Personality Theories

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To read about my own personality theory, see Perspectives Theory and Seven Perspectives.

Dr. H. Berryman Edwards offers the BehaveNet Clinical Capsules: Notable figures in behavioral health care, which include good readings lists as well as therapists not covered here.

Brent Dean Robbins has created a wonderful collection of essays on significant psychoanalytic and existential-phenomenological theorists, therapists, and writers.

Finally, for access to tons of personality research and theory, visit Dr. William Revelle's Personality Project and Dr. Scott Acton's Great Ideas in Personality.

I hope you enjoy the readings.

If you have any comments or questions,

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to "Theories of Personality!"

This course and "e-text" will examine a number of theories of personality, from Sigmund Freud's famous psychoanalysis to Viktor Frankl's logotherapy. It will include biographies, basic terms and concepts, assessment methods and therapies, discussions and anecdotes, and references for further reading.

Some of you may find the area a bit confusing. First, many people ask "who's right." Unfortunately, this aspect of psychology is the least amenable to direct research that pits one theory against another. Much of it involves things that are only accessible to the person him- or herself – your inner thoughts and feelings. Some of it is thought not to be available even to the person – your instincts and unconscious motivations. In other words, personality is still very much in a "pre-scientific" or philosophical stage, and some aspects may well always remain that way.

Another thing that throws some people about personality theories is that they come into it thinking it's the easiest topic of all, and that everyone – especially they themselves – already knows all the answers. Well, it's true that personality theories doesn't involve all the higher math and symbolic systems that physics and chemistry (the famously "tough" courses!) involve. And it's true that we all have pretty direct access to our own thoughts and feelings, and plenty of experience dealing with people. But we are mistaking familiarity with knowledge, and in much of what we think we know turns out to be prejudices and biases we've picked up over the years. In fact, the topic of theories of personality is probably one of the most difficult and most complex we ever deal with.

So, at present, we are stuck with theories (plural) rather than the science of personality. As we go through the various theories, however, there will be ones that fit well with your experiences of self and other – that tends to be a good sign. And there will be times that several theorists say similar things, even though they are taking very different approaches – that, too, is a good sign. And once in a blue moon there is a research program that supports certain ideas over others – that's a very good sign.

What makes personality theories so interesting, I think, is that we can actually participate in the process. You don't need labs and federal funding, just a bit of intelligence, some motivation, and an open mind.

Theory

It might be nice to start off with a definition of theories of personality. First, theory: A theory is a model of reality that helps us to understand, explain, predict, and control that reality. In the study of personality, these models are usually verbal. Every now and then, someone comes up with a graphic model, with symbolic illustrations, or a mathematical model, or even a computer model. But words are the basic form.

Different approaches focus on different aspects of theory. Humanists and Existentialists tend to focus on the understanding part. They believe that much of what we are is way too complex and embedded in history and culture to "predict and control." Besides, they suggest, predicting and controlling people is, to a considerable extent, unethical. Behaviorists and Freudians, on the other hand, prefer to discuss prediction and control. If an idea is useful, if it works, go with it! Understanding, to them, is secondary.

Another definition says that a theory is a guide to action: We figure that the future will be something like the past. We figure that certain sequences and patterns of events that have occurred frequently before are likely to occur again. So we look to the first events of a sequence, or the most vivid parts of a pattern, to serve as our landmarks and warning signals. A theory is a little like a map: It isn't the same as the countryside it describes; it certainly doesn't give you every detail; it may not even be terribly accurate. But it does provide a

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guide to action – and gives us something to correct when it fails.

Personality

Usually when we talk about someone's personality, we are talking about what makes that person different from other people, perhaps even unique. This aspect of personality is called **individual differences**. For some theories, it is the central issue. These theories often spend considerable attention on things like types and traits and tests with which we can categorize or compare people: Some people are neurotic, others are not; some people are more introverted, others more extroverted; and so on.

However, personality theorists are just as interested in the **commonalities** among people. What, for example, does the neurotic person and the healthy person have in common? Or what is the common structure in people that expresses itself as introversion in some and extroversion in others?

If you place people on some dimension – such as healthy-neurotic or introversion-extroversion – you are saying that the dimension is something everyone can be placed on. Whether they are neurotic or not, all people have a capacity for health and ill-health; and whether introverted or extroverted, all are "verted" one way or the other.

Another way of saying this is that personality theorists are interested in the structure of the individual, the psychological structure in particular. How are people "put together;" how do they "work;" how do they "fall apart."

Some theorists go a step further and say they are looking for the essence of being a person. Or they say they are looking for what it means to be an individual human being. The field of personality psychology stretches from a fairly simple empirical search for differences between people to a rather philosophical search for the meaning of life!

Perhaps it is just pride, but personality psychologists like to think of their field as a sort of umbrella for all the rest of psychology. We are, after all, concerned about genetics and physiology, about learning and development, about social interaction and culture, about pathology and therapy. All these things come together in the individual.

Pitfalls

There are quite a few things that can go wrong with a theory, and you should keep your eyes open for them. This applies, of course, even to the theories created by the great minds we'll be looking at. Even Sigmund Freud put his pants on one leg at a time! On the other hand, it is even more important when we develop our own theories about people and their personalities. Here are a few things to look out for:

Ethnocentrism

Everyone grows up in a culture that existed before their birth. It influences us so subtly and so thoroughly that we grow up thinking "this is the way things are," rather than "this is the ways things are in this particular society." Erich Fromm, one of the people we will look at, calls this the social unconscious, and it is very powerful.

So, for example, Sigmund Freud grew up in Vienna, not New York or Tokyo. He was born in 1856, not 1756, not 1956. There were things that had to have influenced him, and so his theorizing, that would be

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different for us.

The peculiarities of a culture can sometimes be most easily seen by asking "what does everybody talk about?" and "what does nobody talk about?" In Europe, during the last half of the 1800's, especially in the middle and upper classes, people just didn't talk about sex much. It was, more or less "taboo."

Women weren't supposed to show their ankles, much less their thighs, and even the legs on a piano were referred to as "limbs," so as not to unnecessarily arouse anyone! It was not uncommon for a doctor to make a housecall to a newlywed couple to help revive the bride, who had never been told the nature of the activity they were to engage in on their wedding night, and had fainted dead-away at the prospect! Slightly different from today, wouldn't you say?

Freud has to be commended, by the way, on his ability to rise above his culture in this instance. He saw how strange it was to pretend that people (especially women) were not sexual creatures. Much of our present openness about sex (for better or for worse) derives from Freud's original insights.

Today, most people aren't mortified by their sexual natures. In fact, we have a tendency to talk about our sexuality all the time, to anyone who will listen! Sex is plastered on our billboards, broadcast on our televisions, a part of the lyrics of our favorite songs, in our movies, our magazines, our books, and, of course, here on the internet! This is something peculiar about our culture, and we are so used to it, we hardly notice anymore.

On the other hand, Freud was mislead by his culture into thinking that neurosis always has a sexual root. In our society, we have more problems with feeling useless and fearing aging and death. Freud's society took death for granted, considered aging a sign of maturity, and had a place for nearly everybody.

Egocentrism

Another potential pitfall in theorizing is the peculiarities of the theorist as an individual. Each of us, beyond our culture, has specific details to his or her life – genetics, family structure and dynamics, special experiences, education, and so on – that affect the way we think and feel and, ultimately, the way we interpret personality.

Freud, for example, was the first of seven children (though he had two half brothers who had kids of their own before Sigmund was born). His mother was a strong personality and 20 years younger than his father, and she was particularly attached to her "Siggie." Freud was a genius (we can't all make that claim!). He was Jewish, although neither he nor his father ever practiced their religion. And so on....

It is quite likely that the patriarchal family structure he experienced as well as the close ties he had with his mother directed his attention to those kinds of issues when it came time for him to formulate his theory. His pessimistic nature and atheistic beliefs led him to view human life as rather survivalistic and requiring strong social control. You, too, have your peculiarities, and they will color your interests and understanding, often without your awareness.

Dogmatism

A third pitfall is dogmatism. We as human beings seem to have a natural conservative tendency: We stick to what has worked in the past. And if we devote our lives to developing a personality theory, if we have poured our heart into it, you can bet we will be very defensive (to use Freud's term) about it.

Dogmatic people don't allow for questions, doubts, new information, and so on. You can tell when you are dealing with dognatic people by looking at how they deal with their critics: They will tend to make use of what is called the circular argument.

A circular argument is one where you "prove" your point by assuming things that would only be true if your point were true in the first place. There are tons of examples of circular arguments because everyone seems

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to use them. A simple example: "I know everything!" Why should I believe you? "Because I know everything!"

Another example (one I've actually experienced): "You have to believe in God because the Bible says so, and the Bible is the word of God!" Now understand that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with saying that God exists, and neither is there anything intrinsically wrong with believing that the Bible is the word of God. Where this person goes wrong is using the point "the Bible is the word of God" to support the contention that "you have to believe in God," since the non-believer is hardly going to be impressed with the one if he doesn't believe in the other!

Well, this kind of thing happens all the time in psychology, an in personality theories in particular. To pick on Freud again, it is not unusual to hear Freudians argue that people who don't accept Freud's ideas are repressing the evidence they would need to believe in Freud – when the idea of repression is in fact a Freudian concept to begin with. What you need, they might suggest, is a few years of Freudian analysis to understand that Freud was right – when, of course, you would hardly spend all that time (and money) on something you don't believe in to begin with!

So if you run into a theory that dismisses your objections or questions, beware!

Misunderstandings

Another problem, or set of problems, is unintended implications: It seems that every time you say something, you let loose words that are susceptible to 100's of different interpretations. To put it simply, people will often misunderstand you.

There are several things that make misunderstandings more likely.

1. **Translation**. Freud, Jung, Binswanger, and several others, wrote in German. When they were translated, some of their concepts were "twisted" a little – something quite natural, since every language has its own idiosyncrasies.

Freud's id, ego, and superego, which you've all heard of, are words used by his translators. The original terms were es, ich, and überich, which are German for it, I, and over-I. They are, in other words, ordinary words, simple words. In translation, they were turned into Latin words, words that sounded vaguely scientific, because the translators felt that American readers would be more accepting of Freud if he sounded a little more scientific, instead of poetic (which is what he sounds like in German!).

Of course that means we "hear" Freud as making scientific statements, cutting up the psyche into clear compartments, when in fact he was speaking more metaphorically, and was suggesting that they shade into each other.

2. **Neologisms**. Neologisms means new words. When we develop a theory, we may have concepts that have not had names before, and we find or create words to name them. Sometimes we use Greek or Latin, sometimes we use combinations of old words (as in German), sometimes we use phrases (as in French), sometimes we just take an old word and use it in a new way: anticathexis, Gemeinschaftsgefühl, être-en-soi, and self, for examples.

It doesn't take much explaining to see how a word like self or anxiety or ego has hundreds of different meanings, depending on the theorist!

3. **Metaphors**. Metaphors (or similes, more exactly) are words or phrases that, while not literally true, somehow capture some aspect of the truth. Every theorist uses models of the human personality in one form or another, but it would be a mistake to confuse the model – the metaphor – for the real thing!

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A good example is the common present-day use of the computer and information-processing in general as a metaphor for human functioning. Do we work something like computers? Yes, in fact, several aspects of our functioning work like that. Are we computers? No, of course not. The metaphor fails in the long run. But it is useful, and that's how we have to view them. It's like a map: It helps you find your way, but you'd hardly confuse it with the territory itself!

Evidence

Evidence, or rather the lack of evidence, is of course another problem. What kind of support do you have for your theory? Or was it something you dreamed up while on a hallucinogenic? There are several kinds of evidence: Anecdotal, clinical, phenomenological, correlational, and experimental.

1. **Anecdotal evidence** is the casual kind of evidence, usually given in story form: "I remember when...," and "I heard that...," for example. It is, of course, notoriously inaccurate. It is best to use this kind of evidence only as a motivation for further research.

2. **Clinical evidence** is evidence gathered from therapy sessions. It is more carefully recorded by people with considerable training. Its major weakness is that it tends to be highly individual and even unusual, because you are describing a person who is almost by definition an unusual individual! Clinical evidence does provide the foundation of most of the theories we will look at, although most follow up with further research.

3. **Phenomenological evidence** is the result of careful observation of people in various circumstances, as well as introspection involving one's own psychological processes. Many of the theorists we will look at have done phenomenological research, either formally or informally. It requires considerable training as well as a certain natural ability. Its weakness is that we have a hard time telling whether the researcher has done a good job.

4. **Correlational research** in personality usually involves the creation and use of personality tests. The scores from these tests are compared with other measurable aspects of life, as well as with other tests. So we might create a test for shyness (introversion), and compare it with the scores on intelligence tests or with ratings of job satisfaction. Unfortunately, measuring things doesn't tell you how they work or even if they are real, and many things resist measurement altogether.

5. **Experimental research** is the most controlled and precise form of research, and, if the issues you are concerned with are amenable to experimentation, it is the preferred method. Experimentation, as you know, involves random selection of subjects, careful control of conditions, great concern to avoid undue influence, and usually measurement and statistics. Its weakness is that it has a hard time getting at many of the issues personality theorists are most interested in. How do you control or measure things like love, anger, or awareness?

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Philosophical assumptions

That people – even famous geniuses – make mistakes should not have been a big surprise to you. It should also not surprise you that people are limited. There are many questions, ones we need to have answers to in order to build our theories, that have no answer. Some are just beyond us presently; some may never have an answer. But we answer them anyway, because we need to get on with life. We can call these our philosophical assumptions.

1. **Free will vs. determinism.** Are we and the world completely determined? Is the sense that we make choices just an illusion? Or is it the other way around, that the spirit has the potential to rise above all restraints, that it is determinism which is an illusion?

Most theorists make more moderate assumptions. A moderate determinist position might say that, although we are ultimately determined, we are capable of participating in that determinism. A moderate free-will position might say that freedom is intrinsic to our nature, but we must live out that nature in an otherwise determined world.

2. **Uniqueness vs. universality.** Is each person unique, or will we eventually discover universal laws which will explain all of human behavior? Again, more moderate positions are available: Perhaps there are broad rules of human nature with room for individual variation within them; Or perhaps or individuality outweighs our commonalities.

I am sure you can see how this assumption relates to the previous one: Determinism suggests the possibility of universal laws, while free will is one possible source of uniqueness. But the relationship is not perfect, and in the moderate versions quite complex.

3. **Physiological vs. purposive motivation.** Are we more "pushed" by basic physiological needs, such as the need for food, water, and sexual activity? Or are we more "pulled" by our purposes, goals, values, principles, and so on? More moderate possibilities include the idea that purposive behavior is powerful but grows out of physiological needs, or simply that both types of motivation are important, perhaps at different times and places.

A more philosophical version of this contrasts causality and teleology. The first says that your state of mind now is determined by prior events; The second says that it is determined by its orientation to the future. The causality position is by far the more common in psychology generally, but the teleological position is very strong in personality psychology.

4. **Conscious vs. unconscious motivation.** Is much, most, or even all of our behavior and experience determined by unconscious forces, i.e. forces of which we are not aware? Or is some, little, or even none determined by unconscious forces. Or, to put it another way, how much of what determines our behavior are we conscious of?

This might be an answerable question, but consciousness and unconsciousness are slippery things. For example, if we were aware of something a moment ago, and it has changed us in some way, but we are now unable to bring it to awareness, are we consciously motivated or unconsciously? Or if we deny some truth, keeping it from awareness, must we not have seen it coming in order to take that action to begin with?

5. **Nature vs. nurture.** This is another question that may someday be answerable: To what degree is what we are due to our genetic inheritance ("nature") or to our upbringing and other experiences ("nurture")? The question is such a difficult one because nature and nurture do not exist independently of each other. Both a

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body and experience are probably essential to being a person, and it is very difficult to separate their effects.

As you will see, the issue comes up in many forms, including the possible existence of instincts in human beings and the nature of temperament, genetically based personality characteristics. It is also very debatable whether "nature" (as in human nature) even refers to genetics.

6. **Stage vs. non-stage theories of development.** One aspect of the nature-nurture issue that is very important to personality psychology is whether or not we all pass through predetermined stages of development. We do, after all, go through certain stages of physiological development – fetal, childhood, puberty, adulthood, senescence – powerfully controlled by genetics. Shouldn't we expect the same for psychological development?

We will see a full range of positions on this issue, from true stage theories such as Freud's, who saw stages as universal an fairly clearly marked, to behaviorist and humanist theories that consider what appear to be stages to be artifacts created by certain patterns of upbringing and culture.

7. **Cultural determinism vs. cultural transcendence.** To what extent do our cultures mold us? Totally, or are we capable of "rising above" (transcending) those influences? And if so, how easy or difficult is it? Notice that this is not quite the same as the determinism-free will issue: If we are not determined by culture, our "transcendence" may be nothing more than some other determinism, by physiological needs, for example, or genetics.

Another way to look at the issue is to ask yourself, "How difficult is it to really get to know someone from a different culture?" If it is difficult to step out of our cultures and communicate as human beings, then perhaps culture is terribly determining of who we are. If it is relatively easy, perhaps it is not so powerful.

8. **Early or late personality formation.** Are our personality characteristics established in early childhood, to remain relatively fixed through the rest of our lives? Or are we every bit as flexible in adulthood? Or is that, although change is always a possibility, it just gets increasingly difficult as time goes on?

This question is intimately tied up with the issues of genetics, stages, and cultural determination, as you can imagine. The biggest hurdle we face before we find a resolution, however, is in specifying what we mean by personality characteristics. If we mean things that never change from the moment of birth – i.e. temperament – then of course personality is formed early. If we mean our beliefs, opinions, habits, and so on, these can change rather dramatically up to the moment of death. Since most theorists mean something "in between" these extremes, the answer is likewise to be found "in between."

