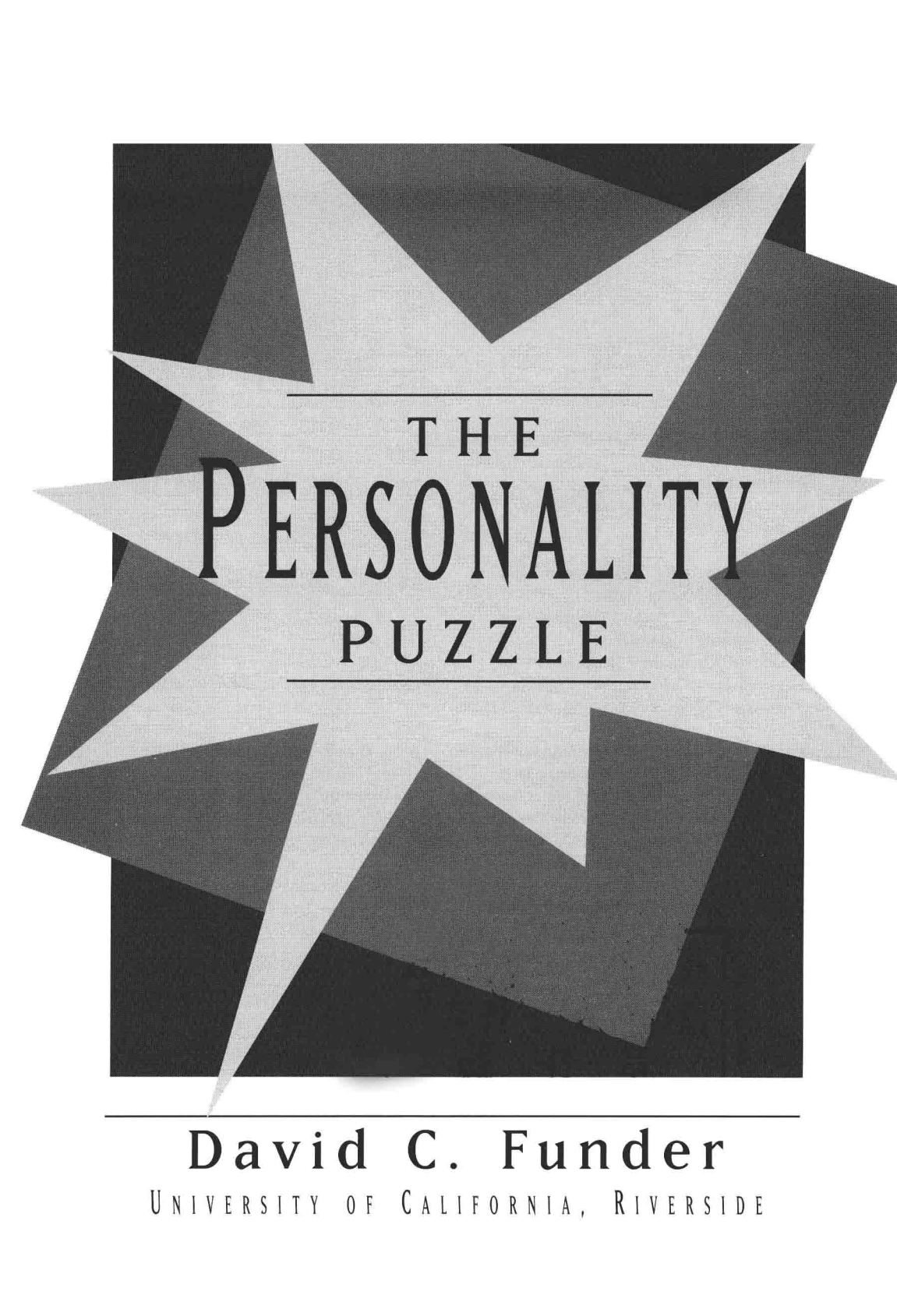




DAVID C.
FUNDER

THE
PERSONALITY
PUZZLE



THE
PERSONALITY
PUZZLE

David C. Funder

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

For my father

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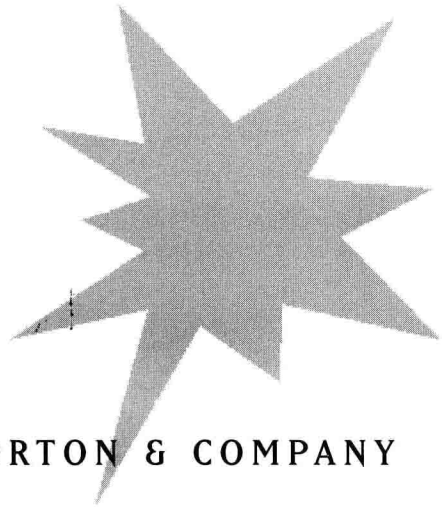
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THE
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Anybody in science, if there are enough anybodies, can find the answer—it's an Easter-egg hunt. That isn't the idea. The idea is: Can you ask the question in such a way as to facilitate the answer?

—Gerald Edelman

The first step is to measure whatever can easily be measured. That's OK as far as it goes. The second step is to pretend that whatever cannot easily be measured isn't very important. That's dangerous. The third step is to pretend that whatever cannot easily be measured doesn't exist. That's suicide.

—Daniel Yankelovich

There once was an entomologist who found a bug he couldn't classify—so he stepped on it.

—Ernest R. Hilgard

Interpretation is the revenge of the intellect upon art.

—Susan Sontag



PREFACE

The way a personality course should be taught—and the way its textbook should be written—depends on its purpose. Therefore, any instructor or author needs to ask at the outset, what do I hope to accomplish? Several different answers are possible, all of them legitimate. Each implies a different approach to teaching and to textbook writing.

GOALS FOR A PERSONALITY COURSE

First, one might wish to ensure that one's students become deeply familiar with the classic theories of personality and learn to appreciate the history of and the intellectual connections between these theories. The course in personality is often treated as part of a liberal education, and sometimes even fits into a “great books” curriculum. This goal is well served by any of the hefty theoretical tomes that have been on the market for many years. But students sometimes end such a course with very little idea of what modern personality psychology is really all about.

A second, very different goal is to make sure one's students know all about the current activities of modern personality psychologists and the very latest research findings. The classic theories of personality are neglected, sometimes on the grounds that they are all false and only modern empirical research has any validity. (I have actually heard psychology professors say this.) Several recent books seem to have been written with this goal in mind.

But of course, the modern empirical literature is not an infallible source of eternal truths. Moreover, a field of personality that focuses exclusively on what modern personality psychologists do is limited to whatever topics current research happens to emphasize. I do not know that any of the answers psychology has provided are eternal, but some of the questions are. And some of these questions are neglected in modern research.

