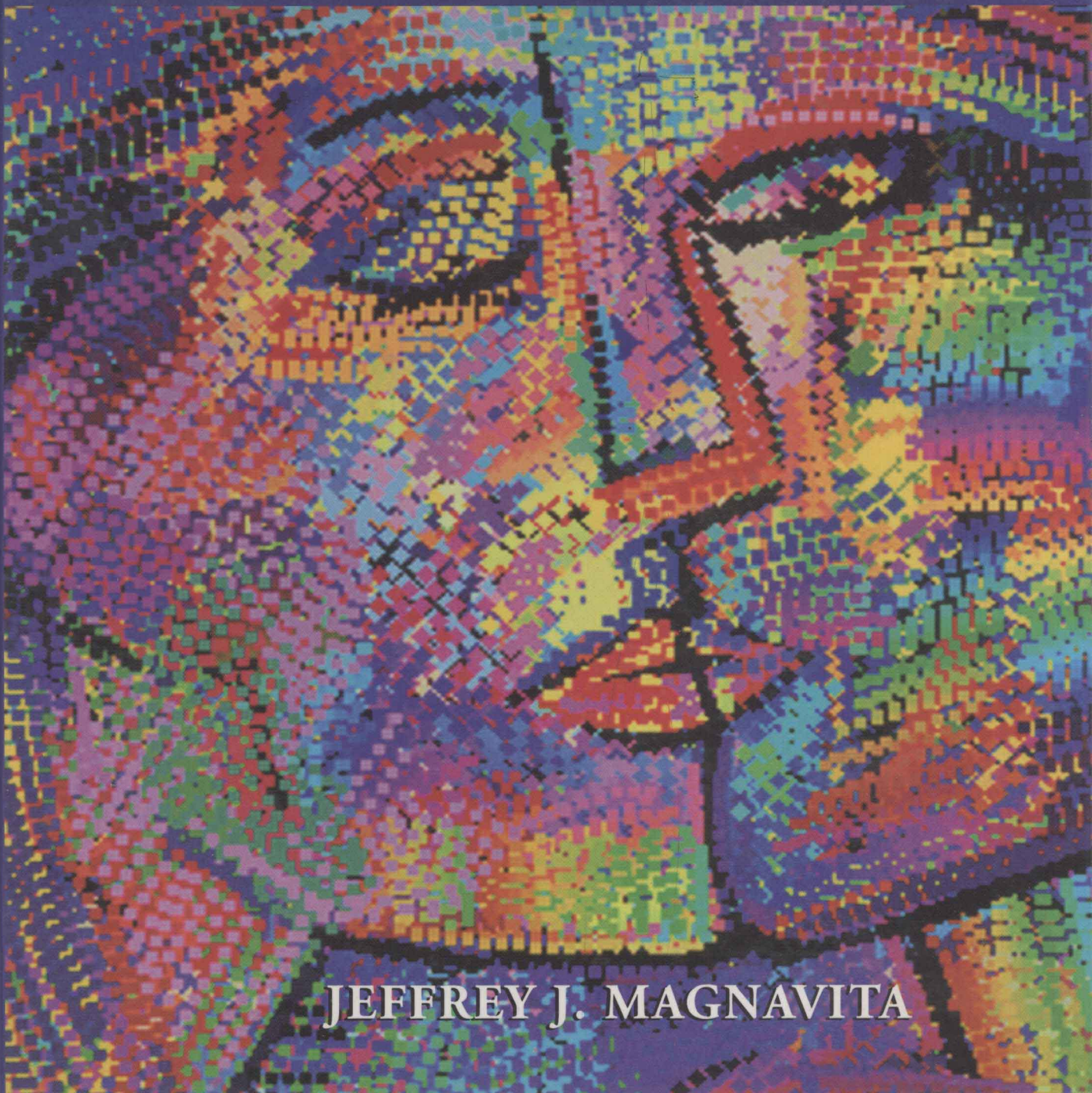


t h e o r i e s o f
PERSONALITY

Contemporary Approaches to the Science of Personality



JEFFREY J. MAGNAVITA

Theories of
Personality

Contemporary Approaches
to the Science of Personality

Jeffrey J. Magnavita

University of Hartford



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Sketches of psychologists were done by Theodore Millon.

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To Annie and our daughters—
Elizabeth, Emily, and Caroline

Personality is a field of study that has captured our attention for centuries, but the modern era of “scientific” approaches did not arrive on the landscape until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The twentieth century heralded a remarkable interest in the topic until about the midpoint of the century. There is much written about this body of work, much of which is now considered classic, and numerous textbooks have described these developments, many going through successive editions to try to keep up with these rapid developments. The interest in personality theory and personality as a construct lost much momentum in the 1960s during the “Dark Age” of the field. After almost 20 years of quiescence, the field was revitalized in the 1980s and has continued to grow and expand at a rapid rate. This period, from the 1980s to the beginning of the twenty-first century, is considered to be the phase of contemporary personality theory. The impetus for writing this text has been the rapid growth of the field in my professional life. Over a century of developments, many of which have taken place in the last quarter of the twentieth century in the fields of psychology, psychiatry, genetics, evolutionary psychology, psychopathology, computer technology, statistical methods, and neuroscience, has fueled the emergence of the field of contemporary personality. Many other newer and related disciplines, such as affective science, relational science, and developmental science, and other scientific models, such as general systems theory, chaos theory, and evolutionary theory, have offered new insights in the quest to understand ourselves and answer the age-old questions philosophers have wrestled with: Who are we? and What is consciousness?