9. **Continuous vs. discontinuous understanding of mental illness.** Is mental illness just a matter of degree? Are they just ordinary people that have taken something to an extreme? Are they perhaps eccentrics that disturb themselves or us? Or is there a qualitative difference in the way they experience reality? As with cultures, is it easy to understand the mentally ill, or do we live in separate worlds?

This issue may be resolvable, but it is complicated by the fact that mental illness is hardly a single entity. There are many different kinds. Some would say there are as many as their are people who are mentally ill. What is a mental illness and what is not is even up for debate. It may be that mental health is also not a single thing.

10. **Optimism vs. pessimism.** Last, we return to an issue that is, I believe, not at all resolvable: Are human beings basically good or basically bad; Should we be hopeful about our prospects, or discouraged; Do we need a lot of help, or would we be better off if left alone?

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This is, obviously, a more philosophical, religious, or personal issue. Yet it is perhaps the most influential of all. The attitude determines what you see when you look at humanity; What you see in turn influences the attitude. And it is bound up with other issues: If, for example, mental illness is not so far from health, if personality can be changed later in life, if culture and genetics aren't too powerful, and if our motivations can at least be made conscious, we have more grounds for optimism. The theorists we will look at were at least optimistic enough to make the effort at understanding human nature.

Organization

With all the different pitfalls, assumptions, and methods, you might think that there is very little we can do in terms of organizing "theories of personality." Fortunately, people with like minds tend to be drawn to each other. Three broad rientations tend to stand out:

1. **Psychoanalytic** or "first force." Although psychoanalytic strictly speaking refers to Freudians, we will use it here to refer to others who have been strongly influenced by Freud and who – though they may disagree with nearly everything else – do share attitude: They tend to believe that the answers to the important questions lie somewhere behind the surface, hidden, in the unconscious.

This book will look at three versions of this approach. The first is the Freudian view proper, which includes Sigmund and Anna Freud, of course, and the ego psychologist, of whom Erik Erikson is the best known.

The second might be called the transpersonal perspective, which has a much more spiritual streak, and which will be represented here by Carl Jung.

The third has been called the social psychological view, and includes Alfred Adler, Karen Horney, and Erich Fromm.

2. **Behavioristic** or "second force." In this perspective, the answers are felt to lie in careful observation of behavior and environment and their relations. Behaviorists, as well as their modern descendants the cognitivist, prefer quantitative and experimental methods.

The behavioristic approach will be represented here by Hans Eysenck, B. F. Skinner, and Albert Bandura.

3. **Humanistic** or "third force." The humanistic approach, which is usually thought of as including existential psychology, is the most recent of the three. Often based on a reaction to psychoanalytic and behavioristic theories, the common belief is that the answers are to be found in consciousness or experience. Phenomenological methods are preferred by most humanists.

We will examine two "streams" of the humanistic approach. The first is humanism proper, represented by Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and George Kelly.

The second is existentialist psychology, a philosophy-based humanism quite popular in Europe and Latin America. We will look at two existential psychologists, Ludwig Binswanger and Viktor Frankl.

If you examine the table of contents, you will notice that there are chapters on other theorists available as well. For charts of the relationships among theories and theorists,

[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/orientations.html]

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Resources

In addition to the primary sources mentioned within the text itself, I am indebted to several secondary sources as well:

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SIGMUND FREUD

[1856 – 1939]

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Introduction

> It is a mistake to believe that a science consists in nothing but conclusively proved propositions, and it is unjust to demand that it should. It is a demand only made by those who feel a craving for authority in some form and a need to replace the religious catechism by something else, even if it be a scientific one. Science in its catechism has but few apodictic precepts; it consists mainly of statements which it has developed to varying degrees of probability. The capacity to be content with these approximations to certainty and the ability to carry on constructive work despite the lack of final confirmation are actually a mark of the scientific habit of mind. – Freud

Freud's story, like most people's stories, begins with others. In his case those others were his mentor and friend, Dr. Joseph Breuer, and Breuer's patient, called Anna O.

Anna O. was Joseph Breuer's patient from 1880 through 1882. Twenty one years old, Anna spent most of her time nursing her ailing father. She developed a bad cough that proved to have no physical basis. She developed some speech difficulties, then became mute, and then began speaking only in English, rather than her usual German.

When her father died she began to refuse food, and developed an unusual set of problems. She lost the feeling in her hands and feet, developed some paralysis, and began to have involuntary spasms. She also had visual hallucinations and tunnel vision. But when specialists were consulted, no physical causes for these problems could be found.

If all this weren't enough, she had fairy-tale fantasies, dramatic mood swings, and made several suicide attempts. Breuer's diagnosis was that she was suffering from what was then called **hysteria** (now called conversion disorder), which meant she had symptoms that appeared to be physical, but were not.

In the evenings, Anna would sink into states of what Breuer called "spontaneous hypnosis," or what Anna herself called "clouds." Breuer found that, during these trance-like states, she could explain her day-time fantasies and other experiences, and she felt better afterwards. Anna called these episodes "chimney sweeping" and "the talking cure."

Sometimes during "chimney sweeping," some emotional event was recalled that gave meaning to some particular symptom. The first example came soon after she had refused to drink for a while: She recalled seeing a woman drink from a glass that a dog had just drunk from. While recalling this, she experienced strong feelings of disgust...and then had a drink of water! In other words, her symptom – an avoidance of water – disappeared as soon as she remembered its root event, and experienced the strong emotion that would be appropriate to that event. Breuer called this catharsis, from the Greek word for cleansing.

It was eleven years later that Breuer and his assistant, Sigmund Freud, wrote a book on hysteria. In it they explained their theory: Every hysteria is the result of a traumatic experience, one that cannot be integrated into the person's understanding of the world. The emotions appropriate to the trauma are not expressed in any direct fashion, but do not simply evaporate: They express themselves in behaviors that in a weak, vague way offer a response to the trauma. These symptoms are, in other words, meaningful. When the client can be made aware of the meanings of his or her symptoms (through hypnosis, for example) then the unexpressed emotions are released and so no longer need to express themselves as symptoms. It is analogous to lancing a boil or draining an infection.

In this way, Anna got rid of symptom after symptom. But it must be noted that she needed Breuer to do this: Whenever she was in one of her hypnotic states, she had to feel his hands to make sure it was him before

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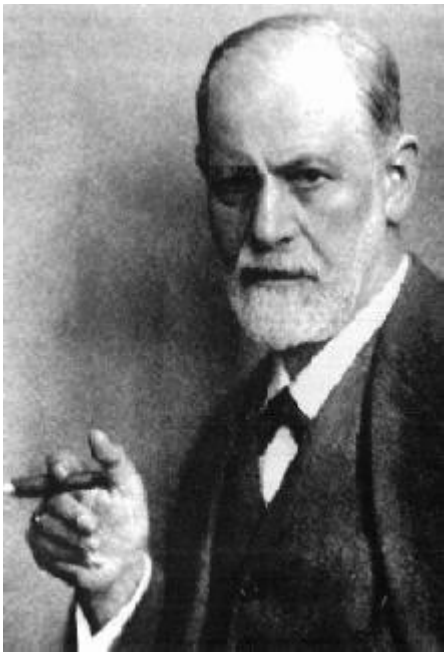
talking! And sadly, new problems continued to arise.

According to Freud, Breuer recognized that she had fallen in love with him, and that he was falling in love with her. Plus, she was telling everyone she was pregnant with his child. You might say she wanted it so badly that her mind told her body it was true, and she developed an hysterical pregnancy. Breuer, a married man in a Victorian era, abruptly ended their sessions together, and lost all interest in hysteria.

It was Freud who would later add what Breuer did not acknowledge publicly – that secret sexual desires lay at the bottom of all these hysterical neuroses.

To finish her story, Anna spent time in a sanatorium. Later, she became a well-respected and active figure – the first social worker in Germany – under her true name, Bertha Pappenheim. She died in 1936. She will be remembered, not only for her own accomplishments, but as the inspiration for the most influential personality theory we have ever had.

Biography



Sigmund Freud was born May 6, 1856, in a small town – Freiberg – in Moravia. His father was a wool merchant with a keen mind and a good sense of humor. His mother was a lively woman, her husband's second wife and 20 years younger. She was 21 years old when she gave birth to her first son, her darling, Sigmund. Sigmund had two older half-brothers and six younger siblings. When he was four or five – he wasn't sure – the family moved to Vienna, where he lived most of his life.

A brilliant child, always at the head of his class, he went to medical school, one of the few viable options for a bright Jewish boy in Vienna those days. There, he became involved in research under the direction of a physiology professor named Ernst Brücke. Brücke believed in what was then a popular, if radical, notion, which we now call reductionism: "No other forces than the common physical-chemical ones are active within the organism." Freud would spend many years trying to "reduce" personality to neurology, a cause he later gave up on.

Freud was very good at his research, concentrating on neurophysiology, even inventing a special cell-staining technique. But only a limited number of positions were available, and there were others ahead of him. Brücke helped him to get a grant to study, first with the great psychiatrist Charcot in Paris, then with his rival Bernheim in Nancy. Both these gentlemen were investigating the use of hypnosis with hysterics.

After spending a short time as a resident in neurology and director of a children's ward in Berlin, he came back to Vienna, married his fiancée of many years Martha Bernays, and set up a practice in neuropsychiatry, with the help of Joseph Breuer.

Freud's books and lectures brought him both fame and ostracism from the mainstream of the medical community. He drew around him a number of very bright sympathizers who became the core of the psychoanalytic movement. Unfortunately, Freud had a penchant for rejecting people who did not totally agree with him. Some separated from him on friendly terms; others did not, and went on to found competing schools of thought.

Freud emigrated to England just before World War II when Vienna became an increasing dangerous place

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for Jews, especially ones as famous as Freud. Not long afterward, he died of the cancer of the mouth and jaw that he had suffered from for the last 20 years of his life.

Theory

Freud didn't exactly invent the idea of the conscious versus unconscious mind, but he certainly was responsible for making it popular. The **conscious mind** is what you are aware of at any particular moment, your present perceptions, memories, thoughts, fantasies, feelings, what have you. Working closely with the conscious mind is what Freud called the **preconscious**, what we might today call "available memory:" anything that can easily be made conscious, the memories you are not at the moment thinking about but can readily bring to mind. Now no-one has a problem with these two layers of mind. But Freud suggested that these are the smallest parts!

The largest part by far is the **unconscious**. It includes all the things that are not easily available to awareness, including many things that have their origins there, such as our drives or instincts, and things that are put there because we can't bear to look at them, such as the memories and emotions associated with trauma.

According to Freud, the unconscious is the source of our motivations, whether they be simple desires for food or sex, neurotic compulsions, or the motives of an artist or scientist. And yet, we are often driven to deny or resist becoming conscious of these motives, and they are often available to us only in disguised form. We will come back to this.

The id, the ego, and the superego

Freudian psychological reality begins with the world, full of objects. Among them is a very special object, the organism. The organism is special in that it acts to survive and reproduce, and it is guided toward those ends by its needs – hunger, thirst, the avoidance of pain, and sex.

A part – a very important part – of the organism is the nervous system, which has as one its characteristics a sensitivity to the organism's needs. At birth, that nervous system is little more than that of any other animal, an "it" or **id**. The nervous system, as id, translates the organism's needs into motivational forces called, in German, **Triebe**, which has been translated as **instincts** or **drives**. Freud also called them **wishes**. This translation from need to wish is called the **primary process**.

The id works in keeping with the **pleasure principle**, which can be understood as a demand to take care of needs immediately. Just picture the hungry infant, screaming itself blue. It doesn't "know" what it wants in any adult sense; it just knows that it wants it and it wants it now. The infant, in the Freudian view, is pure, or nearly pure id. And the id is nothing if not the psychic representative of biology.

Unfortunately, although a wish for food, such as the image of a juicy steak, might be enough to satisfy the id, it isn't enough to satisfy the organism. The need only gets stronger, and the wishes just keep coming. You may have noticed that, when you haven't satisfied some need, such as the need for food, it begins to demand more and more of your attention, until there comes a point where you can't think of anything else. This is the wish or drive breaking into consciousness.

Luckily for the organism, there is that small portion of the mind we discussed before, the conscious, that is hooked up to the world through the senses. Around this little bit of consciousness, during the first year of a child's life, some of the "it" becomes "I," some of the id becomes **ego**. The ego relates the organism to reality by means of its consciousness, and it searches for objects to satisfy the wishes that id creates to represent the organisms needs. This problem-solving activity is called the **secondary process**.

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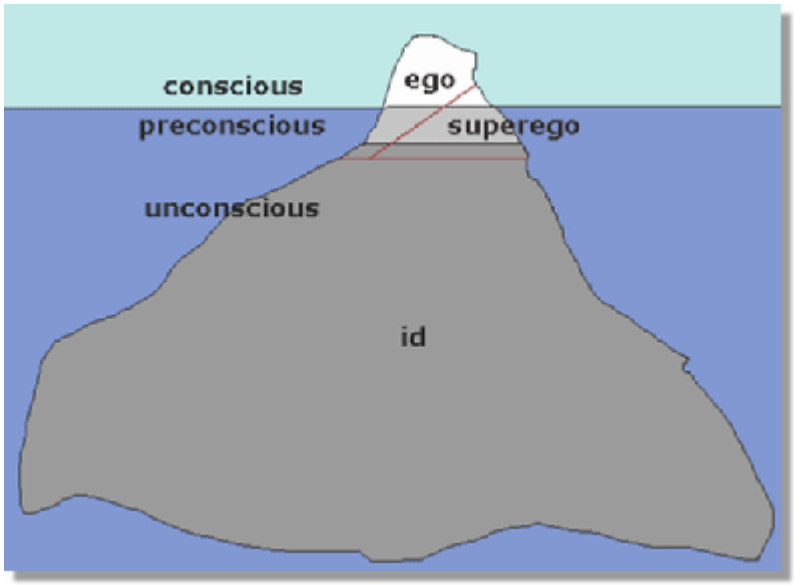

The ego, unlike the id, functions according to the **reality principle**, which says "take care of a need as soon as an appropriate object is found." It represents reality and, to a considerable extent, reason.

However, as the ego struggles to keep the id (and, ultimately, the organism) happy, it meets with obstacles in the world. It occasionally meets with objects that actually assist it in attaining its goals. And it keeps a record of these obstacles and aides. In particular, it keeps track of the rewards and punishments meted out by two of the most influential objects in the world of the child – mom and dad. This record of things to avoid and strategies to take becomes the **superego**. It is not completed until about seven years of age. In some people, it never is completed.

There are two aspects to the superego: One is the **conscience**, which is an internalization of punishments and warnings. The other is called the **ego ideal**. It derives from rewards and positive models presented to the child. The conscience and ego ideal communicate their requirements to the ego with feelings like pride, shame, and guilt.

It is as if we acquired, in childhood, a new set of needs and accompanying wishes, this time of social rather than biological origins. Unfortunately, these new wishes can easily conflict with the ones from the id. You see, the superego represents society, and society often wants nothing better than to have you never satisfy your needs at all!

Life instincts and the death instinct

Freud saw all human behavior as motivated by the drives or instincts, which in turn are the neurological representations of physical needs. At first, he referred to them as the **life instincts**. These instincts perpetuate (a) the life of the individual, by motivating him or her to seek food and water, and (b) the life of the species, by motivating him or her to have sex. The motivational energy of these life instincts, the "oomph" that powers our psyches, he called **libido**, from the Latin word for "I desire."

Freud's clinical experience led him to view sex as much more important in the dynamics of the psyche than other needs. We are, after all, social creatures, and sex is the most social of needs. Plus, we have to remember that Freud included much more than intercourse in the term sex! Anyway, libido has come to mean, not any old drive, but the sex drive.

Later in his life, Freud began to believe that the life instincts didn't tell the whole story. Libido is a lively

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thing; the pleasure principle keeps us in perpetual motion. And yet the goal of all this motion is to be still, to be satisfied, to be at peace, to have no more needs. The goal of life, you might say, is death! Freud began to believe that "under" and "beside" the life instincts there was a **death instinct**. He began to believe that every person has an unconscious wish to die.

This seems like a strange idea at first, and it was rejected by many of his students, but I think it has some basis in experience: Life can be a painful and exhausting process. There is easily, for the great majority of people in the world, more pain than pleasure in life – something we are extremely reluctant to admit! Death promises release from the struggle.

Freud referred to a **nirvana principle**. Nirvana is a Buddhist idea, often translated as heaven, but actually meaning "blowing out," as in the blowing out of a candle. It refers to non-existence, nothingness, the void, which is the goal of all life in Buddhist philosophy.

The day-to-day evidence of the death instinct and its nirvana principle is in our desire for peace, for escape from stimulation, our attraction to alcohol and narcotics, our penchant for escapist activity, such as losing ourselves in books or movies, our craving for rest and sleep. Sometimes it presents itself openly as suicide and suicidal wishes. And, Freud theorized, sometimes we direct it out away from ourselves, in the form of aggression, cruelty, murder, and destructiveness.

Anxiety

Freud once said "life is not easy!"

The ego – the "I" – sits at the center of some pretty powerful forces: reality; society, as represented by the superego; biology, as represented by the id. When these make conflicting demands upon the poor ego, it is understandable if it – if you – feel threatened, fell overwhelmed, feel as if it were about to collapse under the weight of it all. This feeling is called **anxiety**, and it serves as a signal to the ego that its survival, and with it the survival of the whole organism, is in jeopardy.

Freud mentions three different kind of anxieties: The first is **realistic anxiety**, which you and I would call fear. Actually Freud did, too, in German. But his translators thought "fear" too mundane! Nevertheless, if I throw you into a pit of poisonous snakes, you might experience realistic anxiety.

The second is **moral anxiety**. This is what we feel when the threat comes not from the outer, physical world, but from the internalized social world of the superego. It is, in fact, just another word for feelings like shame and guilt and the fear of punishment.

