

Personality Theories

A Comparative Analysis

Fifth Edition

Salvatore R. Maddi

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THE DORSEY PRESS
Chicago, Illinois 60604

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Sponsoring editor: *Paul E. O'Connell*

Project editor: *Jane Lightell*

Production manager: *Stephen K. Emry*

Cover design: *Maureen McCutcheon*

Compositor: *Weimer Typesetting Co., Inc.*

Typeface: *10/12 Times Roman*

Printer: *Arcata Graphics/Kingsport*

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Maddi, Salvatore R.

Personality theories : a comparative analysis / Salvatore, R.

Maddi. — 5th ed.

p. cm.

Bibliography

Includes index.

ISBN 0-256-03245-9

1. Personality. I. Title.

BF698.M237 1989

155.2—dc19 88-1607

Printed in the United States of America

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 0 K 6 5 4 3 2 1 0 9

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Preface

I am so pleased that this book has been useful enough to enter its fifth edition. Over the years, many students and teachers have gone out of their way to tell me of its value for them. This has affirmed for me the utility of a comparative analysis of personality approaches. You will find the main features of this analysis still there: Once explicated, theories are compared and contrasted in order to illuminate the overall models of human behavior they express, and then rational and empirical efforts are made to resolve the issues separating these models. The overall aim of this analysis is to help people think through the most promising views of personality.

Despite the persistence of a comparative analytic approach, this edition includes many changes. The chapters on personality research methods and on assessment and psychotherapy are wholly new. They add the concreteness of procedure and application to what was a more abstract emphasis on theory before. The other changes involve extensive updating of theoretical and research sections. Overall, the fifth edition is a more complete and current comparison of personality approaches than were the earlier versions.

These days the trend in teaching personality is away from theories and toward research findings. In various ways we are told that the comprehensive personality theories are too vague and interpretive—the leftovers of a previous, prescientific age in psychology. We are also told that the findings of personality research, however fragmentary and simplified they may be, are the only sound basis for teaching. The end result of this trend is courses that emphasize seemingly unrelated topics overly defined by the research designs and assessment methods employed, with the whole person quite lost from view. This amounts to throwing the baby out with the bath water.

From its very beginning, this book was intended as an alternative to uncritical theoretical emphases, on the one hand, and fragmentary research emphases on the other. I still maintain that it is not only possible but also profitable to wed theory and research, and that a ready mechanism for this is comparative analysis. In this approach, research becomes theory-relevant and

theory becomes rigorous and empirically sound. The person emerges clearly and the requirements of science are served.

My book takes existing comprehensive theories of personality as a starting point, not out of any undue reverence for the past, but because these seminal views would only be reinvented soon if they were to be discarded. In any event, my emphasis is less on them as individual bodies of thought to be preserved as such than it is on the underlying models of personality that they reveal. Although the three models that emerge may not be exhaustive, they are generic enough to have withstood the test of time. The issues separating these models provide an integrative structure for our notoriously fragmented personality field. And when efforts are mounted to resolve these issues by reason and research, a future of changing, ever-improving personality knowledge is approached.

In some circles, previous editions of this book gained the reputation of being difficult for undergraduates to understand. This was certainly not my intent. The organization of the book into clearly marked sections and subsections facilitates varied organizations and uses—some things can be emphasized and others omitted. Care is taken to indicate why material is included and placed where it is. Readers are encouraged to bring their own experience to bear in appreciating theoretical points. The overall thrust of approaches that lends organization to the parts is elaborated. Most important, readers are treated to a frame of reference concerning the parts of a personality theory, the models for human behavior that pertain, and the relevance of personality research. Over the years I have talked with many undergraduate students who have used my book. Their message is that although the vocabulary and information to which they are exposed is demanding, they find themselves learning so much that it becomes exciting. Rather than engage in the dry task of memorizing facts, they master principles from which they can derive the necessary knowledge. Through the conversational style of the book, they feel in dialogue with me even if someone else is teaching the course. Many report that what they learned stayed with them and informed their functioning even much later. That so many readers took the trouble to contact me is very gratifying.

