith, Abby Stewart, Avril Thorne, Joel Weinberger, Dave Winter, Barbara Woike, and Peter Zeldow.

—Dan P. McAdams

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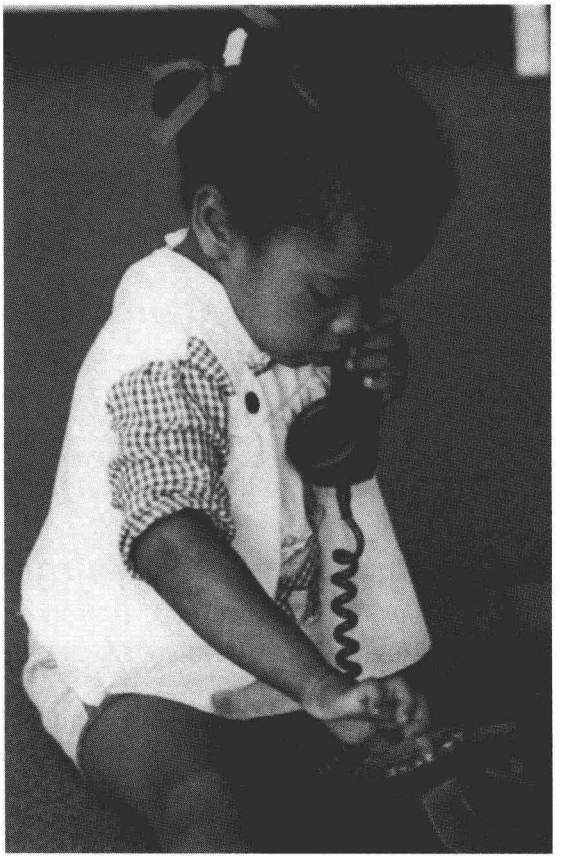

Chapter 1 Studying the Person

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