The last is **neurotic anxiety**. This is the fear of being overwhelmed by impulses from the id. If you have ever felt like you were about to "lose it," lose control, your temper, your rationality, or even your mind, you have felt neurotic anxiety. Neurotic is actually the Latin word for nervous, so this is nervous anxiety. It is this kind of anxiety that intrigued Freud most, and we usually just call it anxiety, plain and simple.

The defense mechanisms

The ego deals with the demands of reality, the id, and the superego as best as it can. But when the anxiety becomes overwhelming, the ego must defend itself. It does so by unconsciously blocking the impulses or distorting them into a more acceptable, less threatening form. The techniques are called the **ego defense mechanisms**, and Freud, his daughter Anna, and other disciples have discovered quite a few.

Denial involves blocking external events from awareness. If some situation is just too much to handle, the

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person just refuses to experience it. As you might imagine, this is a primitive and dangerous defense – no one disregards reality and gets away with it for long! It can operate by itself or, more commonly, in combination with other, more subtle mechanisms that support it.

I was once reading while my five year old daughter was watching a cartoon (The Smurfs, I think). She was, as was her habit, quite close to the television, when a commercial came on. Apparently, no-one at the television station was paying much attention, because this was a commercial for a horror movie, complete with bloody knife, hockey mask, and screams of terror. Now I wasn't able to save my child from this horror, so I did what any good psychologist father would do: I talked about it. I said to her "Boy, that was a scary commercial, wasn't it?" She said "Huh?" I said "That commercial...it sure was scary wasn't it?" She said "What commercial?" I said "The commercial that was just on, with the blood and the mask and the screaming...!" She had apparently shut out the whole thing.

Since then, I've noticed little kids sort of glazing over when confronted by things they'd rather not be confronted by. I've also seen people faint at autopsies, people deny the reality of the death of a loved one, and students fail to pick up their test results. That's denial.

Anna Freud also mentions **denial in fantasy**: This is when children, in their imaginations, transform an "evil" father into a loving teddy bear, or a helpless child into a powerful superhero.

Repression, which Anna Freud also called "motivated forgetting," is just that: not being able to recall a threatening situation, person, or event. This, too, is dangerous, and is a part of most other defenses.

As an adolescent, I developed a rather strong fear of spiders, especially long-legged ones. I didn't know where it came from, but it was starting to get rather embarrassing by the time I entered college. At college, a counselor helped me to get over it (with a technique called systematic desensitization), but I still had no idea where it came from. Years later, I had a dream, a particularly clear one, that involved getting locked up by my cousin in a shed behind my grandparents' house when I was very young. The shed was small, dark, and had a dirt floor covered with – you guessed it! – long-legged spiders.

The Freudian understanding of this phobia is pretty simple: I repressed a traumatic event – the shed incident – but seeing spiders aroused the anxiety of the event without arousing the memory.

Other examples abound. Anna Freud provides one that now strikes us as quaint: A young girl, guilty about her rather strong sexual desires, tends to forget her boy-friend's name, even when trying to introduce him to her relations! Or an alcoholic can't remember his suicide attempt, claiming he must have "blacked out." Or a someone almost drowns as a child, but can't remember the event even when people try to remind him – but he does have this fear of open water!

Note that, to be a true example of a defense, it should function unconsciously. My brother had a fear of dogs as a child, but there was no defense involved: He had been bitten by one, and wanted very badly never to repeat the experience! Usually, it is the irrational fears we call phobias that derive from repression of traumas.

Asceticism, or the renunciation of needs, is one most people haven't heard of, but it has become relevant again today with the emergence of the disorder called anorexia. Preadolescents, when they feel threatened by their emerging sexual desires, may unconsciously try to protect themselves by denying, not only their sexual desires, but all desires. They get involved in some kind of ascetic (monk-like) lifestyle wherein they renounce their interest in what other people enjoy.

In boys nowadays, there is a great deal of interest in the self-discipline of the martial arts. Fortunately, the martial arts not only don't hurt you (much), they may actually help you. Unfortunately, girls in our society often develop a great deal of interest in attaining an excessively and artificially thin standard of beauty. In Freudian theory, their denial of their need for food is actually a cover for their denial of their sexual

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development. Our society conspires with them: After all, what most societies consider a normal figure for a mature woman is in ours considered 20 pounds overweight!

Anna Freud also discusses a milder version of this called **restriction of ego**. Here, a person loses interest in some aspect of life and focuses it elsewhere, in order to avoid facing reality. A young girl who has been rejected by the object of her affections may turn away from feminine things and become a "sex-less intellectual," or a boy who is afraid that he may be humiliated on the football team may unaccountably become deeply interested in poetry.

Isolation (sometimes called intellectualization) involves stripping the emotion from a difficult memory or threatening impulse. A person may, in a very cavalier manner, acknowledge that they had been abused as a child, or may show a purely intellectual curiosity in their newly discovered sexual orientation. Something that should be a big deal is treated as if it were not.

In emergency situations, many people find themselves completely calm and collected until the emergency is over, at which point they fall to pieces. Something tells you that, during the emergency, you can't afford to fall apart. It is common to find someone totally immersed in the social obligations surrounding the death of a loved one. Doctors and nurses must learn to separate their natural reactions to blood, wounds, needles, and scalpels, and treat the patient, temporarily, as something less than a warm, wonderful human being with friends and family. Adolescents often go through a stage where they are obsessed with horror movies, perhaps to come to grips with their own fears. Nothing demonstrates isolation more clearly than a theater full of people laughing hysterically while someone is shown being dismembered.

Displacement is the redirection of an impulse onto a substitute target. If the impulse, the desire, is okay with you, but the person you direct that desire towards is too threatening, you can displace to someone or something that can serve as a symbolic substitute.

Someone who hates his or her mother may repress that hatred, but direct it instead towards, say, women in general. Someone who has not had the chance to love someone may substitute cats or dogs for human beings. Someone who feels uncomfortable with their sexual desire for a real person may substitute a fetish. Someone who is frustrated by his or her superiors may go home and kick the dog, beat up a family member, or engage in cross-burnings.

Turning against the self is a very special form of displacement, where the person becomes their own substitute target. It is normally used in reference to hatred, anger, and aggression, rather than more positive impulses, and it is the Freudian explanation for many of our feelings of inferiority, guilt, and depression. The idea that depression is often the result of the anger we refuse to acknowledge is accepted by many people, Freudians and non-Freudians alike.

Once upon a time, at a time when I was not feeling my best, my daughter, five years old, spilled an entire glass of chocolate milk in the living room. I lashed out at her verbally, telling her she was clumsy and had to learn to be more careful and how often hadn't I told her and...well, you know. She stood there stiffly with a sort of smoldering look in her eyes, and, of all things, pounded herself on her own head several times! Obviously, she would rather have pounded my head, but, well, you just don't do that, do you? Needless to say, I've felt guilty ever since.

Projection, which Anna Freud also called displacement outward, is almost the complete opposite of turning against the self. It involves the tendency to see your own unacceptable desires in other people. In other words, the desires are still there, but they're not your desires anymore. I confess that whenever I hear

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someone going on and on about how aggressive everybody is, or how perverted they all are, I tend to wonder if this person doesn't have an aggressive or sexual streak in themselves that they'd rather not acknowledge.

Let me give you a couple of examples: A husband, a good and faithful one, finds himself terribly attracted to the charming and flirtatious lady next door. But rather than acknowledge his own, hardly abnormal, lusts, he becomes increasingly jealous of his wife, constantly worried about her faithfulness, and so on. Or a woman finds herself having vaguely sexual feelings about her girlfriends. Instead of acknowledging those feelings as quite normal, she becomes increasingly concerned with the presence of lesbians in her community.

Altruistic surrender is a form of projection that at first glance looks like its opposite: Here, the person attempts to fulfill his or her own needs vicariously, through other people.

A common example of this is the friend (we've all had one) who, while not seeking any relationship himself, is constantly pushing other people into them, and is particularly curious as to "what happened last night" and "how are things going?" The extreme example of altruistic surrender is the person who lives their whole life for and through another.

Reaction formation, which Anna Freud called "believing the opposite," is changing an unacceptable impulse into its opposite. So a child, angry at his or her mother, may become overly concerned with her and rather dramatically shower her with affection. An abused child may run to the abusing parent. Or someone who can't accept a homosexual impulse may claim to despise homosexuals.

Perhaps the most common and clearest example of reaction formation is found in children between seven and eleven or so: Most boys will tell you in no uncertain terms how disgusting girls are, and girls will tell you with equal vigor how gross boys are. Adults watching their interactions, however, can tell quite easily what their true feelings are!

Undoing involves "magical" gestures or rituals that are meant to cancel out unpleasant thoughts or feelings after they've already occurred. Anna Freud mentions, for example, a boy who would recite the alphabet backwards whenever he had a sexual thought, or turn around and spit whenever meeting another boy who shared his passion for masturbation.

In "normal" people, the undoing is, of course, more conscious, and we might engage in an act of atonement for some behavior, or formally ask for forgiveness. But in some people, the act of atonement isn't conscious at all. Consider the alcoholic father who, after a year of verbal and perhaps physical abuse, puts on the best and biggest Christmas ever for his kids. When the season is over, and the kids haven't quite been fooled by his magical gesture, he returns to his bartender with complaints about how ungrateful his family is, and how they drive him to drink.

One of the classic examples of undoing concerns personal hygiene following sex: It is perfectly reasonable to wash up after sex. After all, it can get messy! But if you feel the need to take three or four complete showers using gritty soap – perhaps sex doesn't quite agree with you.

Introjection, sometimes called identification, involves taking into your own personality characteristics of someone else, because doing so solves some emotional difficulty. For example, a child who is left alone frequently, may in some way try to become "mom" in order to lessen his or her fears. You can sometimes catch them telling their dolls or animals not to be afraid. And we find the older child or teenager imitating his or her favorite star, musician, or sports hero in an effort to establish an identity.

A more unusual example is a woman who lived next to my grandparents. Her husband had died and she began to dress in his clothes, albeit neatly tailored to her figure. She began to take up various of his habits,

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such as smoking a pipe. Although the neighbors found it strange and referred to her as "the man-woman," she was not suffering from any confusion about her sexual identity. In fact, she later remarried, retaining to the end her men's suits and pipe!

I must add here that identification is very important to Freudian theory as the mechanism by which we develop our superegos.

Identification with the aggressor is a version of introjection that focuses on the adoption, not of general or positive traits, but of negative or feared traits. If you are afraid of someone, you can partially conquer that fear by becoming more like them. Two of my daughters, growing up with a particularly moody cat, could often be seen meowing, hissing, spitting, and arching their backs in an effort to keep that cat from springing out of a closet or dark corner and trying to eat their ankles.

A more dramatic example is one called the Stockholm Syndrome. After a hostage crisis in Stockholm, psychologists were surprised to find that the hostages were not only not terribly angry at their captors, but often downright sympathetic. A more recent case involved a young woman named Patty Hearst, of the wealthy and influential Hearst family. She was captured by a very small group of self-proclaimed revolutionaries called the Symbionese Liberation Army. She was kept in closets, raped, and otherwise mistreated. Yet she apparently decided to join them, making little propaganda videos for them and even waving a machine gun around during a bank robbery. When she was later tried, psychologists strongly suggested she was a victim, not a criminal. She was nevertheless convicted of bank robbery and sentenced to 7 years in prison. Her sentence was commuted by President Carter after 2 years.

Regression is a movement back in psychological time when one is faced with stress. When we are troubled or frightened, our behaviors often become more childish or primitive. A child may begin to suck their thumb again or wet the bed when they need to spend some time in the hospital. Teenagers may giggle uncontrollably when introduced into a social situation involving the opposite sex. A freshman college student may need to bring an old toy from home. A gathering of civilized people may become a violent mob when they are led to believe their livelihoods are at stake. Or an older man, after spending twenty years at a company and now finding himself laid off, may retire to his recliner and become childishly dependent on his wife.

Where do we retreat when faced with stress? To the last time in life when we felt safe and secure, according to Freudian theory.

Rationalization is the cognitive distortion of "the facts" to make an event or an impulse less threatening. We do it often enough on a fairly conscious level when we provide ourselves with excuses. But for many people, with sensitive egos, making excuses comes so easy that they never are truly aware of it. In other words, many of us are quite prepared to believe our lies.

A useful way of understanding the defenses is to see them as a combination of denial or repression with various kinds of rationalizations.

All defenses are, of course, lies, even if we are not conscious of making them. But that doesn't make them less dangerous – in fact it makes them more so. As your grandma may have told you, "Oh what a tangled web we weave..." Lies breed lies, and take us further and further from the truth, from reality. After a while, the ego can no longer take care of the id's demands, or pay attention to the superego's. The anxieties come rushing back, and you break down.

And yet Freud saw defenses as necessary. You can hardly expect a person, especially a child, to take the pain

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and sorrow of life full on! While some of his followers suggested that all of the defenses could be used positively, Freud himself suggested that there was one positive defense, which he called sublimation.

Sublimation is the transforming of an unacceptable impulse, whether it be sex, anger, fear, or whatever, into a socially acceptable, even productive form. So someone with a great deal of hostility may become a hunter, a butcher, a football player, or a mercenary. Someone suffering from a great deal of anxiety in a confusing world may become an organizer, a businessperson, or a scientist. Someone with powerful sexual desires may become an artist, a photographer, or a novelist, and so on. For Freud, in fact, all positive, creative activities were sublimations, and predominantly of the sex drive.

The stages

As I said earlier, for Freud, the sex drive is the most important motivating force. In fact, Freud felt it was the primary motivating force not only for adults but for children and even infants. When he introduced his ideas about infantile sexuality to the Viennese public of his day, they were hardly prepared to talk about sexuality in adults, much less in infants!

It is true that the capacity for orgasm is there neurologically from birth. But Freud was not just talking about orgasm. Sexuality meant not only intercourse, but all pleasurable sensation from the skin. It is clear even to the most prudish among us that babies, children, and, of course, adults, enjoy tactile experiences such as caresses, kisses, and so on.

Freud noted that, at different times in our lives, different parts of our skin give us greatest pleasure. Later theorists would call these areas **erogenous zones**. It appeared to Freud that the infant found its greatest pleasure in sucking, especially at the breast. In fact, babies have a penchant for bringing nearly everything in their environment into contact with their mouths. A bit later in life, the child focuses on the anal pleasures of holding it in and letting go. By three or four, the child may have discovered the pleasure of touching or rubbing against his or her genitalia. Only later, in our sexual maturity, do we find our greatest pleasure in sexual intercourse. In these observations, Freud had the makings of a psychosexual stage theory.

The **oral stage** lasts from birth to about 18 months. The focus of pleasure is, of course, the mouth. Sucking and biting are favorite activities.

The **anal stage** lasts from about 18 months to three or four years old. The focus of pleasure is the anus. Holding it in and letting it go are greatly enjoyed.

The **phallic stage** lasts from three or four to five, six, or seven years old. The focus of pleasure is the genitalia. Masturbation is common.

The **latent stage** lasts from five, six, or seven to puberty, that is, somewhere around 12 years old. During this stage, Freud believed that the sexual impulse was suppressed in the service of learning. I must note that, while most children seem to be fairly calm, sexually, during their grammar school years, perhaps up to a quarter of them are quite busy masturbating and playing "doctor." In Freud's repressive era, these children were, at least, quieter than their modern counterparts.

The **genital stage** begins at puberty, and represents the resurgence of the sex drive in adolescence, and the more specific focusing of pleasure in sexual intercourse. Freud felt that masturbation, oral sex, homosexuality, and many other things we find acceptable in adulthood today, were immature.

This is a true stage theory, meaning that Freudians believe that we all go through these stages, in this order, and pretty close to these ages.

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The Oedipal crisis

Each stage has certain difficult tasks associated with it where problems are more likely to arise. For the oral stage, this is weaning. For the anal stage, it's potty training. For the phallic stage, it is the Oedipal crisis, named after the ancient Greek story of king Oedipus, who inadvertently killed his father and married his mother.

Here's how the Oedipal crisis works: The first love-object for all of us is our mother. We want her attention, we want her affection, we want her caresses, we want her, in a broadly sexual way. The young boy, however, has a rival for his mother's charms: his father! His father is bigger, stronger, smarter, and he gets to sleep with mother, while junior pines away in his lonely little bed. Dad is the enemy.

About the time the little boy recognizes this archetypal situation, he has become aware of some of the more subtle differences between boys and girls, the ones other than hair length and clothing styles. From his naive perspective, the difference is that he has a penis, and girls do not. At this point in life, it seems to the child that having something is infinitely better than not having something, and so he is pleased with this state of affairs.

But the question arises: where is the girl's penis? Perhaps she has lost it somehow. Perhaps it was cut off. Perhaps this could happen to him! This is the beginning of **castration anxiety**, a slight misnomer for the fear of losing one's penis.

To return to the story, the boy, recognizing his father's superiority and fearing for his penis, engages some of his ego defenses: He displaces his sexual impulses from his mother to girls and, later, women; And he identifies with the aggressor, dad, and attempts to become more and more like him, that is to say, a man. After a few years of latency, he enters adolescence and the world of mature heterosexuality.

The girl also begins her life in love with her mother, so we have the problem of getting her to switch her affections to her father before the Oedipal process can take place. Freud accomplishes this with the idea of **penis envy**: The young girl, too, has noticed the difference between boys and girls and feels that she, somehow, doesn't measure up. She would like to have one, too, and all the power associated with it. At very least, she would like a penis substitute, such as a baby. As every child knows, you need a father as well as a mother to have a baby, so the young girl sets her sights on dad.

Dad, of course, is already taken. The young girl displaces from him to boys and men, and identifies with mom, the woman who got the man she really wanted. Note that one thing is missing here: The girl does not suffer from the powerful motivation of castration anxiety, since she cannot lose what she doesn't have. Freud felt that the lack of this great fear accounts for fact (as he saw it) that women were both less firmly heterosexual than men and somewhat less morally-inclined.

Before you get too upset by this less-than-flattering account of women's sexuality, rest assured that many people have responded to it. I will discuss it in the discussion section.