This book serves both of the goals just listed. It covers the main theories of personality and traces some relevant intellectual history. It also includes a fair amount of current research, including recent work on person perception, biology, and cross-cultural psychology.

But the ultimate goal of this book is very different. The goal that has driven the selection of its topics and its writing, above all others, is to convince the reader that personality psychology is worthwhile and exciting. Theory *and* research in personality contain much that is of intellectual interest, as well as many useful insights into real-life concerns. Moreover, it is important for personality psychology to continue to make progress. To the extent that, on the final page, the reader of this text ends up believing these things, this book will have accomplished what it set out to do.

PERSONALITY AND LIFE

To convince somebody new to the field that personality psychology is important, each basic approach must be taught in a form that is relevant not just to its historical antecedents or to current research, but to everyday life. Establishing this relevance is one thing I have tried to do more distinctively than anything else in this book. The result is a presentation that strays from the conventional versions of the basic approaches to personality in favor of a new and modern rendition of each.

This strategy is most obvious in the Freud chapters, where I present a psychoanalytic approach to personality that certainly stems from Freud but departs from orthodoxy in numerous ways and, in the end, may not really be Freud any more. Someone who wants to learn what Freud really said should read a different book. But someone who wants to see how some derivations from Freud's basic ideas can be presented in what I think is a fairly convincing contemporary context might find this book illuminating. Parallel comments could be made about the presentations of the other approaches.

One goal of this writing strategy is to make the book a little more interesting to read than some others in the same genre. The humorist Dave Barry once wrote a history of the United States that he touted as more interesting than any other because, he said, he left out all the boring parts. While I have not gone that far, I have freed myself of the obligation to cover topics just because they are there, or are traditional, or are covered in every other book. Instead of emphasizing precise historical documentation or exactly tracing the empirical origins of some ideas, I have focused on the meaning and relevance of those ideas.