So I encourage you not to turn away from this book because it may appear formidable. Give it a chance, as others have to their benefit. You should also know that the fifth edition has been simplified for style and vocabulary. I guess that on growing older, I cherish ease and directness of communication more than before.

The fifth edition could not have been prepared without the diligent work of my secretary, Beverly McKinney, that master of the word processor. I also thank my editor, Paul O'Connell, who kept me working, and my colleagues Carol Whalen and Wendy Goldberg for valuable editorial and factual help. I also owe a great debt to my students over the years for their enthusiasm and criticism, which has improved this book with each edition.

Salvatore R. Maddi

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CHAPTER 1

Personality and Personology

The many available books on personality fall into two main categories: benevolent eclecticism and partisan zealotry. A book written from the standpoint of *benevolent eclecticism* tends to include many theories of personality, each given relatively equal space. When the book is good, you are made to understand why the theorist felt compelled to make the stated assumptions. Theory follows theory neatly in the discussion, with little concern for the possible incompatibilities organized between the two covers. An air of humility permeates the whole endeavor. The writer does not claim to be worthy of resolving the differences of opinion and assumption existing among the theorists. He or she justifies the presentation by saying that it is valuable just to present the various theories in demonstrating the richness of the field and that the existing differences of opinion are currently beyond our meager power to resolve by reason or experiment. Sometimes we are even given the pious assurance that someday, in a glorious future of comprehensive knowledge, it will be clear which theory is best. At other times the writer doubts that any particular theory will emerge victorious, as if theorizing were no more than a perpetual game, engaged in primarily as a stimulant.

In the benevolently eclectic approach, it is assumed that all theorists are entitled to be heard and appreciated simply because they theorize. Sometimes in such books there is even a place—usually a final, short chapter—in which a bit of attention is given to cataloging the similarities and differences among the various theories. But the aim here is to ensure that the reader will grasp the essential meaning of each theory, not to provide springboards to further analysis. When empirical research is included in such books, it only illustrates individual theories; it does not bear on the crucial differences among them. Good examples of benevolent eclecticism are *Introduction to Theories of Personality* by Hall and Lindzey (1985) and *Personality: Theory, Assessment and Research* by Pervin (1970). Most books in which an editor brings together the writings of many authors also fall into this category.

The book written with *partisan zealotry* contrasts sharply with what I have just described. By intent, such books express one—and only one—approach to personality. The topics considered, research presented, and conclusions reached are all predictable from the assumptions of the approach. The writer sometimes adopts a polemical style aimed at persuading the reader that the writer's viewpoint is best. Other viewpoints are either badly slighted or

included only to be criticized. When such books are done well, they provide the reader with a vivid account of a theory. When done poorly, they are ludicrously one-sided, misinterpreting other theories or willfully insulating the reader against any possibility of recognizing another point of view. Some representative examples are *Personality: Dynamics and Development* by Sarnoff (1962), *Pattern and Growth in Personality* by Allport (1961), and *Personality: A Behavioral Analysis* by Lundin (1974).

It has become more common in recent years for personality textbooks to appear nontheoretical. They emphasize research and present conclusions in terms of facts rather than assumptions. In such books, comprehensive theories are abhorred on the grounds that they are subscientific or merely speculative. Actually, it is not possible to do research without having some theory in mind. Given this widely accepted conclusion among scientists, it seems better to make one's theory explicit than to pretend that no theorizing has occurred.

Once one perceives the implicit theorizing in seemingly nontheoretical personality textbooks, they will generally fall into either the benevolent eclecticism or partisan zealotry camps. Those that show benevolent eclecticism may try to fit various research themes together with little concern for possible incompatibilities. Because these research themes are listed as "examples" of work being done, they need not be compared and contrasted. And partisan textbooks that avoid theoretical elaboration are no less zealous because their underlying assumptions are implicit.