Character

Your experiences as you grow up contribute to your personality, or character, as an adult. Freud felt that traumatic experiences had an especially strong effect. Of course, each specific trauma would have its own unique impact on a person, which can only be explored and understood on an individual basis. But traumas associated with stage development, since we all have to go through them, should have more consistency.

If you have difficulties in any of the tasks associated with the stages – weaning, potty training, or finding your sexual identity – you will tend to retain certain infantile or childish habits. This is called **fixation**. Fixation gives each problem at each stage a long-term effect in terms of our personality or character.

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If you, in the first eight months of your life, are often frustrated in your need to suckle, perhaps because mother is uncomfortable or even rough with you, or tries to wean you too early, then you may develop an **oral-passive character**. An oral-passive personality tends to be rather dependent on others. They often retain an interest in "oral gratifications" such as eating, drinking, and smoking. It is as if they were seeking the pleasures they missed in infancy.

When we are between five and eight months old, we begin teething. One satisfying thing to do when you are teething is to bite on something, like mommy's nipple. If this causes a great deal of upset and precipitates an early weaning, you may develop an **oral-aggressive personality**. These people retain a life-long desire to bite on things, such as pencils, gum, and other people. They have a tendency to be verbally aggressive, argumentative, sarcastic, and so on.

In the anal stage, we are fascinated with our "bodily functions." At first, we can go whenever and wherever we like. Then, out of the blue and for no reason you can understand, the powers that be want you to do it only at certain times and in certain places. And parents seem to actually value the end product of all this effort!

Some parents put themselves at the child's mercy in the process of toilet training. They beg, they cajole, they show great joy when you do it right, they act as though their hearts were broken when you don't. The child is the king of the house, and knows it. This child will grow up to be an **anal expulsive** (a.k.a. anal aggressive) **personality**. These people tend to be sloppy, disorganized, generous to a fault. They may be cruel, destructive, and given to vandalism and graffiti. The Oscar Madison character in The Odd Couple is a nice example.

Other parents are strict. They may be competing with their neighbors and relatives as to who can potty train their child first (early potty training being associated in many people's minds with great intelligence). They may use punishment or humiliation. This child will likely become constipated as he or she tries desperately to hold it in at all times, and will grow up to be an **anal retentive personality**. He or she will tend to be especially clean, perfectionistic, dictatorial, very stubborn, and stingy. In other words, the anal retentive is tight in all ways. The Felix Unger character in The Odd Couple is a perfect example.

There are also two **phallic personalities**, although no-one has given them names. If the boy is harshly rejected by his mother, and rather threatened by his very masculine father, he is likely to have a poor sense of self-worth when it comes to his sexuality. He may deal with this by either withdrawing from heterosexual interaction, perhaps becoming a book-worm, or by putting on a rather macho act and playing the ladies' man. A girl rejected by her father and threatened by her very feminine mother is also likely to feel poorly about herself, and may become a wall-flower or a hyper-feminine "belle."

But if a boy is not rejected by his mother, but rather favored over his weak, milquetoast father, he may develop quite an opinion of himself (which may suffer greatly when he gets into the real world, where nobody loves him like his mother did), and may appear rather effeminate. After all, he has no cause to identify with his father. Likewise, if a girl is daddy's little princess and best buddy, and mommy has been relegated to a sort of servant role, then she may become quite vain and self-centered, or possibly rather masculine.

These various phallic characters demonstrate an important point in Freudian characterology: Extremes lead to extremes. If you are frustrated in some way or overindulged in some way, you have problems. And, although each problem tends to lead to certain characteristics, these characteristics can also easily be reversed. So an anal retentive person may suddenly become exceedingly generous, or may have some part of their life where they are terribly messy. This is frustrating to scientists, but it may reflect the reality of personality!

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Therapy

Freud's therapy has been more influential than any other, and more influential than any other part of his theory. Here are some of the major points:

Relaxed atmosphere. The client must feel free to express anything. The therapy situation is in fact a unique social situation, one where you do not have to be afraid of social judgment or ostracism. In fact, in Freudian therapy, the therapist practically disappears. Add to that the physically relaxing couch, dim lights, sound-proof walls, and the stage is set.

Free association. The client may talk about anything at all. The theory is that, with relaxation, the unconscious conflicts will inevitably drift to the fore. It isn't far off to see a similarity between Freudian therapy and dreaming! However, in therapy, there is the therapist, who is trained to recognize certain clues to problems and their solutions that the client would overlook.

Resistance. One of these clues is resistance. When a client tries to change the topic, draws a complete blank, falls asleep, comes in late, or skips an appointment altogether, the therapist says "aha!" These resistances suggest that the client is nearing something in his free associations that he – unconsciously, of course – finds threatening.

Dream analysis. In sleep, we are somewhat less resistant to our unconscious and we will allow a few things, in symbolic form, of course, to come to awareness. These wishes from the id provide the therapist and client with more clues. Many forms of therapy make use of the client's dreams, but Freudian interpretation is distinct in the tendency to find sexual meanings.

Parapraxes. A parapraxis is a slip of the tongue, often called a Freudian slip. Freud felt that they were also clues to unconscious conflicts. Freud was also interested in the jokes his clients told. In fact, Freud felt that almost everything meant something almost all the time – dialing a wrong number, making a wrong turn, misspelling a word, were serious objects of study for Freud. However, he himself noted, in response to a student who asked what his cigar might be a symbol for, that "sometimes a cigar is just a cigar." Or is it?

Other Freudians became interested in **projective tests**, such as the famous Rorschach or inkblot tests. The theory behind these test is that, when the stimulus is vague, the client fills it with his or her own unconscious themes. Again, these could provide the therapist with clues.

Transference, catharsis, and insight

Transference occurs when a client projects feelings toward the therapist that more legitimately belong with certain important others. Freud felt that transference was necessary in therapy in order to bring the repressed emotions that have been plaguing the client for so long, to the surface. You can't feel really angry, for example, without a real person to be angry at. The relationship between the client and the therapist, contrary to popular images, is very close in Freudian therapy, although it is understood that it can't get out of hand.

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Catharsis is the sudden and dramatic outpouring of emotion that occurs when the trauma is resurrected. The box of tissues on the end table is not there for decoration.

Insight is being aware of the source of the emotion, of the original traumatic event. The major portion of the therapy is completed when catharsis and insight are experienced. What should have happened many years ago – because you were too little to deal with it, or under too many conflicting pressures – has now happened, and you are on your way to becoming a happier person.

Freud said that the goal of therapy is simply " to make the unconscious conscious."

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Discussion

The only thing more common than a blind admiration for Freud seems to be an equally blind hatred for him. Certainly, the proper attitude lies somewhere in between. Let's start by exploring some of the apparent flaws in his theory.

The least popular part of Freud's theory is the Oedipal complex and the associated ideas of castration anxiety and penis envy. What is the reality behind these concepts? It is true that some children are very attached to their opposite sex parent, and very competitive with their same-sex parent. It is true that some boys worry about the differences between boys and girls, and fear that someone may cut their penis off. It is true that some girls likewise are concerned, and wish they had a penis. And it is true that some of these children retain these affections, fears, and aspirations into adulthood.

Most personality theorists, however, consider these examples aberrations rather than universals, exceptions rather than rules. They occur in families that aren't working as well as they should, where parents are unhappy with each other, use their children against each other. They occur in families where parents literally denigrate girls for their supposed lack, and talk about cutting off the penises of unruly boys. They occur especially in neighborhoods where correct information on even he simplest sexual facts is not forthcoming, and children learn mistaken ideas from other children.

If we view the Oedipal crisis, castration anxiety, and penis envy in a more metaphoric and less literal fashion, they are useful concepts: We do love our mothers and fathers as well as compete with them. Children probably do learn the standard heterosexual behavior patterns by imitating the same-sex parent and practicing on the opposite-sex parent. In a male-dominated society, having a penis – being male – is better than not, and losing one's status as a male is scary. And wanting the privileges of the male, rather than the male organ, is a reasonable thing to expect in a girl with aspirations. But Freud did not mean for us to take these concepts metaphorically. Some of his followers, however, did.

Sexuality

A more general criticism of Freud's theory is its emphasis on sexuality. Everything, both good and bad, seems to stem from the expression or repression of the sex drive. Many people question that, and wonder if there are any other forces at work. Freud himself later added the death instinct, but that proved to be another one of his less popular ideas.

First let me point out that, in fact, a great deal of our activities are in some fashion motivated by sex. If you take a good hard look at our modern society, you will find that most advertising uses sexual images, that movies and television programs often don't sell well if they don't include some titillation, that the fashion industry is based on a continual game of sexual hide-and-seek, and that we all spend a considerable portion of every day playing "the mating game." Yet we still don't feel that all life is sexual.

But Freud's emphasis on sexuality was not based on the great amount of obvious sexuality in his society – it was based on the intense avoidance of sexuality, especially among the middle and upper classes, and most especially among women. What we too easily forget is that the world has changed rather dramatically over the last hundred years. We forget that doctors and ministers recommended strong punishment for masturbation, that "leg" was a dirty word, that a woman who felt sexual desire was automatically considered a potential prostitute, that a bride was often taken completely by surprise by the events of the wedding night, and could well faint at the thought.

It is to Freud's credit that he managed to rise above his culture's sexual attitudes. Even his mentor Breuer and the brilliant Charcot couldn't fully acknowledge the sexual nature of their clients' problems. Freud's mistake was more a matter of generalizing too far, and not taking cultural change into account. It is ironic that much of the cultural change in sexual attitudes was in fact due to Freud's work!

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The unconscious

One last concept that is often criticized is the unconscious. It is not argued that something like the unconscious accounts for some of our behavior, but rather how much and the exact nature of the beast.

Behaviorists, humanists, and existentialists all believe that (a) the motivations and problems that can be attributed to the unconscious are much fewer than Freud thought, and (b) the unconscious is not the great churning cauldron of activity he made it out to be. Most psychologists today see the unconscious as whatever we don't need or don't want to see. Some theorists don't use the concept at all.

On the other hand, at least one theorist, Carl Jung, proposed an unconscious that makes Freud's look puny! But we will leave all these views for the appropriate chapters.

Positive aspects

People have the unfortunate tendency to "throw the baby out with the bath water." If they don't agree with ideas a, b, and c, they figure x, y, and z must be wrong as well. But Freud had quite a few good ideas, so good that they have been incorporated into many other theories, to the point where we forget to give him credit.

First, Freud made us aware of two powerful forces and their demands on us. Back when everyone believed people were basically rational, he showed how much of our behavior was based on biology. When everyone conceived of people as individually responsible for their actions, he showed the impact of society. When everyone thought of male and female as roles determined by nature or God, he showed how much they depended on family dynamics. The id and the superego – the psychic manifestations of biology and society – will always be with us in some form or another.

Second is the basic theory, going back to Breuer, of certain neurotic symptoms as caused by psychological traumas. Although most theorists no longer believe that all neurosis can be so explained, or that it is necessary to relive the trauma to get better, it has become a common understanding that a childhood full of neglect, abuse, and tragedy tends to lead to an unhappy adult.

Third is the idea of ego defenses. Even if you are uncomfortable with Freud's idea of the unconscious, it is clear that we engage in little manipulations of reality and our memories of that reality to suit our own needs, especially when those needs are strong. I would recommend that you learn to recognize these defenses: You will find that having names for them will help you to notice them in yourself and others!

Finally, the basic form of therapy has been largely set by Freud. Except for some behaviorist therapies, most therapy is still "the talking cure," and still involves a physically and socially relaxed atmosphere. And, even if other theorists do not care for the idea of transference, the highly personal nature of the therapeutic relationship is generally accepted as important to success.

Some of Freud's ideas are clearly tied to his culture and era. Other ideas are not easily testable. Some may even be a matter of Freud's own personality and experiences. But Freud was an excellent observer of the human condition, and enough of what he said has relevance today that he will be a part of personality textbooks for years to come. Even when theorists come up with dramatically different ideas about how we work, they compare their ideas with Freud's.

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Readings

Freud's work is preserved in a 23 volume set called **The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud**. For a briefer overview, you might want to try Freud's **A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis** or **New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis**. They are a part of **The Standard Edition**, but can also be found separately and in paperback. Or you might try a collection, such as **The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud**.

Some of Freud's most interesting works are **The Interpretation of Dreams**, his own favorite, **The Psychopathology of Everyday Life**, about Freudian slips and other day-to-day oddities, **Totem and Taboo**, Freud's views on our beginnings, **Civilization and Its Discontents**, his pessimistic commentary on modern society, and **The Future of an Illusion**, on religion. All are a part of **The Standard Edition**, but all are available as separate paperbacks as well.

The father of psychoanalysis has been psychoanalyzed many times. First, there is his official biography, by his student Ernest Jones. More recent is a biography by Peter Gay. A highly critical account of Freud's work is Jeffrey Masson's **The Assault on Truth**. The commentary on and criticism of Freud's work is unending!

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ANNA FREUD

[1895 - 1982]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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It seems that every time Freud felt he had his successor picked out, the nominee would abandon him. At least, that's what happened with Jung and Adler. In the meantime, though, his daughter Anna was attending lectures, going through analysis with her father, and generally moving towards a career as a lay psychoanalyst. She also became his care-taker after he developed cancer in 1923. She became at very least her father's symbolic successor.

Ego psychology

Unlike Jung and Adler, she remained faithful to the basic ideas her father developed. However, she was more interested in the dynamics of the psyche than in its structure, and was particularly fascinated by the place of the ego in all this. Freud had, after all, spent most of his efforts on the id and the unconscious side of psychic life. As she rightly pointed out, the ego is the "seat of observation" from which we observe the work of the id and the superego and the unconscious generally, and deserves study in its own right.

She is probably best known for her book ***The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense***, in which she gives a particularly clear description of how the defenses work, including some special attention to adolescents' use of defenses. The defenses section of the chapter on Freud in this text is based as much on Anna's work as on Sigmund's.

This focus on the ego began a movement in psychoanalytic circles called **ego psychology** that today represents, arguably, the majority of Freudians. It takes Freud's earlier work as a crucial foundation, but extends it into the more ordinary, practical, day-to-day world of the ego. In this way, Freudian theory can be applied, not only to psychopathology, but to social and developmental issues as well. Erik Erikson is the best-known example of an ego psychologist.

Child psychology

But Anna Freud was not primarily a theoretician. Her interests were more practical, and most of her energies were devoted to the analysis of children and adolescents, and to improving that analysis. Her father, after all, had focused entirely on adult patients. Although he wrote a great deal about development, it was from the perspectives of these adults. What do you do with the child, for whom family crises and traumas and fixations are present events, not dim recollections?

First, the relationship of the child to the therapist is different. The child's parents are still very much a part of his or her life, a part the therapist cannot and should not try to usurp. But neither can the therapist pretend to be just another child rather than an authority figure. Anna Freud found that the best way to deal with this "transference problem" was the way that came most naturally: be a caring adult, not a new playmate, not a substitute parent. Her approach seems authoritarian by the standards of many modern child therapies, but it might make more sense.

Another problem with analyzing children is that their symbolic abilities are not as advanced as those of adults. The younger ones, certainly, may have trouble relating their emotional difficulties verbally. Even older children are less likely than adults to bury their problems under complex symbols. After all, the child's problems are here-and-now; there hasn't been much time to build up defenses. So the problems are close to the surface and tend to be expressed in more direct, less symbolic, behavioral and emotional terms.

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Most of her contributions to the study of personality come out of her work at the **Hamstead Child Therapy Clinic** in London, which she helped to set up. Here, she found that one of the biggest problems was communications among therapists: Whereas adult problems were communicated by means of traditional labels, children's problems could not be.

Because children's problems are more immediate, she reconceptualized them in terms of the child's movement along a developmental time-line. A child keeping pace with most of his or her peers in terms of eating behaviors, personal hygiene, play styles, relationships with other children, and so on, could be considered healthy. When one aspect or another of a child's development seriously lagged behind the rest, the clinician could assume that there was a problem, and could communicate the problem by describing the particular lag.

Research

She also influenced research in Freudian psychology. She standardized the records for children with diagnostic profiles, encouraged the pooling of observations from multiple analysts, and encouraged long-term studies of development from early childhood through adolescence. She also led the way in the use of natural experiments, that is, careful analyses of groups of children who suffered from similar disabilities, such as blindness, or early traumas, such as wartime loss of parents. The common criticism of Freudian psychology as having no empirical basis is true only if "empirical basis" is restricted to laboratory experimentation!

Most of Anna Freud's work is contained within ***The Writings of Anna Freud***, a seven-volume collection of her books and papers, including ***The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*** and her work on the analysis of children and adolescents. She is a very good writer, doesn't get too technical in most of her works, and uses many interesting case studies as examples.

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ERIK ERIKSON

[1902 – 1994]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

Among the Oglala Lakota, it was the tradition for an adolescent boy to go off on his own, weaponless and wearing nothing but a loincloth and mocassins, on a dream quest. Hungry, thirsty, and bone-tired, the boy would expect to have a dream on the fourth day which would reveal to him his life's path. Returning home, he would relate his dream to the tribal elders, who would interpret it according to ancient practice. And his dream would tell him whether he was destined to be a good hunter, or a great warrior, or expert at the art of horse-stealing, or perhaps to become specialized in the making of weapons, or a spiritual leader, priest, or medicine man.

In some cases, the dream would lead him into the realm of controlled deviations among the Oglala. A dream involving the thunderbird might lead a boy to go through a period of time as a heyoka, which involved acting like a clown or a crazy man. Or a vision of the moon or a white buffalo could lead one to a life as a berdache, a man who dresses and behaves as if he were a woman.

In any case, the number of roles one could play in life was extremely limited for men, and even more so for women. Most people were generalists; very few could afford to be specialists. And you learned these roles by simply being around the other people in your family and community. You learned them by living.