TOPICS VS. THEORIES

In broadest outline, this book follows the traditional organization according to "theories" or "paradigms" (I call them "approaches"). It begins with a treat-

ment of research methods, then considers the five basic approaches to personality: trait, biological, psychoanalytic, phenomenological, and behaviorist (in which I include social learning theory and cognitive approaches as important variants).

I am well aware that some of my colleagues believe this organization is outdated and should be replaced by a scheme that instead focuses on “topics” like aggression, or development, or the self. The differing ideas of the differing basic approaches presumably would be scattered across these topical chapters. The suggested model seems to be that of social psychology, which in its courses and textbooks almost always follows such a topical organization.

There are several reasons why a topical organization is a mistake for a personality text, however. A pragmatic reason is that the basic approaches are complex theoretical systems, and breaking all of them up across topics seems unlikely to yield a clear understanding of any of them. A more substantive reason is that, in my opinion, the topical approach of social psychology represents an intellectual deficit of that field, as compared with personality psychology, rather than any sort of advantage. Social psychology lacks even one organizing, theoretical approach with any scope, as far as I am aware; it organizes itself by topic because it must. Personality psychology, by contrast, has at least five approaches, each of which offers an organized way to cover a wide range of data and theory about human psychology.

A further reason became clearer as I worked on this book. In personality, a “topics” organization and a “basic approaches” organization are not, at a deep level, truly different. A consistent theme throughout this book is that the five basic approaches to personality are not different answers to the same question—they are different questions! To put this point another way, each of the basic approaches to personality has a few topics it addresses most centrally, and many others it ignores. The basic topics ignored by each tend to be central concerns of one or more of the others. As a result, a basic approaches organization *is* a topics organization, to a considerable degree, because each basic approach can be associated with a different basic topic:

individual differences	=	trait approach
biological influences	=	biological approach
psychodynamics and the unconscious	=	psychoanalytic approach
experience and awareness	=	phenomenological approach
		(I include cross-cultural psychology here)
learning and behavior change	=	behavioral approach

I hope this organizational scheme makes this volume easy to use as a textbook in a personality course. It matches in broad outline the way in which most

courses are now taught. Beyond that, it should not be hard for an instructor using this text to find places where she or he wishes to amplify, supplement, or disagree. For example, an instructor wishing to go beyond this text in her or his own lectures could talk in detail about any of the personality tests that are only mentioned here; or consider some of the neo-Freudians who in this book make a relatively brief appearance; or provide further detail on the cognitive approaches to personality that are so prominent in the modern literature.

The reader will also find that I present opinions in this book. An instructor who disagrees with some of these opinions—and surely nobody will agree with me on everything—will be able to put together compelling lectures about those disagreements. The result of this intellectual give-and-take between instructor and author could be, for the student, an exciting introduction to a fascinating subject.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with pleasure that I acknowledge some of the help I received with this project. First of all, my wife, Patti, has been a source of emotional support, clever ideas, and critical comments throughout the writing of this book. Her insights and her continued belief that psychology is not really a science (she was trained as a biologist) has helped to keep me on my toes.

Tiffany Wright, a graduate student at the University of California, Riverside, Chris Langston, a colleague, and Cathy Wick, my editor at Norton, read the entire second draft of this book and made many comments and suggestions, nearly all of which I followed. Paul Rozin read both the first and the second drafts, and his insights and ideas affected many parts of the presentation. His encouragement and consistent support have been even more important. Henry Gleitman provided helpful ideas and encouragement. Traci Nagle carefully, thoughtfully, and gracefully copyedited the final draft. Don Fusting, a former Norton editor, used the softest sell in the history of publishing to convince me to undertake this project in the first place. If not for him, this book would not exist.

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Finally, I want to acknowledge the first person to read the first draft of this book all the way through. He made comments on nearly every page. Usually, they were notations like “what does this mean?” or “what are you talking about?” These invariably identified places where I had lapsed into incomprehensible

jargon or otherwise failed to make sense. Sometimes his comments were just strong expressions of agreement or disagreement. Over the several years this project took to be completed, I never once had a conversation with him that did not include the question “how is the book coming along?” and some sort of suggestion that I really ought to be working faster. He looked forward to seeing this book in print, and didn’t miss it by much. My father, Elvin Funder, died in August 1995, just as I was putting the finishing touches on the last chapters. I dedicate this book to him.

David C. Funder

Riverside, California
October 1995



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