The student and professor of personality may wonder what makes this book different from the array of fine textbooks on this topic. I would respond that this text was conceived to fill a void in the field. Rapid developments in the past 20 years in a number of related disciplines as well as in personality theory have changed the theoretical landscape substantially. Personality is a field in a phase of exponential growth, with new developments reported almost daily. It is a topic that holds interest for most of us and has applications to many disciplines of study beyond psychology. It is truly a multidisciplinary topic!

I have enjoyed tremendously the experience of finding and reading many of the classic works on personality, which have always been on my reading list. Whenever possible, I have provided material from the original works so that the reader will have an appreciation for the excitement of many of the conceptual developments and paradigmatic shifts that are reported by various pioneers. I hope that this inspires readers to seek out original works. Although I endeavored to at least mention many of the major developments during the past century, to limit this text to one volume, many important psychological discoveries have been omitted. The most challenging aspect of this project was to identify the components of personality theory that are most relevant to contemporary theory. Older texts have chapters devoted to individuals who are not even cited in this one or are given only minimal coverage. This is not to place a value judgment on the work of so many important contributors. I believe that the major theoretical models presented in this volume give the reader a sound foundation from which to grow and, I hope, find passion in a subject that never seems to lose interest for many and can provide a life-long learning experience. There are many other fine texts available for those interested in the history of the field and for those who seek greater detail of the lives and work of major historical figures.

This text emphasizes the major theories of contemporary personality theory and provides the reader with the necessary background perspective from which to appreciate and understand the evolution of these developments. The main goals of this text are to:

- Present a historical and theoretical background so that the themes and challenges inherent in the study of contemporary personality theory will be evident.
- Present a brief introduction to Freud's psychoanalytic model, along with variants offered by his early disciples, both for its historical value as well as for its continuing influence on many contemporary theories of personality.
- Present an overview of the component systems and newer scientific disciplines that have emerged in the last half of the twentieth century that are required to understand contemporary personality theories. These new developments in cognitive, affective, developmental, and relational theories and neurosciences have a

direct influence on theoretical models and will continue to offer fresh perspectives as well as empirical evidence.

- Present the major contemporary theoretical models of personality currently seen in the literature. Many theoretical models and trends have gained prominence and then fallen out of favor. In part, this evolution represents the scientific process in operation.
- Present theoretical models from all levels of the biopsychosocial matrix, each of which offers an insight into personality through its own unique lens.
- Offer a standard format for each of the main theoretical chapters that allows for an examination of the pertinent issues that need to be considered, as well as examples of how the model is applied in real-world situations.

Organization of Material

This text is organized into five sections. Section One provides an introduction to the topic of personality and begins to pose some of the questions a reader is probably beginning to ponder. In this section, basic constructs are introduced that will be seen throughout the text so that the reader begins to develop a conceptual vocabulary. A brief history of the field of personality is presented, beginning with early Greek theoretical formulations, followed by later nineteenth-century attempts at establishing scientific psychology.

Section Two provides the reader with a basic overview of modern scientific personality theory, starting with Freud, and progresses through the work of Freud's disciples and the controversy they sparked.

Section Three summarizes and defines various disciplines that comprise the components needed to understand essential aspects of human nature, personality, and the relationship between the mind and brain.

Section Four, the major body of the text, presents the major contemporary theoretical models using a standard format for each of the seven chapters. Each chapter begins with a review of the main historical figures, followed by a presentation of the current theory. At the end of each chapter, a sample of relevant research is presented

in a separate section with a citation for each so that interested readers may select the ones that they are interested in pursuing further. The philosophical underpinnings and assumptions, notions of normal versus abnormal, assessment strategies and tools, applications of the model, how cultural differences are understood, as well as strengths and limitations are offered. Each chapter is summarized and the major concepts highlighted.

Section Five contains one chapter devoted to a number of important topics and issues that are relevant to the field.

For instructors, an *Instructor's Manual* is available from the publisher that provides a template for using this text for a college course.

JEFFREY J. MAGNAVITA

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I would like to express my deep appreciation and thanks to my wife, Anne Gardner Magnavita, for her unflagging support during the time it took me to research and write this volume. Her organizational ability kept our life and family running when I was preoccupied with aspects of this project along with teaching and clinical responsibilities. My daughters, Elizabeth, Emily, and Caroline, have graced me with the opportunity to witness the unfolding of their unique personalities. I want to thank them for delivering cups of coffee and snacks, along with smiles and hugs while I was working.

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I would also like to thank Jennifer Simon, associate publisher, who extended the original offer to develop a proposal, believing a theory of personality text was a worthwhile project. She has done an amazing job shepherding this project along from shortly after its inception to the finished product. She strongly believed that there existed a need for a personality theory text that was “out of the box” and gave me the freedom to allow my unorthodox approach to take shape, carefully crafting it to fit the needs of the reader. A special thanks also goes to Isabel Pratt for her thoughtful input, calm consistent presence, and organizational ability. I would also like to thank the staff at Publications Development Company of Texas for their diligent copy editing and production work on this text. Their work has made it much more coherent.

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J. J. M.

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