By the time the Oglala Lakota were visited by Erik Erikson, things had changed quite a bit. They had been herded onto a large but barren reservation through a series of wars and unhappy treaties. The main source of food, clothing, shelter, and just about everything else – the buffalo – had long since been hunted into near-extinction. Worst of all, the patterns of their lives had been taken from them, not by white soldiers, but by the quiet efforts of government bureaucrats to turn the Lakota into Americans!

Children were made to stay at boarding schools much of the year, in the sincere belief that civilization and prosperity comes with education. At boarding schools they learned many things that contradicted what they learned at home: They were taught white standards of cleanliness and beauty, some of which contradicted Lakota standards of modesty. They were taught to compete, which contradicted Lakota traditions of egalitarianism. They were told to speak up, when their upbringing told them to be still. In other words, their white teachers found them quite impossible to work with, and their parents found them quite corrupted by an alien culture.

As time went by, their original culture disappeared, but the new culture didn't provide the necessary substitutions. There were no more dream quests, but then what roles were there left for adolescents to dream themselves into?

Erikson was moved by the difficulties faced by the Lakota childen and adolescents he talked to and observed. But growing up and finding one's place in the world isn't easy for many other Americans, either. African-Americans struggle to piece together an identity out of forgotten African roots, the culture of powerlessness and poverty, and the culture of the surrounding white majority. Asian-Americans are similarly stretched between Asian and American traditions. Rural Americans find that the cultures of childhood won't cut it in the larger society. And the great majority of European-Americans have, in fact, little left of their own cultural identities other than wearing green on St. Patrick's Day or a recipe for marinara sauce from grandma! American culture, because it is everybody's, is in some senses nobody's.

Like native Americans, other Americans have also lost many of the rituals that once guided us through life. At what point are you an adult? When you go through puberty? Have your confirmation or bar mitzvah? Your first sexual experience? Sweet sixteen party? Your learner's permit? Your driver's license? High school graduation? Voting in your first election? First job? Legal drinking age? College graduation? When exactly is it that everyone treats you like an adult?

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Consider some of the contradictions: You may be old enough to be entrusted with a two-ton hunk of speeding metal, yet not be allowed to vote; You may be old enough to die for your country in war, yet not be permitted to order a beer; As a college student, you may be trusted with thousands of dollars of student loans, yet not be permitted to choose your own classes.

In traditional societies (even our own only 50 or 100 years ago), a young man or woman looked up to his or her parents, relations, neighbors, and teachers. They were decent, hard-working people (most of them) and we wanted to be just like them.

Unfortunately, most children today look to the mass media, especially T.V., for role models. It is easy to understand why: The people on T.V. are prettier, richer, smarter, wittier, healthier, and happier than anybody in our own neighborhoods! Unfortunately, they aren't real. I'm always astounded at how many new college students are quickly disappointed to discover that their chosen field actually requires a lot of work and study. It doesn't on T.V. Later, many people are equally surprised that the jobs they worked so hard to get aren't as creative and glorious and fulfilling as they expected. Again, that isn't how it is on T.V. It shouldn't surprise us that so many young people look to the short-cuts that crime seems to offer, or the fantasy life that drugs promise.

Some of you may see this as an exaggeration or a stereotype of modern adolescence. I certainly hope that your passage from childhood to adulthood was a smooth one. But a lot of people – myself and Erikson included – could have used a dream quest.

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Biography

Erik Erikson was born in Frankfurt, Germany, on June 15, 1902. There is a little mystery about his heritage: His biological father was an unnamed Danish man who abandoned Erik's mother before he was born. His mother, Karla Abrahamsen, was a young Jewish woman who raised him alone for the first three years of his life. She then married Dr. Theodor Homberger, who was Erik's pediatrician, and moved to Karlsruhe in southern Germany.

We cannot pass over this little piece of biography without some comment: The development of identity seems to have been one of his greatest concerns in Erikson's own life as well as in his theory. During his childhood, and his early adulthood, he was Erik Homberger, and his parents kept the details of his birth a secret. So here he was, a tall, blond, blue-eyed boy who was also Jewish. At temple school, the kids teased him for being Nordic; at grammar school, they teased him for being Jewish.

After graduating high school, Erik focussed on becoming an artist. When not taking art classes, he wandered around Europe, visiting museums and sleeping under bridges. He was living the life of the carefree rebel, long before it became "the thing to do."

When he was 25, his friend Peter Blos – a fellow artist and, later, psychoanalyst – suggested he apply for a teaching position at an experimental school for American students run by Dorothy Burlingham, a friend of Anna Freud. Besides teaching art, he gathered a certificate in Montessori education and one from the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. He was psychoanalyzed by Anna Freud herself.

While there, he also met Joan Serson, a Canadian dance teacher at the school. They went on the have three children, one of whom became a sociologist himself.

With the Nazis coming into power, they left Vienna, first for Copenhagen, then to Boston. Erikson was offered a position at the Harvard Medical School and practiced child psychoanalysis privately. During this time, he met psychologists like Henry Murray and Kurt Lewin, and anthropologists like Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson. I think it can be safely said that these anthropologists had nearly as great an effect on Erikson as Sigmund and Anna Freud!

He later taught at Yale, and later still at the University of California at Berkeley. It was during this period of time that he did his famous studies of modern life among the Lakota and the Yurok.

When he became an American citizen, he officially changed his name to Erik Erikson. No-one seems to know where he got the name!

In 1950, he wrote Childhood and Society, which contained summaries of his studies among the native Americans, analyses of Maxim Gorkiy and Adolph Hitler, a discussion of the "American personality," and the basic outline of his version of Freudian theory. These themes – the influence of culture on personality and the analysis of historical figures – were repeated in other works, one of which, Gandhi's Truth, won him the Pulitzer Prize and the national Book Award.

In 1950, during Senator Joseph McCarthy's reign of terror, Erikson left Berkeley when professors there were asked to sign "loyalty oaths." He spent ten years working and teaching at a clinic in Massachussets, and ten years more back at Harvard. Since retiring in 1970, he wrote and did research with his wife. He died in 1994.

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Theory

Erikson is a Freudian **ego-psychologist**. This means that he accepts Freud's ideas as basically correct, including the more debatable ideas such as the Oedipal complex, and accepts as well the ideas about the ego that were added by other Freudian loyalists such as Heinz Hartmann and, of, course, Anna Freud. However, Erikson is much more society and culture-oriented than most Freudians, as you might expect from someone with his anthropological interests, and he often pushes the instincts and the unconscious practically out of the picture. Perhaps because of this, Erikson is popular among Freudians and non-Freudians alike!

The epigenetic principle

He is most famous for his work in refining and expanding Freud's theory of stages. Development, he says, functions by the **epigenetic principle**. This principle says that we develop through a predetermined unfolding of our personalities in eight stages. Our progress through each stage is in part determined by our success, or lack of success, in all the previous stages. A little like the unfolding of a rose bud, each petal opens up at a certain time, in a certain order, which nature, through its genetics, has determined. If we interfere in the natural order of development by pulling a petal forward prematurely or out of order, we ruin the development of the entire flower.

Each stage involves certain developmental **tasks** that are psychosocial in nature. Although he follows Freudian tradition by calling them **crises**, they are more drawn out and less specific than that term implies. The child in grammar school, for example, has to learn to be industrious during that period of his or her life, and that industriousness is learned through the complex social interactions of school and family.

The various tasks are referred to by two terms. The infant's task, for example, is called "trust-mistrust." At first, it might seem obvious that the infant must learn trust and not mistrust. But Erikson made it clear that there it is a balance we must learn: Certainly, we need to learn mostly trust; but we also need to learn a little mistrust, so as not to grow up to become gullible fools!

Each stage has a certain **optimal time** as well. It is no use trying to rush children into adulthood, as is so common among people who are obsessed with success. Neither is it possible to slow the pace or to try to protect our children from the demands of life. There is a time for each task.

If a stage is managed well, we carry away a certain **virtue** or psychosocial strength which will help us through the rest of the stages of our lives. On the other hand, if we don't do so well, we may develop maladaptations and malignancies, as well as endanger all our future development. A malignancy is the worse of the two, and involves too little of the positive and too much of the negative aspect of the task, such as a person who can't trust others. A maladaptation is not quite as bad and involves too much of the positive and too little of the negative, such as a person who trusts too much.

Children and adults

Perhaps Erikson's greatest innovation was to postulate not five stages, as Freud had done, but eight. Erikson elaborated Freud's genital stage into adolescence plus three stages of adulthood. We certainly don't stop developing – especially psychologically – after our twelfth or thirteenth birthdays; It seems only right to extend any theory of stages to cover later development!

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Erikson also had some things to say about the interaction of generations, which he called **mutuality**. Freud had made it abundantly clear that a child's parents influence his or her development dramatically. Erikson pointed out that children influence their parents' development as well. The arrival of children, for example, into a couple's life, changes that life considerably, and moves the new parents along their developmental paths. It is even appropriate to add a third (and in some cases, a fourth) generation to the picture: Many of us have been influenced by our grandparents, and they by us.

A particularly clear example of mutuality can be seen in the problems of the teenage mother. Although the mother and her child may have a fine life together, often the mother is still involved in the tasks of adolescence, that is, in finding out who she is and how she fits into the larger society. The relationship she has or had with the child's father may have been immature on one or both sides, and if they don't marry, she will have to deal with the problems of finding and developing a relationship as well. The infant, on the other hand, has the simple, straight-forward needs that infants have, and the most important of these is a mother with the mature abilities and social support a mother should have. If the mother's parents step in to help, as one would expect, then they, too, are thrown off of their developmental tracks, back into a life-style they thought they had passed, and which they might find terribly demanding. And so on....

The ways in which our lives intermesh are terribly complex and very frustrating to the theorist. But ignoring them is to ignore something vitally important about our development and our personalities.

stage (age)	psychosocial crisis	significant relations	psychosocial modalities	psychosocial virtues	maladaptations & malignancies
I (0-1) – infant	trust vs mistrust	mother	to get, to give in return	hope, faith	sensory distortion – withdrawal
II (2-3) – toddler	autonomy vs shame and doubt	parents	to hold on, to let go	will, determination	impulsivity – compulsion
III (3-6) – preschooler	initiative vs guilt	family	to go after, to play	purpose, courage	ruthlessness – inhibition
IV (7-12 or so) – school-age child	industry vs inferiority	neighborhood and school	to complete, to make things together	competence	narrow virtuosity – inertia
V (12-18 or so) – adolescence	ego-identity vs role-confusion	peer groups, role models	to be oneself, to share oneself	fidelity, loyalty	fanaticism – repudiation
VI (the 20's) – young adult	intimacy vs isolation	partners, friends	to lose and find oneself in a another	love	promiscuity – exclusivity
VII (late 20's to 50's) – middle adult	generativity vs self-absorption	household, workmates	to make be, to take care of	care	overextension – rejectivity
VIII (50's and beyond) – old adult	integrity vs despair	mankind or "my kind"	to be, through having been, to face not being	wisdom	presumption – despair

Chart adapted from Erikson's 1959 *Identity and the Life Cycle* (**Psychological Issues** vol 1, #1)

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The first stage

The first stage, infancy or the **oral-sensory stage**, is approximately the first year or year and a half of life. The task is to develop **trust** without completely eliminating the capacity for **mistrust**.

If mom and dad can give the newborn a degree of familiarity, consistency, and continuity, then the child will develop the feeling that the world – especially the social world – is a safe place to be, that people are reliable and loving. Through the parents' responses, the child also learns to trust his or her own body and the biological urges that go with it.

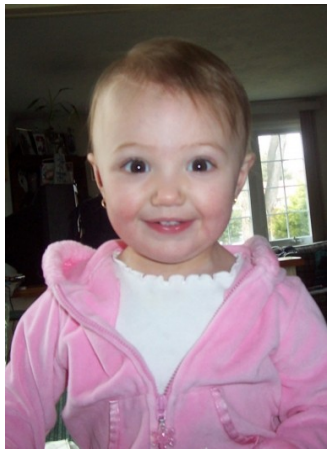
If the parents are unreliable and inadequate, if they reject the infant or harm it, if other interests cause both parents to turn away from the infants needs to satisfy their own instead, then the infant will develop mistrust. He or she will be apprehensive and suspicious around people.

Please understand that this doesn't mean that the parents have to be perfect. In fact, parents who are overly protective of the child, are there the minute the first cry comes out, will lead that child into the **maladaptive tendency** Erikson calls **sensory maladjustment**: Overly trusting, even gullible, this person cannot believe anyone would mean them harm, and will use all the defenses at their command to retain their pollyanna perspective.

Worse, of course, is the child whose balance is tipped way over on the mistrust side: They will develop the **malignant tendency** of **withdrawal**, characterized by depression, paranoia, and possibly psychosis.

If the proper balance is achieved, the child will develop the virtue **hope**, the strong belief that, even when things are not going well, they will work out well in the end. One of the signs that a child is doing well in the first stage is when the child isn't overly upset by the need to wait a moment for the satisfaction of his or her needs: Mom or dad don't have to be perfect; I trust them enough to believe that, if they can't be here immediately, they will be here soon; Things may be tough now, but they will work out. This is the same ability that, in later life, gets us through disappointments in love, our careers, and many other domains of life.

Stage two



The second stage is the **anal-muscular stage** of early childhood, from about eighteen months to three or four years old. The task is to achieve a degree of **autonomy** while minimizing **shame and doubt**.

If mom and dad (and the other care-takers that often come into the picture at this point) permit the child, now a toddler, to explore and manipulate his or her environment, the child will develop a sense of autonomy or independence. The parents should not discourage the child, but neither should they push. A balance is required. People often advise new parents to be "firm but tolerant" at this stage, and the advice is good. This way, the child will develop both self-control and self-esteem.

On the other hand, it is rather easy for the child to develop instead a sense of shame and doubt. If the parents come down hard on any attempt to explore and be independent, the child will soon give up with the assumption that cannot and should not act on their own. We should keep in mind that even something as innocent as laughting at the toddler's efforts can lead the child to feel deeply ashamed, and to doubt his or her abilities.

And there are other ways to lead children to shame and doubt: If you give children unrestricted freedom and

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no sense of limits, or if you try to help children do what they should learn to do for themselves, you will also give them the impression that they are not good for much. If you aren't patient enough to wait for your child to tie his or her shoe-laces, your child will never learn to tie them, and will assume that this is too difficult to learn!

Nevertheless, a little "shame and doubt" is not only inevitable, but beneficial. Without it, you will develop the maladaptive tendency Erikson calls **impulsiveness**, a sort of shameless willfulness that leads you, in later childhood and even adulthood, to jump into things without proper consideration of your abilities.

Worse, of course, is too much shame and doubt, which leads to the malignancy Erikson calls **compulsiveness**. The compulsive person feels as if their entire being rides on everything they do, and so everything must be done perfectly. Following all the rules precisely keeps you from mistakes, and mistakes must be avoided at all costs. Many of you know how it feels to always be ashamed and always doubt yourself. A little more patience and tolerance with your own children may help them avoid your path. And give yourself a little slack, too!

If you get the proper, positive balance of autonomy and shame and doubt, you will develop the virtue of **willpower** or determination. One of the most admirable – and frustrating – thing about two- and three-year-olds is their determination. "Can do" is their motto. If we can preserve that "can do" attitude (with appropriate modesty to balance it) we are much better off as adults.

Stage three

Stage three is the **genital-locomotor stage** or play age. From three or four to five or six, the task confronting every child is to learn **initiative** without too much **guilt**.

Initiative means a positive response to the world's challenges, taking on responsibilities, learning new skills, feeling purposeful. Parents can encourage initiative by encouraging children to try out their ideas. We should accept and encourage fantasy and curiosity and imagination. This is a time for play, not for formal education. The child is now capable, as never before, of imagining a future situation, one that isn't a reality right now. Initiative is the attempt to make that non-reality a reality.

But if children can imagine the future, if they can plan, then they can be responsible as well, and guilty. If my two-year-old flushes my watch down the toilet, I can safely assume that there were no "evil intentions." It was just a matter of a shiny object going round and round and down. What fun! But if my five year old does the same thing... well, she should know what's going to happen to the watch, what's going to happen to daddy's temper, and what's going to happen to her! She can be guilty of the act, and she can begin to feel guilty as well. The capacity for moral judgement has arrived.

Erikson is, of course, a Freudian, and as such, he includes the Oedipal experience in this stage. From his perspective, the Oedipal crisis involves the reluctance a child feels in relinquishing his or her closeness to the opposite sex parent. A parent has the responsibility, socially, to enourage the child to "grow up – you're not a baby anymore!" But if this process is done too harshly and too abruptly, the child learns to feel guilty about his or her feelings.

Too much initiative and too little guilt means a maladaptive tendency Erikson calls **ruthlessness**. The ruthless person takes the initiative alright; They have their plans, whether it's a matter of school or romance or politics or career. It's just that they don't care who they step on to achieve their goals. The goals are everything, and guilty feelings are for the weak. The extreme form of ruthlessess is sociopathy.

Ruthlessness is bad for others, but actually relatively easy on the ruthless person. Harder on the person is the malignancy of too much guilt, which Erikson calls **inhibition**. The inhibited person will not try things because "nothing ventured, nothing lost" and, particularly, nothing to feel guilty about. On the sexual,

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Oedipal, side, the inhibited person may be impotent or frigid.

A good balance leads to the psychosocial strength of **purpose**. A sense of purpose is something many people crave in their lives, yet many do not realize that they themselves make their purposes, through imagination and initiative. I think an even better word for this virtue would have been courage, the capacity for action despite a clear understanding of your limitations and past failings.

Stage four

Stage four is the **latency stage**, or the school-age child from about six to twelve. The task is to develop a capacity for **industry** while avoiding an excessive sense of **inferiority**. Children must "tame the imagination" and dedicate themselves to education and to learning the social skills their society requires of them.