It is surprising that so many of the available books on personality fall into one of these two categories, because there is another clear possibility having obvious value. This third type of book transcends the limitations of benevolent eclecticism and partisan zealotry while showing some similarity to each. From benevolent eclecticism, it borrows the breadth and balance necessary for considering many theories of personality; from partisan zealotry, it borrows the conviction that some theories are better than others. The overall aim of this third kind of book, which I call *comparative analysis*, is to uncover the similarities and differences among many existing approaches to personality as a starting point for determining which type of approach is the most fruitful. Such comparison helps clarify the issues separating the various types of theorizing. Once these issues are posed, rational and empirical analyses can be conducted to determine which types of theorizing are best. In such a book, the purpose of including research is to help delineate the important issues separating the various approaches. Comparative analysis should be comprehensive, orderly, and evaluative in searching for improved understanding. This book is an example of this approach.

Several books that have appeared since this one was first offered in 1968 seem to have adopted a comparative analytic stance. An example is Liebert and Spiegler (1982). Such books usually consider several general approaches or categories of theorizing and also include research results. These certainly are characteristics of comparative analysis. But what is missing is a method of

systematic comparison and contrast of approaches to bring out issues that are then resolved through research. Instead, such books have the more limited aim of giving examples of personality approaches and research. On close scrutiny, this approach tends more toward benevolent eclecticism than toward rigorous comparative analysis.

Benevolent eclecticism and partisan zealotry are useful orientations in the initial stage of the development of a field. People having partisan zeal ensure that the hard work of formulating, refining, selling, and defending particular viewpoints gets done. It is probably only through the loyalty and commitment of its supporters that a particular approach eventually gets a proper hearing. Benevolent eclectics, on the other hand, help keep people's minds open, leaving them free to accept or reject the zealots' arguments. In addition, benevolent eclecticism allows the difficult, heavily intuitive work of theory formulation to go forward without being prematurely hampered by hard-headed, cynical evaluation.

But once a number of coherent theories are available, neither benevolent eclecticism nor partisan zealotry will spur much further development of the field. The zealots will merely continue trusting in, advocating, and seeking rational and empirical demonstrations of their particular theories. The benevolent eclectics will stand aside, casting a blessing on all the bustling, partisan activity taking place. No one will try to determine the relative value of the various existing approaches. Succeeding generations of workers will duplicate their predecessors, with slight increases in sophistication. But there will be no sweeping changes, no dramatic advances unless an attitude of comparative analysis develops.

If there is enough interest in systematic inquiry into the relative merits of different forms of theorizing, people in the field can conjoin their efforts rather than dissipate their energy in competitive, partisan disputes. This conjoining of efforts produces an intermediate stage in the development of the field, leading toward the end of determining the really worthwhile theories. When, armed with really trustworthy and effective theories, the field enters a fully mature stage of development, its knowledge is applied in a way that significantly changes and improves the process of living.

It seems to me that the personality field is in an unnecessarily prolonged infancy. We have had a set of reasonably coherent theories for some time now. Occasionally a new one comes along, but it usually seems more of a rephrasing or elaboration of an earlier theory than a departure from it. More and more personality research gets done each year; yet we have made little progress toward weeding out some theories as empirically unworkable. This lack of progress is partly due to research that is partisan rather than directed squarely at the issues separating the various types of theorizing. Although researchers typically insist that the existing personality theories are irrelevant to their work, it is, of course, impossible to do personality research without being guided by a personality theory. The fragmentation of theory and research

produced by supposedly atheoretical research is at present a serious impediment to progress in the personality field. I fear that the retarded development of an attitude of comparative analysis is beginning to produce stagnation in this area. It is in the interest of helping to eradicate this problem that I write this book.

WHAT PERSONOLOGISTS DO

In our private lives, none of us seriously doubts that personality exists. Indeed, we routinely take our own and others' personalities into account in day-to-day decisions and activities. But once we try to specify the nature of personality in some precise way, it seems to evaporate before our eyes, leaving us frustrated and uncertain. This has even happened to some psychologists, leading them to seriously contend that personality does not exist. Such a contention seems to me as unfounded as personality is elusive. We must expect the elucidation of personality to be difficult, for it is, after all, the most ubiquitous and human thing about us. We cannot gain much understanding of it by studying subhuman organisms, and our ability to accurately observe other humans is limited by the need to filter all observations through our own personalities. But personality is here to stay, so I suggest that we simply accept the difficulty of our task and plunge right in.