There is a much broader social sphere at work now: The parents and other family members are joined by teachers and peers and other members of he community at large. They all contribute: Parents must encourage, teachers must care, peers must accept. Children must learn that there is pleasure not only in conceiving a plan, but in carrying it out. They must learn the feeling of success, whether it is in school or on the playground, academic or social.

A good way to tell the difference between a child in the third stage and one in the fourth stage is to look at the way they play games. Four-year-olds may love games, but they will have only a vague understanding of the rules, may change them several times during the course of the game, and be very unlikely to actually finish the game, unless it is by throwing the pieces at their opponents. A seven-year-old, on the other hand, is dedicated to the rules, considers them pretty much sacred, and is more likely to get upset if the game is not allowed to come to its required conclusion.

If the child is allowed too little success, because of harsh teachers or rejecting peers, for example, then he or she will develop instead a sense of inferiority or incompetence. An additional source of inferiority Erikson mentions is racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination: If a child believes that success is related to who you are rather than to how hard you try, then why try?

Too much industry leads to the maladaptive tendency called **narrow virtuosity**. We see this in children who aren't allowed to "be children," the ones that parents or teachers push into one area of competence, without allowing the development of broader interests. These are the kids without a life: child actors, child athletes, child musicians, child prodigies of all sorts. We all admire their industry, but if we look a little closer, it's all that stands in the way of an empty life.

Much more common is the malignancy called **inertia**. This includes all of us who suffer from the "inferiority complexes" Alfred Adler talked about. If at first you don't succeed, don't ever try again! Many of us didn't do well in mathematics, for example, so we'd die before we took another math class. Others were humiliated instead in the gym class, so we never try out for a sport or play a game of raquetball. Others never developed social skills – the most important skills of all – and so we never go out in public. We become inert.

A happier thing is to develop the right balance of industry and inferiority – that is, mostly industry with just a touch of inferiority to keep us sensibly humble. Then we have the virtue called **competency**.

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Stage five

Stage five is **adolescence**, beginning with puberty and ending around 18 or 20 years old. The task during adolescence is to achieve **ego identity** and avoid **role confusion**. It was adolescence that interested Erikson first and most, and the patterns he saw here were the bases for his thinking about all the other stages.

Ego identity means knowing who you are and how you fit in to the rest of society. It requires that you take all you've learned about life and yourself and mold it into a unified self-image, one that your community finds meaningful.

There are a number of things that make things easier: First, we should have a mainstream adult culture that is worthy of the adolescent's respect, one with good adult role models and open lines of communication.

Further, society should provide clear **rites of passage**, certain accomplishments and rituals that help to distinguish the adult from the child. In primitive and traditional societies, an adolescent boy may be asked to leave the village for a period of time to live on his own, hunt some symbolic animal, or seek an inspirational vision. Boys and girls may be required to go through certain tests of endurance, symbolic ceremonies, or educational events. In one way or another, the distinction between the powerless, but irresponsible, time of childhood and the powerful and responsbile time of adulthood, is made clear.

Without these things, we are likely to see role confusion, meaning an uncertainty about one's place in society and the world. When an adolescent is confronted by role confusion, Erikson say he or she is suffering from an identity crisis. In fact, a common question adolescents in our society ask is a straight-forward question of identity: "Who am I?"

One of Erikson's suggestions for adolescence in our society is the **psychosocial moratorium**. He suggests you take a little "time out." If you have money, go to Europe. If you don't, bum around the U.S. Quit school and get a job. Quit your job and go to school. Take a break, smell the roses, get to know yourself. We tend to want to get to "success" as fast as possible, and yet few of us have ever taken the time to figure out what success means to us. A little like the young Oglala Lakota, perhaps we need to dream a little.

There is such a thing as too much "ego identity," where a person is so involved in a particular role in a particular society or subculture that there is no room left for tolerance. Erikson calls this maladaptive tendency **fanaticism**. A fanatic believes that his way is the only way. Adolescents are, of course, known for their idealism, and for their tendency to see things in black-and-white. These people will gather others around them and promote their beliefs and life-styles without regard to others' rights to disagree.

The lack of identity is perhaps more difficult still, and Erikson refers to the malignant tendency here as **repudiation**. They repudiate their membership in the world of adults and, even more, they repudiate their need for an identity. Some adolescents allow themselves to "fuse" with a group, especially the kind of group that is particularly eager to provide the details of your identity: religious cults, militaristic organizations, groups founded on hatred, groups that have divorced themselves from the painful demands of mainstream society. They may become involved in destructive activities, drugs, or alcohol, or you may withdraw into their own psychotic fantasies. After all, being "bad" or being "nobody" is better than not knowing who you are!

If you successfully negotiate this stage, you will have the virtue Erikson called **fidelity**. Fidelity means loyalty, the ability to live by societies standards despite their imperfections and incompleteness and inconsistencies. We are not talking about blind loyalty, and we are not talking about accepting the imperfections. After all, if you love your community, you will want to see it become the best it can be. But fidelity means that you have found a place in that community, a place that will allow you to contribute.

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Stage six

If you have made it this far, you are in the stage of young adulthood, which lasts from about 18 to about 30. The ages in the adult stages are much fuzzier than in the childhood stages, and people may differ dramatically. The task is to achieve some degree of **intimacy**, as opposed to remaining in **isolation**.

Intimacy is the ability to be close to others, as a lover, a friend, and as a participant in society. Because you have a clear sense of who you are, you no longer need to fear "losing" yourself, as many adolescents do. The "fear of commitment" some people seem to exhibit is an example of immaturity in this stage. This fear isn't always so obvious. Many people today are always putting off the progress of their relationships: I'll get married (or have a family, or get involved in important social issues) as soon as I finish school, as soon as I have a job, as soon as I have a house, as soon as.... If you've been engaged for the last ten years, what's holding you back?

Neither should the young adult need to prove him- or herself anymore. A teenage relationship is often a matter of trying to establish identity through "couple-hood." Who am I? I'm her boy-friend. The young adult relationship should be a matter of two independent egos wanting to create something larger than themselves. We intuitively recognize this when we frown on a relationship between a young adult and a teenager: We see the potential for manipulation of the younger member of the party by the older.

Our society hasn't done much for young adults, either. The emphasis on careers, the isolation of urban living, the splitting apart of relationships because of our need for mobility, and the general impersonal nature of modern life prevent people from naturally developing their intimate relationships. I am typical of many people in having moved dozens of times in my life. I haven't the faintest idea what has happened to the kids I grew up with, or even my college buddies. My oldest friend lives a thousand miles away. I live where I do out of career necessity and, until recently, have felt no real sense of community.

Before I get too depressing, let me mention that many of you may not have had these experiences. If you grew up and stayed in your community, and especially if your community is a rural one, you are much more likely to have deep, long-lasting friendships, to have married your high school sweetheart, and to feel a great love for your community. But this style of life is quickly becoming an anachronism.

Erikson calls the maladaptive form **promiscuity**, refering particularly to the tendency to become intimate too freely, too easily, and without any depth to your intimacy. This can be true of your relationships with friends and neighbors and your whole community as well as with lovers.

The malignancy he calls **exclusion**, which refers to the tendency to isolate oneself from love, friendship, and community, and to develop a certain hatefulness in compensation for one's loneliness.

If you successfully negotiate this stage, you will instead carry with you for the rest of your life the virtue or psychosocial strength Erikson calls **love**. Love, in the context of his theory, means being able to put aside differences and antagonisms through "mutuality of devotion." It includes not only the love we find in a good marriage, but the love between friends and the love of one's neighbor, co-worker, and compatriot as well.

Stage seven

The seventh stage is that of **middle adulthood**. It is hard to pin a time to it, but it would include the period during which we are actively involved in raising children. For most people in our society, this would put it somewhere between the middle twenties and the late fifties. The task here is to cultivate the proper balance of **generativity** and **stagnation**.

Generativity is an extension of love into the future. It is a concern for the next generation and all future

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generations. As such, it is considerably less "selfish" than the intimacy of the previous stage: Intimacy, the love between lovers or friends, is a love between equals, and it is necessarily reciprocal. Oh, of course we love each other unselfishly, but the reality is such that, if the love is not returned, we don't consider it a true love. With generativity, that implicit expectation of reciprocity isn't there, at least not as strongly. Few parents expect a "return on their investment" from their children; If they do, we don't think of them as very good parents!

Although the majority of people practice generativity by having and raising children, there are many other ways as well. Erikson considers teaching, writing, invention, the arts and sciences, social activism, and generally contributing to the welfare of future generations to be generativity as well – anything, in fact, that satisfies that old "need to be needed."

Stagnation, on the other hand, is self-absorption, caring for no-one. The stagnant person ceases to be a productive member of society. It is perhaps hard to imagine that we should have any "stagnation" in our lives, but the maladaptive tendency Erikson calls **overextension** illustrates the problem: Some people try to be so generative that they no longer allow time for themselves, for rest and relaxation. The person who is overextended no longer contributes well. I'm sure we all know someone who belongs to so many clubs, or is devoted to so many causes, or tries to take so many classes or hold so many jobs that they no longer have time for any of them!

More obvious, of course, is the malignant tendency of **rejectivity**. Too little generativity and too much stagnation and you are no longer participating in or contributing to society. And much of what we call "the meaning of life" is a matter of how we participate and what we contribute.

This is the stage of the "midlife crisis." Sometimes men and women take a look at their lives and ask that big, bad question "what am I doing all this for?" Notice the question carefully: Because their focus is on themselves, they ask what, rather than whom, they are doing it for. In their panic at getting older and not having experienced or accomplished what they imagined they would when they were younger, they try to recapture their youth. Men are often the most flambouyant examples: They leave their long-suffering wives, quit their humdrum jobs, buy some "hip" new clothes, and start hanging around singles bars. Of course, they seldom find what they are looking for, because they are looking for the wrong thing!

But if you are successful at this stage, you will have a capacity for caring that will serve you through the rest of your life.

Stage eight

This last stage, referred to delicately as **late adulthood** or maturity, or less delicately as old age, begins sometime around retirement, after the kids have gone, say somewhere around 60. Some older folks will protest and say it only starts when you feel old and so on, but that's an effect of our youth-worshipping culture, which has even old people avoiding any acknowledgement of age. In Erikson's theory, reaching this stage is a good thing, and not reaching it suggests that earlier problems retarded your development!

The task is to develop **ego integrity** with a minimal amount of **despair**. This stage, especially from the perspective of youth, seems like the most difficult of all. First comes a detachment from society, from a sense of usefulness, for most people in our culture. Some retire from jobs they've held for years; others find their duties as parents coming to a close; most find that their input is no longer requested or required.

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Then there is a sense of biological uselessness, as the body no longer does everything it used to. Women go through a sometimes dramatic menopause; Men often find they can no longer "rise to the occasion." Then there are the illnesses of old age, such as arthritis, diabetes, heart problems, concerns about breast and ovarian and prostrate cancers. There come fears about things that one was never afraid of before – the flu, for example, or just falling down.

Along with the illnesses come concerns of death. Friends die. Relatives die. One's spouse dies. It is, of course, certain that you, too, will have your turn. Faced with all this, it might seem like everyone would feel despair.

In response to this despair, some older people become preoccupied with the past. After all, that's where things were better. Some become preoccupied with their failures, the bad decisions they made, and regret that (unlike some in the previous stage) they really don't have the time or energy to reverse them. We find some older people become depressed, spiteful, paranoid, hypochondriacal, or developing the patterns of senility with or without physical bases.

Ego integrity means coming to terms with your life, and thereby coming to terms with the end of life. If you are able to look back and accept the course of events, the choices made, your life as you lived it, as being necessary, then you needn't fear death. Although most of you are not at this point in life, perhaps you can still sympathize by considering your life up to now. We've all made mistakes, some of them pretty nasty ones; Yet, if you hadn't made these mistakes, you wouldn't be who you are. If you had been very fortunate, or if you had played it safe and made very few mistakes, your life would not have been as rich as is.

The maladaptive tendency in stage eight is called **presumption**. This is what happens when a person "presumes" ego integrity without actually facing the difficulties of old age. The malignant tendency is called **disdain**, by which Erikson means a contempt of life, one's own or anyone's.

Someone who approaches death without fear has the strength Erikson calls **wisdom**. He calls it a gift to children, because "healthy children will not fear life if their elders have integrity enough not to fear death." He suggests that a person must be somewhat gifted to be truly wise, but I would like to suggest that you understand "gifted" in as broad a fashion as possible: I have found that there are people of very modest gifts who have taught me a great deal, not by their wise words, but by their simple and gentle approach to life and death, by their "generosity of spirit."

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Discussion

I can't think of anyone, other than Jean Piaget, who has promoted the stage approach to development more than Erik Erikson. And yet stages are not at all a popular concept among personality theorists. Of the people reviewed in this text, only Sigmund and Anna Freud fully share his convictions. Most theorists prefer an incremental or gradual approach to development, and speak of "phases" or "transitions" rather than of clearly marked stages..

But there are certain segments of life that are fairly easy to identify, that do have the necessary quality of biologically determined timing. Adolescence is "preprogrammed" to occur when it occurs, as is birth and, very possibly, natural death. The first year of life has some special, fetus-like qualities, and the last year of life includes certain "catastrophic" qualities.

If we stretch the meaning of stages to include certain logical sequences, i.e. things that happen in a certain order, not because they are biologically so programmed, but because they don't make sense any other way, we can make an even better case: weaning and potty training have to precede the independence from mother required by schooling; one is normally sexually mature before finding a lover, normally finds a lover before having children, and necessarily has children before enjoying their leaving!

And if we stretch the meaning of stages even further to include social "programming" as well as biological, we can include periods of dependence and schooling and work and retirement as well. So stretched, it is no longer a difficult matter to come up with seven or eight stages; Only now, of course, you'd be hard pressed to call them stages, rather than "phases" or something equally vague.

It is, in fact, hard to defend Erikson's eight stages if we accept the demands of his understanding of what stages are. In different cultures, even within cultures, the timing can be quite different: In some countries, babies are weaned at six months and potty trained at nine months; in others, they still get the breast at five and potty training involves little more than taking it outside. At one time in our own culture, people were married at thirteen and had their first child by fifteen. Today, we tend to postpone marriage until thirty and rush to have our one and only child before forty. We look forward to many years of retirement; in other times and other places, retirement is unknown.

And yet Erikson's stages do seem to give us a framework. We can talk about our culture as compared with others', or today as compared with a few centuries ago, by looking at the ways in which we differ relative to the "standard" his theory provides. Erikson and other researchers have found that the general pattern does in fact hold across cultures and times, and most of us find it quite familiar. In other words, his theory meets one of the most important standards of personality theory, a standard sometimes more important than "truth:" It is useful.

It also offers us insights we might not have noticed otherwise. For example, you may tend to think of his eight stages as a series of tasks that don't follow any particularly logical course. But if you divide the lifespan into two sequences of four stages, you can see a real pattern, with a child development half and an adult development half.

In stage I, the infant must learn that "it" (meaning the world, especially as represented by mom and dad and itself) is "okay." In stage II, the toddler learns "I can do," in the here-and-now. In stage III, the preschooler learns "I can plan," and project him or herself into the future. In stage IV, the school-age child learns "I can finish" these projections. In going through these four stages, the child develops a competent ego, ready for the larger world.

In the adult half of the scheme, we expand beyond the ego. Stage V, is concerned with establishing something very similar to "it is okay:" The adolescent must learn that "I am okay," a conclusion predicated on successful negotiation of the preceding four stages. In stage VI, the young adult must learn to love, which is a sort of social "I can do," in the here-and-now. In stage VII, the adult must learn to extend that love into the future, as caring. And in stage VIII, the old person must learn to "finish" him- or herself as an ego, and

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establish a new and broader identity. We could borrow Jung's term, and say that the second half of live is devoted to realizing one's self.

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Readings

Erikson is an excellent writer and will capture your imagination whether you are convinced by his Freudian side or not. The two books that lay out his theory are **Childhood and Society** and **Identity: Youth and Crisis**. These are more like collections of essays on subjects as varied as Native American tribes, famous people like William James and Adolph Hitler, nationality, race, and gender.

His most famous books are two studies in "Psychohistory," **Young Man Luther** on Martin Luther, and **Ghandi's Truth**.

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CARL JUNG

[1875 - 1961]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

> Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to abandon exact science, put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throught the world. There in the horrors of prisons, lunatic asylums and hospitals, in drab suburban pubs, in brothels and gambling-hells, in the salons of the elegant, the Stock Exchanges, socialist meetings, churches, revivalist gatherings and ecstatic sects, through love and hate, through the experience of passion in every form in his own body, he would reap richer stores of knowledge than text-books a foot thick could give him, and he will know how to doctor the sick with a real knowledge of the human soul. – Carl Jung

Freud said that the goal of therapy was to make the unconscious conscious. He certainly made that the goal of his work as a theorist. And yet he makes the unconscious sound very unpleasant, to say the least: It is a cauldron of seething desires, a bottomless pit of perverse and incestuous cravings, a burial ground for frightening experiences which nevertheless come back to haunt us. Frankly, it doesn't sound like anything I'd like to make conscious!

A younger colleague of his, Carl Jung, was to make the exploration of this "inner space" his life's work. He went equipped with a background in Freudian theory, of course, and with an apparently inexhaustible knowledge of mythology, religion, and philosophy. Jung was especially knowledgeable in the symbolism of complex mystical traditions such as Gnosticism, Alchemy, Kabala, and similar traditions in Hinduism and Buddhism. If anyone could make sense of the unconscious and its habit of revealing itself only in symbolic form, it would be Carl Jung.

He had, in addition, a capacity for very lucid dreaming and occasional visions. In the fall of 1913, he had a vision of a "monstrous flood" engulfing most of Europe and lapping at the mountains of his native Switzerland. He saw thousands of people drowning and civilization crumbling. Then, the waters turned into blood. This vision was followed, in the next few weeks, by dreams of eternal winters and rivers of blood. He was afraid that he was becoming psychotic.

But on August 1 of that year, World War I began. Jung felt that there had been a connection, somehow, between himself as an individual and humanity in general that could not be explained away. From then until 1928, he was to go through a rather painful process of self-exploration that formed the basis of all of his later theorizing. He carefully recorded his dreams, fantasies, and visions, and drew, painted, and sculpted them as well. He found that his experiences tended to form themselves into persons, beginning with a wise old man and his companion, a little girl. The wise old man evolved, over a number of dreams, into a sort of spiritual guru. The little girl became "anima," the feminine soul, who served as his main medium of communication with the deeper aspects of his unconscious.

A leathery brown dwarf would show up guarding the entrance to the unconscious. He was "the shadow," a primitive companion for Jung's ego. Jung dreamt that he and the dwarf killed a beautiful blond youth, whom he called Siegfried. For Jung, this represented a warning about the dangers of the worship of glory and heroism which would soon cause so much sorrow all over Europe – and a warning about the dangers of some of his own tendencies towards hero-worship, of Sigmund Freud!

Jung dreamt a great deal about the dead, the land of the dead, and the rising of the dead. These represented the unconscious itself – not the "little" personal unconscious that Freud made such a big deal out of, but a new **collective unconscious** of humanity itself, an unconscious that could contain all the dead, not just our personal ghosts. Jung began to see the mentally ill as people who are haunted by these ghosts, in an age where no-one is supposed to even believe in them. If we could only recapture our mythologies, we would understand these ghosts, become comfortable with the dead, and heal our mental illnesses.

Critics have suggested that Jung was, very simply, ill himself when all this happened. But Jung felt that, if you want to understand the jungle, you can't be content just to sail back and forth near the shore. You've got to get into it, no matter how strange and frightening it might seem.

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Biography

Carl Gustav Jung was born July 26, 1875, in the small Swiss village of Kessewil. His father was Paul Jung, a country parson, and his mother was Emilie Preiswerk Jung. He was surrounded by a fairly well educated extended family, including quite a few clergymen and some eccentrics as well.

The elder Jung started Carl on Latin when he was six years old, beginning a long interest in language and literature – especially ancient literature. Besides most modern western European languages, Jung could read several ancient ones, including Sanskrit, the language of the original Hindu holy books.

Carl was a rather solitary adolescent, who didn't care much for school, and especially couldn't take competition. He went to boarding school in Basel, Switzerland, where he found himself the object of a lot of jealous harassment. He began to use sickness as an excuse, developing an embarrassing tendency to faint under pressure.

Although his first career choice was archeology, he went on to study medicine at the University of Basel. While working under the famous neurologist Krafft-Ebing, he settled on psychiatry as his career.

After graduating, he took a position at the Burghoeltzli Mental Hospital in Zurich under Eugene Bleuler, an expert on (and the namer of) schizophrenia. In 1903, he married Emma Rauschenbach. He also taught classes at the University of Zurich, had a private practice, and invented word association at this time!

Long an admirer of Freud, he met him in Vienna in 1907. The story goes that after they met, Freud canceled all his appointments for the day, and they talked for 13 hours straight, such was the impact of the meeting of these two great minds! Freud eventually came to see Jung as the crown prince of psychoanalysis and his heir apparent.

But Jung had never been entirely sold on Freud's theory. Their relationship began to cool in 1909, during a trip to America. They were entertaining themselves by analyzing each others' dreams (more fun, apparently, than shuffleboard), when Freud seemed to show an excess of resistance to Jung's efforts at analysis. Freud finally said that they'd have to stop because he was afraid he would lose his authority! Jung felt rather insulted.

World War I was a painful period of self-examination for Jung. It was, however, also the beginning of one of the most interesting theories of personality the world has ever seen.

After the war, Jung traveled widely, visiting, for example, tribal people in Africa, America, and India. He retired in 1946, and began to retreat from public attention after his wife died in 1955. He died on June 6, 1961, in Zurich.

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Theory

Jung's theory divides the psyche into three parts. The first is the **ego**, which Jung identifies with the conscious mind. Closely related is the **personal unconscious**, which includes anything which is not presently conscious, but can be. The personal unconscious is like most people's understanding of the unconscious in that it includes both memories that are easily brought to mind and those that have been suppressed for some reason. But it does not include the instincts that Freud would have it include.

But then Jung adds the part of the psyche that makes his theory stand out from all others: the **collective unconscious**. You could call it your "psychic inheritance." It is the reservoir of our experiences as a species, a kind of knowledge we are all born with. And yet we can never be directly conscious of it. It influences all of our experiences and behaviors, most especially the emotional ones, but we only know about it indirectly, by looking at those influences.

There are some experiences that show the effects of the collective unconscious more clearly than others: The experiences of love at first sight, of deja vu (the feeling that you've been here before), and the immediate recognition of certain symbols and the meanings of certain myths, could all be understood as the sudden conjunction of our outer reality and the inner reality of the collective unconscious. Grander examples are the creative experiences shared by artists and musicians all over the world and in all times, or the spiritual experiences of mystics of all religions, or the parallels in dreams, fantasies, mythologies, fairy tales, and literature.

A nice example that has been greatly discussed recently is the near-death experience. It seems that many people, of many different cultural backgrounds, find that they have very similar recollections when they are brought back from a close encounter with death. They speak of leaving their bodies, seeing their bodies and the events surrounding them clearly, of being pulled through a long tunnel towards a bright light, of seeing deceased relatives or religious figures waiting for them, and of their disappointment at having to leave this happy scene to return to their bodies. Perhaps we are all "built" to experience death in this fashion.

Archetypes

The contents of the collective unconscious are called **archetypes**. Jung also called them dominants, imagos, mythological or primordial images, and a few other names, but archetypes seems to have won out over these. An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way.

The archetype has no form of its own, but it acts as an "organizing principle" on the things we see or do. It works the way that instincts work in Freud's theory: At first, the baby just wants something to eat, without knowing what it wants. It has a rather indefinite yearning which, nevertheless, can be satisfied by some things and not by others. Later, with experience, the child begins to yearn for something more specific when it is hungry – a bottle, a cookie, a broiled lobster, a slice of New York style pizza.

The archetype is like a black hole in space: You only know its there by how it draws matter and light to itself.

The mother archetype

The **mother archetype** is a particularly good example. All of our ancestors had mothers. We have evolved in an environment that included a mother or mother-substitute. We would never have survived without our connection with a nurturing-one during our times as helpless infants. It stands to reason that we are "built" in a way that reflects that evolutionary environment: We come into this world ready to want mother, to seek her, to recognize her, to deal with her.

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So the mother archetype is our built-in ability to recognize a certain relationship, that of "mothering." Jung says that this is rather abstract, and we are likely to project the archetype out into the world and onto a particular person, usually our own mothers. Even when an archetype doesn't have a particular real person available, we tend to personify the archetype, that is, turn it into a mythological "story-book" character. This character symbolizes the archetype.

The mother archetype is symbolized by the primordial mother or "earth mother" of mythology, by Eve and Mary in western traditions, and by less personal symbols such as the church, the nation, a forest, or the ocean. According to Jung, someone whose own mother failed to satisfy the demands of the archetype may well be one that spends his or her life seeking comfort in the church, or in identification with "the motherland," or in meditating upon the figure of Mary, or in a life at sea.

Mana

You must understand that these archetypes are not really biological things, like Freud's instincts. They are more spiritual demands. For example, if you dreamt about long things, Freud might suggest these things represent the phallus and ultimately sex. But Jung might have a very different interpretation. Even dreaming quite specifically about a penis might not have much to do with some unfulfilled need for sex.

It is curious that in primitive societies, phallic symbols do not usually refer to sex at all. They usually symbolize **mana**, or spiritual power. These symbols would be displayed on occasions when the spirits are being called upon to increase the yield of corn, or fish, or to heal someone. The connection between the penis and strength, between semen and seed, between fertilization and fertility are understood by most cultures.

The shadow

Sex and the life instincts in general are, of course, represented somewhere in Jung's system. They are a part of an archetype called the **shadow**. It derives from our prehuman, animal past, when our concerns were limited to survival and reproduction, and when we weren't self-conscious.

It is the "dark side" of the ego, and the evil that we are capable of is often stored there. Actually, the shadow is amoral – neither good nor bad, just like animals. An animal is capable of tender care for its young and vicious killing for food, but it doesn't choose to do either. It just does what it does. It is "innocent." But from our human perspective, the animal world looks rather brutal, inhuman, so the shadow becomes something of a garbage can for the parts of ourselves that we can't quite admit to.

Symbols of the shadow include the snake (as in the garden of Eden), the dragon, monsters, and demons. It often guards the entrance to a cave or a pool of water, which is the collective unconscious. Next time you dream about wrestling with the devil, it may only be yourself you are wrestling with!

The persona

The **persona** represents your public image. The word is, obviously, related to the word person and personality, and comes from a Latin word for mask. So the persona is the mask you put on before you show yourself to the outside world. Although it begins as an archetype, by the time we are finished realizing it, it is

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the part of us most distant from the collective unconscious.

At its best, it is just the "good impression" we all wish to present as we fill the roles society requires of us. But, of course, it can also be the "false impression" we use to manipulate people's opinions and behaviors. And, at its worst, it can be mistaken, even by ourselves, for our true nature: Sometimes we believe we really are what we pretend to be!

Anima and animus

A part of our persona is the role of male or female we must play. For most people that role is determined by their physical gender. But Jung, like Freud and Adler and others, felt that we are all really bisexual in nature. When we begin our lives as fetuses, we have undifferentiated sex organs that only gradually, under the influence of hormones, become male or female. Likewise, when we begin our social lives as infants, we are neither male nor female in the social sense. Almost immediately – as soon as those pink or blue booties go on – we come under the influence of society, which gradually molds us into men and women.

In all societies, the expectations placed on men and women differ, usually based on our different roles in reproduction, but often involving many details that are purely traditional. In our society today, we still have many remnants of these traditional expectations. Women are still expected to be more nurturant and less aggressive; men are still expected to be strong and to ignore the emotional side of life. But Jung felt these expectations meant that we had developed only half of our potential.

The **anima** is the female aspect present in the collective unconscious of men, and the **animus** is the male aspect present in the collective unconscious of women. Together, they are refered to as **syzygy**. The anima may be personified as a young girl, very spontaneous and intuitive, or as a witch, or as the earth mother. It is likely to be associated with deep emotionality and the force of life itself. The animus may be personified as a wise old man, a sorcerer, or often a number of males, and tends to be logical, often rationalistic, even argumentative.

The anima or animus is the archetype through which you communicate with the collective unconscious generally, and it is important to get into touch with it. It is also the archetype that is responsible for much of our love life: We are, as an ancient Greek myth suggests, always looking for our other half, the half that the Gods took from us, in members of the opposite sex. When we fall in love at first sight, then we have found someone that "fills" our anima or animus archetype particularly well!

Other archetypes

Jung said that there is no fixed number of archetypes which we could simply list and memorize. They overlap and easily melt into each other as needed, and their logic is not the usual kind. But here are some he mentions:

Besides mother, their are other family archetypes. Obviously, there is **father**, who is often symbolized by a guide or an authority figure. There is also the archetype **family**, which represents the idea of blood relationship and ties that run deeper than those based on conscious reasons.

There is also the **child**, represented in mythology and art by children, infants most especially, as well as

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other small creatures. The Christ child celebrated at Christmas is a manifestation of the child archetype, and represents the future, becoming, rebirth, and salvation. Curiously, Christmas falls during the winter solstice, which in northern primitive cultures also represents the future and rebirth. People used to light bonfires and perform ceremonies to encourage the sun's return to them. The child archetype often blends with other archetypes to form the child-god, or the child-hero.

Many archetypes are story characters. The **hero** is one of the main ones. He is the mana personality and the defeater of evil dragons. Basically, he represents the ego – we do tend to identify with the hero of the story – and is often engaged in fighting the shadow, in the form of dragons and other monsters. The hero is, however, often dumb as a post. He is, after all, ignorant of the ways of the collective unconscious. Luke Skywalker, in the **Star Wars** films, is the perfect example of a hero.

The hero is often out to rescue the **maiden**. She represents purity, innocence, and, in all likelihood, naivete. In the beginning of the **Star Wars** story, Princess Leia is the maiden. But, as the story progresses, she becomes the anima, discovering the powers of the force – the collective unconscious – and becoming an equal partner with Luke, who turns out to be her brother.

The hero is guided by the **wise old man**. He is a form of the animus, and reveals to the hero the nature of the collective unconscious. In **Star Wars**, he is played by Obi Wan Kenobi and, later, Yoda. Notice that they teach Luke about the force and, as Luke matures, they die and become a part of him.

You might be curious as to the archetype represented by Darth Vader, the "dark father." He is the shadow and the master of the dark side of the force. He also turns out to be Luke and Leia's father. When he dies, he becomes one of the wise old men.

There is also an **animal** archetype, representing humanity's relationships with the animal world. The hero's faithful horse would be an example. Snakes are often symbolic of the animal archetype, and are thought to be particularly wise. Animals, after all, are more in touch with their natures than we are. Perhaps loyal little robots and reliable old spaceships – the Falcon– are also symbols of animal.

And there is the **trickster**, often represented by a clown or a magician. The trickster's role is to hamper the hero's progress and to generally make trouble. In Norse mythology, many of the gods' adventures originate in some trick or another played on their majesties by the half-god Loki.

There are other archetypes that are a little more difficult to talk about. One is the **original man**, represented in western religion by Adam. Another is the **God** archetype, representing our need to comprehend the universe, to give a meaning to all that happens, to see it all as having some purpose and direction.

The **hermaphrodite**, both male and female, represents the union of opposites, an important idea in Jung's theory. In some religious art, Jesus is presented as a rather feminine man. Likewise, in China, the character Kuan Yin began as a male saint (the bodhisattva Avalokiteshwara), but was portrayed in such a feminine manner that he is more often thought of as the female goddess of compassion!

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The most important archetype of all is the **self**. The self is the ultimate unity of the personality and issymbolized by the circle, the cross, and the **mandala** figures that Jung was fond of painting. A mandala is a drawing that is used in meditation because it tends to draw your focus back to the center, and it can be as simple as a geometric figure or as complicated as a stained glass window. The personifications that best represent self are Christ and Buddha, two people who many believe achieved perfection. But Jung felt that perfection of the personality is only truly achieved in death.

The dynamics of the psyche

So much for the content of the psyche. Now let's turn to the principles of its operation. Jung gives us three principles, beginning with the **principle of opposites**. Every wish immediately suggests its opposite. If I have a good thought, for example, I cannot help but have in me somewhere the opposite bad thought. In fact, it is a very basic point: In order to have a concept of good, you must have a concept of bad, just like you can't have up without down or black without white.

This idea came home to me when I was about eleven. I occasionally tried to help poor innocent woodland creatures who had been hurt in some way – often, I'm afraid, killing them in the process. Once I tried to nurse a baby robin back to health. But when I picked it up, I was so struck by how light it was that the thought came to me that I could easily crush it in my hand. Mind you, I didn't like the idea, but it was undeniably there.

According to Jung, it is the opposition that creates the power (or **libido**) of the psyche. It is like the two poles of a battery, or the splitting of an atom. It is the contrast that gives energy, so that a strong contrast gives strong energy, and a weak contrast gives weak energy.

The second principle is the **principle of equivalence**. The energy created from the opposition is "given" to both sides equally. So, when I held that baby bird in my hand, there was energy to go ahead and try to help it. But there is an equal amount of energy to go ahead and crush it. I tried to help the bird, so that energy went into the various behaviors involved in helping it. But what happens to the other energy?

Well, that depends on your attitude towards the wish that you didn't fulfill. If you acknowledge it, face it, keep it available to the conscious mind, then the energy goes towards a general improvement of your psyche. You grow, in other words.

But if you pretend that you never had that evil wish, if you deny and suppress it, the energy will go towards the development of a **complex**. A complex is a pattern of suppressed thoughts and feelings that cluster – constellate – around a theme provided by some archetype. If you deny ever having thought about crushing the little bird, you might put that idea into the form offered by the shadow (your "dark side"). Or if a man denies his emotional side, his emotionality might find its way into the anima archetype. And so on.

Here's where the problem comes: If you pretend all your life that you are only good, that you don't even have the capacity to lie and cheat and steal and kill, then all the times when you do good, that other side of you goes into a complex around the shadow. That complex will begin to develop a life of its own, and it will haunt you. You might find yourself having nightmares in which you go around stomping on little baby birds!

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If it goes on long enough, the complex may take over, may "possess" you, and you might wind up with a multiple personality. In the movie The Three Faces of Eve, Joanne Woodward portrayed a meek, mild woman who eventually discovered that she went out and partied like crazy on Saturday nights. She didn't smoke, but found cigarettes in her purse, didn't drink, but woke up with hangovers, didn't fool around, but found herself in sexy outfits. Although multiple personality is rare, it does tend to involve these kinds of black-and-white extremes.

The final principle is the **principle of entropy**. This is the tendency for oppositions to come together, and so for energy to decrease, over a person's lifetime. Jung borrowed the idea from physics, where entropy refers to the tendency of all physical systems to "run down," that is, for all energy to become evenly distributed. If you have, for example, a heat source in one corner of the room, the whole room will eventually be heated.

When we are young, the opposites will tend to be extreme, and so we tend to have lots of energy. For example, adolescents tend to exaggerate male-female differences, with boys trying hard to be macho and girls trying equally hard to be feminine. And so their sexual activity is invested with great amounts of energy! Plus, adolescents often swing from one extreme to another, being wild and crazy one minute and finding religion the next.

As we get older, most of us come to be more comfortable with our different facets. We are a bit less naively idealistic and recognize that we are all mixtures of good and bad. We are less threatened by the opposite sex within us and become more androgynous. Even physically, in old age, men and women become more alike. This process of rising above our opposites, of seeing both sides of who we are, is called **transcendence**.