To understand what personality is, we could start by reviewing the available definitions; indeed, Allport (1937) did just this. But I think we would gain little by proceeding in this fashion, for there are myriad definitions, each quite detailed and complex. We would be lost in a maze of words that could have but little impact. I suggest instead that we look in a general way at what people in the personality field do. The implications of their activities will give us an overall, vivid idea of the nature of personality.

The statements I am about to make may not apply equally to the activities of every person in the personality field. Unless you grant me the leeway of searching for commonalities among most, but not necessarily all, of the workers in the field, we will get nowhere. After all, there are no statistics or explicit data we can use—indeed, it is difficult even to be sure just who is in the field and who is not. So we must approach our task in a rather general way.

Let us start by adopting a name for the kind of person we will be describing. Following Murray (1938), let us call him or her a *personologist*: someone who is expert in the study and understanding of the consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions people demonstrate. Many psychologists and psychiatrists indisputably can be called personologists. Their work involves any or all of four activities: psychotherapy, assessment, research, and theorizing. *Psychotherapy* involves sensitively listening to and interacting with people toward the goal of ameliorating their problems. In *assessment*, the personologist uses techniques such as personality or skills tests in order to pinpoint a person's problems or capabilities, either for the person's own information or for someone else, such as a prospective employer. In psychotherapy and as-

assessment, the personologist is interested mainly in clients' specific needs. In *research*, he or she typically is more concerned with general knowledge. The research may require people to perform certain tasks in order to determine similarities and differences in their behavior, both within themselves and with respect to one another. Personality *theorizing* tends to come out of the personologist's experiences in these activities; it brings these experiences to bear on the perceived nature of people in general. With this brief introduction, let us focus more concretely on how the personologist habitually functions.

First, we can observe that *the personologist tends to study groups of people or, if only a few individuals are studied, the concern is with how representative they are of people in general*. Occasionally the personologist studies only one person for his or her own sake, as does the biographer. Sometimes the reason is that the person is extraordinary (say, Abraham Lincoln). Other times it is the task of psychotherapy or assessment that leads the personologist to focus on one person. Nonetheless, he or she engages in such study of an individual in order to subsequently compare and contrast that person with others. This is because an important interest of the personologist is the *commonalities among persons*. Indeed, in research a technical requirement is that the observed group be representative of people in general. The personologist approaches the task of understanding people with the systematic, orderly thoroughness of the scientist rather than the impressionistic anecdotalism of the fiction writer. The personologist, however, need not shun the imaginativeness of his or her humanist neighbor merely because of an insistence on systematic sampling.

Despite this deeply ingrained interest in commonalities, the personologist also expends great effort in the *attempt to identify and classify differences among people*. There is no basic incompatibility between the search for commonalities and the search for differences, though individual personologists frequently show preference for one or the other. Whereas the search for commonalities proceeds at an abstract, interpretive level, the quest for differences involves a concrete, face-value analysis of observable behavior. Personologists engaged in assessment are especially sensitive to individual differences. Such differences are tapped by the personality tests so often taken on entrance to college or for job evaluation purposes. The personologist's overall aim is a classification of styles of being, with the similarities and differences among the categories within the classification clearly specified. The personologist's interest is much like the chemist's concern with the periodic table of elements.

The personologist is not alone in identifying and classifying the similarities and differences that exist among people. Social and biological scientists study them as well, but they tend to be interested in those similarities and differences produced by pressures in the external environment or biological factors of the internal environment. Thus, a sociologist is concerned with such things as the similarities in voting behavior within a certain socioeconomic class or the differences in such behavior traceable to differences in socioeconomic class. Further, the sociologist may study the behavioral similarities of all people playing the social role of father and the differences between their behavior and