The self

The goal of life is to realize the **self**. The self is an archetype that represents the transcendence of all opposites, so that every aspect of your personality is expressed equally. You are then neither and both male and female, neither and both ego and shadow, neither and both good and bad, neither and both conscious and unconscious, neither and both an individual and the whole of creation. And yet, with no oppositions, there is no energy, and you cease to act. Of course, you no longer need to act.

To keep it from getting too mystical, think of it as a new center, a more balanced position, for your psyche. When you are young, you focus on the ego and worry about the trivialities of the persona. When you are older (assuming you have been developing as you should), you focus a little deeper, on the self, and become closer to all people, all life, even the universe itself. The self-realized person is actually less selfish.

Synchronicity

Personality theorists have argued for many years about whether psychological processes function in terms of **mechanism** or **teleology**. Mechanism is the idea that things work in through cause and effect: One thing leads to another which leads to another, and so on, so that the past determines the present. Teleology is the idea that we are lead on by our ideas about a future state, by things like purposes, meanings, values, and so on. Mechanism is linked with determinism and with the natural sciences. Teleology is linked with free will and has become rather rare. It is still common among moral, legal, and religious philosophers, and, of course, among personality theorists.

Among the people discussed in this book, Freudians and behaviorists tend to be mechanists, while the neo-Freudians, humanists, and existentialists tend to be teleologists. Jung believes that both play a part. But he adds a third alternative called **synchronicity**.

Synchronicity is the occurrence of two events that are not linked causally, nor linked teleologically, yet are

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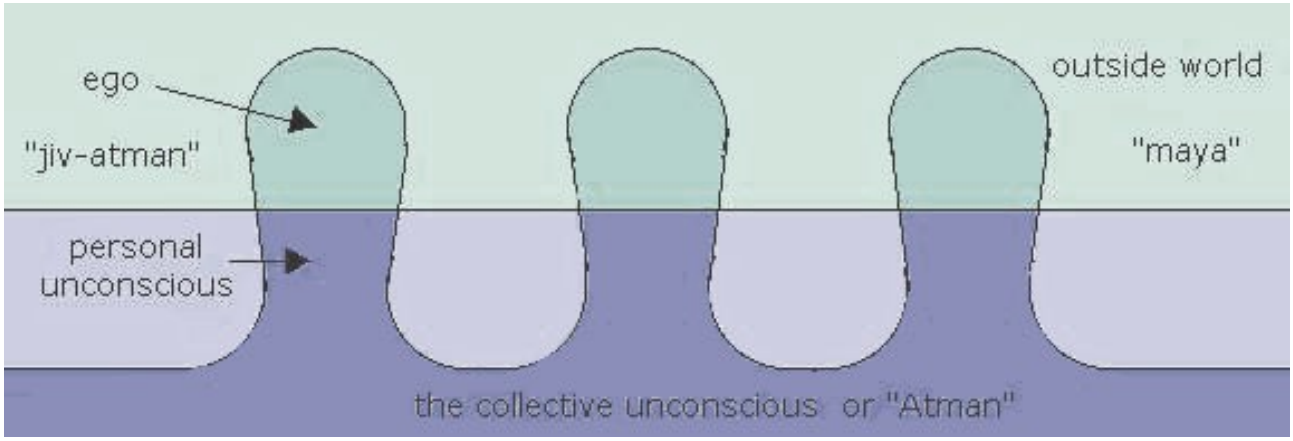
meaningfully related. Once, a client was describing a dream involving a scarab beetle when, at that very instant, a very similar beetle flew into the window. Often, people dream about something, like the death of a loved one, and find the next morning that their loved one did, in fact, die at about that time. Sometimes people pick up he phone to call a friend, only to find that their friend is already on the line. Most psychologists would call these things coincidences, or try to show how they are more likely to occur than we think. Jung believed the were indications of how we are connected, with our fellow humans and with nature in general, through the collective unconscious.

Jung was never clear about his own religious beliefs. But this unusual idea of synchronicity is easily explained by the Hindu view of reality. In the Hindu view, our individual egos are like islands in a sea: We look out at the world and each other and think we are separate entities. What we don't see is that we are connected to each other by means of the ocean floor beneath the waters.



The outer world is called **maya**, meaning illusion, and is thought of as God's dream or God's dance. That is, God creates it, but it has no reality of its own. Our individual egos they call **jivatman**, which means individual souls. But they, too, are something of an illusion. We are all actually extensions of the one and only **Atman**, or God, who allows bits of himself to forget his identity, to become apparently separate and independent, to become us. But we never truly are separate. When we die, we wake up and realize who we were from the beginning: God.

When we dream or meditate, we sink into our personal unconscious, coming closer and closer to our true selves, the collective unconscious. It is in states like this that we are especially open to "communications" from other egos. Synchronicity makes Jung's theory one of the rare ones that is not only compatible with parapsychological phenomena, but actually tries to explain them!

Introversion and extroversion

Jung developed a personality typology that has become so popular that some people don't realize he did anything else! It begins with the distinction between **introversion** and **extroversion**. Introverts are people who prefer their internal world of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, dreams, and so on, while extroverts prefer the external world of things and people and activities.

The words have become confused with ideas like shyness and sociability, partially because introverts tend to be shy and extroverts tend to be sociable. But Jung intended for them to refer more to whether you ("ego") more often faced toward the persona and outer reality, or toward the collective unconscious and its archetypes. In that sense, the introvert is somewhat more mature than the extrovert. Our culture, of course, values the extrovert much more. And Jung warned that we all tend to value our own type most!

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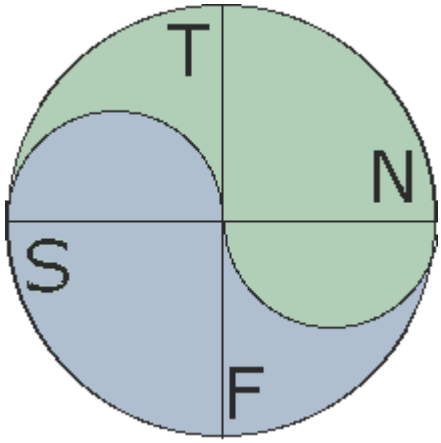
We now find the introvert-extravert dimension in several theories, notably Hans Eysenck's, although often hidden under alternative names such as "sociability" and "surgency."

The functions

Whether we are introverts or extroverts, we need to deal with the world, inner and outer. And each of us has our preferred ways of dealing with it, ways we are comfortable with and good at. Jung suggests there are four basic ways, or **functions**:

The first is **sensing**. Sensing means what it says: getting information by means of the senses. A sensing person is good at looking and listening and generally getting to know the world. Jung called this one of the **irrational** functions, meaning that it involved perception rather than judging of information.

The second is **thinking**. Thinking means evaluating information or ideas rationally, logically. Jung called this a **rational** function, meaning that it involves decision making or judging, rather than simple intake of information.



The third is **intuiting**. Intuiting is a kind of perception that works outside of the usual conscious processes. It is irrational or perceptual, like sensing, but comes from the complex integration of large amounts of information, rather than simple seeing or hearing. Jung said it was like seeing around corners.

The fourth is **feeling**. Feeling, like thinking, is a matter of evaluating information, this time by weighing one's overall, emotional response. Jung calls it rational, obviously not in the usual sense of the word.

We all have these functions. We just have them in different proportions, you might say. Each of us has a **superior** function, which we prefer and which is best developed in us, a **secondary** function, which we are aware of and use in support of our superior function, a **tertiary** function, which is only slightly less developed but not terribly conscious, and an **inferior** function, which is poorly developed and so unconscious that we might deny its existence in ourselves.

Most of us develop only one or two of the functions, but our goal should be to develop all four. Once again, Jung sees the transcendence of opposites as the ideal.

Assessment

Katharine Briggs and her daughter Isabel Briggs Myers found Jung's types and functions so revealing of people's personalities that they decided to develop a paper-and-pencil test. It came to be called the **Myers-Briggs Type Indicator**, and is one of the most popular, and most studied, tests around.

On the basis of your answers on about 125 questions, you are placed in one of sixteen types, with the understanding that some people might find themselves somewhere between two or three types. What type you are says quite a bit about you – your likes and dislikes, your likely career choices, your compatibility with others, and so on. People tend to like it quite a bit. It has the unusual quality among personality tests of not being too judgmental: None of the types is terribly negative, nor are any overly positive. Rather than assessing how "crazy" you are, the "Myers-Briggs" simply opens up your personality for exploration.

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The test has four scales. **Extroversion - Introversion** (E-I) is the most important. Test researchers have found that about 75 % of the population is extroverted.

The next one is **Sensing - Intuiting** (S-N), with about 75 % of the population sensing.

The next is **Thinking - Feeling** (T-F). Although these are distributed evenly through the population, researchers have found that two-thirds of men are thinkers, while two-thirds of women are feelers. This might seem like stereotyping, but keep in mind that feeling and thinking are both valued equally by Jungians, and that one-third of men are feelers and one-third of women are thinkers. Note, though, that society does value thinking and feeling differently, and that feeling men and thinking women often have difficulties dealing with people's stereotyped expectations.

The last is **Judging - Perceiving** (J-P), not one of Jung's original dimensions. Myers and Briggs included this one in order to help determine which of a person's functions is superior. Generally, judging people are more careful, perhaps inhibited, in their lives. Perceiving people tend to be more spontaneous, sometimes careless. If you are an extrovert and a "J," you are a thinker or feeler, whichever is stronger. Extroverted and "P" means you are a senser or intuiter. On the other hand, an introvert with a high "J" score will be a senser or intuiter, while an introvert with a high "P" score will be a thinker or feeler. J and P are equally distributed in the population.

Each type is identified by four letters, such as ENFJ. These have proven so popular, you can even find them on people's license plates!

ENFJ (Extroverted feeling with intuiting): These people are easy speakers. They tend to idealize their friends. They make good parents, but have a tendency to allow themselves to be used. They make good therapists, teachers, executives, and salespeople.

ENFP (Extroverted intuiting with feeling): These people love novelty and surprises. They are big on emotions and expression. They are susceptible to muscle tension and tend to be hyperalert. they tend to feel self-conscious. They are good at sales, advertising, politics, and acting.

ENTJ (Extroverted thinking with intuiting): In charge at home, they expect a lot from spouses and kids. They like organization and structure and tend to make good executives and administrators.

ENTP (Extroverted intuiting with thinking): These are lively people, not humdrum or orderly. As mates, they are a little dangerous, especially economically. They are good at analysis and make good entrepreneurs. They do tend to play at oneupmanship.

ESFJ (Extroverted feeling with sensing): These people like harmony. They tend to have strong shoulds and should-nots. They may be dependent, first on parents and later on spouses. They wear their hearts on their sleeves and excel in service occupations involving personal contact.

ESFP (Extroverted sensing with feeling): Very generous and impulsive, they have a low tolerance for anxiety. They make good performers, they like public relations, and they love the phone. They should avoid scholarly pursuits, especially science.

ESTJ (Extroverted thinking with sensing): These are responsible mates and parents and are loyal to the workplace. They are realistic, down-to-earth, orderly, and love tradition. They often find themselves joining civic clubs!

ESTP (Extroverted sensing with thinking): These are action-oriented people, often sophisticated, sometimes ruthless – our "James Bonds." As mates, they are exciting and charming, but they have trouble with commitment. They make good promoters, entrepreneurs, and con artists.

INFJ (Introverted intuiting with feeling): These are serious students and workers who really want to contribute. They are private and easily hurt. They make good spouses, but tend to be physically reserved. People often think they are psychic. They make good therapists, general practitioners, ministers, and so on.

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INFP (Introverted feeling with intuiting): These people are idealistic, self-sacrificing, and somewhat cool or reserved. They are very family and home oriented, but don't relax well. You find them in psychology, architecture, and religion, but never in business. Both Jung and I admire this type. Of course, both Jung and I are this type!

INTJ (Introverted intuiting with thinking): These are the most independent of all types. They love logic and ideas and are drawn to scientific research. They can be rather single-minded, though.

INTP (Introverted thinking with intuiting): Faithful, preoccupied, and forgetful, these are the bookworms. They tend to be very precise in their use of language. They are good at logic and math and make good philosophers and theoretical scientists, but not writers or salespeople.

ISFJ (Introverted sensing with feeling): These people are service and work oriented. They may suffer from fatigue and tend to be attracted to troublemakers. They are good nurses, teachers, secretaries, general practitioners, librarians, middle managers, and housekeepers.

ISFP (Introverted feeling with sensing): They are shy and retiring, are not talkative, but like sensuous action. They like painting, drawing, sculpting, composing, dancing – the arts generally – and they like nature. They are not big on commitment.

ISTJ (Introverted sensing with thinking): These are dependable pillars of strength. They often try to reform their mates and other people. They make good bank examiners, auditors, accountants, tax examiners, supervisors in libraries and hospitals, business, home ec., and phys. ed. teachers, and boy or girl scouts!

ISTP (Introverted thinking with sensing): These people are action-oriented and fearless, and crave excitement. They are impulsive and dangerous to stop. They often like tools, instruments, and weapons, and often become technical experts. They are not interested in communications and are often incorrectly diagnosed as dyslexic or hyperactive. They tend to do badly in school.

Even without taking the test, you may very well recognize yourself in one or two of these types. Or ask others – they may be more accurate! But, if you like, you can take my Jungian personality test on the internet:

[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/jungiantypestest.html]

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Discussion

Quite a few people find that Jung has a great deal to say to them. They include writers, artists, musicians, film makers, theologians, clergy of all denominations, students of mythology, and, of course, some psychologists. Examples that come to mind are the mythologist Joseph Campbell, the film maker George Lucas, and the science fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin. Anyone interested in creativity, spirituality, psychic phenomena, the universal, and so on will find in Jung a kindred spirit.

But scientists, including most psychologists, have a lot of trouble with Jung. Not only does he fully support the teleological view (as do most personality theorists), but he goes a step further and talks about the mystical interconnectedness of synchronicity. Not only does he postulate an unconscious, where things are not easily available to the empirical eye, but he postulates a collective unconscious that never has been and never will be conscious.

In fact, Jung takes an approach that is essentially the reverse of the mainstream's reductionism: Jung begins with the highest levels – even spiritualism – and derives the lower levels of psychology and physiology from them.

Even psychologists who applaud his teleology and antireductionist position may not be comfortable with him. Like Freud, Jung tries to bring everything into his system. He has little room for chance, accident, or circumstances. Personality – and life in general – seems "over-explained" in Jung's theory.

I have found that his theory sometimes attracts students who have difficulty dealing with reality. When the world, especially the social world, becomes too difficult, some people retreat into fantasy. Some, for example, become couch potatoes. But others turn to complex ideologies that pretend to explain everything. Some get involved in Gnostic or Tantric religions, the kind that present intricate rosters of angels and demons and heavens and hells, and endlessly discuss symbols. Some go to Jung. There is nothing intrinsically wrong with this; but for someone who is out of touch with reality, this is hardly going to help.

These criticisms do not cut the foundation out from under Jung's theory. But they do suggest that some careful consideration is in order.

The positive things

On the plus side, there is the Myers-Briggs and other tests based on Jung's types and functions. Because they do not place people on dimensions that run from "good" to "bad," they are much less threatening. They encourage people to become more aware of themselves.

The archetypes, at first glance, might seem to be Jung's strangest idea. And yet they have proven to be very useful in the analysis of myths, fairy tales, literature in general, artistic symbolism, and religious exposition. They apparently capture some of the basic "units" of our self-expression. Many people have suggested that there are only so many stories and characters in the world, and we just keep on rearranging the details.

This suggests that the archetypes actually do refer to some deep structures of the human mind. After all, from the physiological perspective, we come into his world with a certain structure: We see in a certain way, hear in a certain way, "process information" in a certain way, behave in a certain way, because our neurons and glands and muscles are structured in a certain way. At least one cognitive psychologist has suggested looking for the structures that correspond to Jung's archetypes!

Finally, Jung has opened our eyes to the differences between child development and adult development. Children clearly emphasize differentiation – separating one thing from another – in their learning. "What's this?" " Why is it this way and not that?" "What kinds are there?" They actively seek diversity. And many people, psychologists included, have been so impressed by this that they have assumed that all learning is a matter of differentiation, of learning more and more "things."

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But Jung has pointed out that adults search more for integration, for the transcending of opposites. Adults search for the connections between things, how things fit together, how they interact, how they contribute to the whole. We want to make sense of it, find the meaning of it, the purpose of it all. Children unravel the world; adults try to knit it back together.

Connections

On the one hand, Jung is still attached to his Freudian roots. He emphasizes the unconscious even more than Freudians do. In fact, he might be seen as the logical extension of Freud's tendency to put the causes of things into the past. Freud, too, talked about myths –Oedipus, for example – and how they impact on the modern psyche.

On the other hand, Jung has a lot in common with the neo-Freudians, humanists, and existentialists. He believes that we are meant to progress, to move in a positive direction, and not just to adapt, as the Freudians and behaviorists would have it. His idea of self-realization is clearly similar to self-actualization.

The balancing or transcending of opposites also has counterparts in other theories. Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Andreas Angyal, David Bakan, Gardner Murphy, and Rollo May all make reference to balancing two opposing tendencies, one towards individual development and the other towards the development of compassion or social interest. Rollo May talks about the psyche being composed of many "daimons" (little gods) such as the desire for sex, or love, or power. All are positive in their place, but should any one take over the whole personality, we would have "daimonic possession," or mental illness!

Finally, we owe to Jung the broadening of interpretation, whether of symptoms or dreams or free-associations. While Freud developed more-or-less rigid (specifically, sexual) interpretations, Jung allowed for a rather free-wheeling "mythological" interpretation, wherein anything could mean, well, anything. Existential analysis, in particular, has benefited from Jung's ideas.

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Readings

Most of Jung's writings are contained in **The Collected Works of Carl G. Jung**. I have to warn you that most of his works are not easy going, but they are full of interesting things that make them worth the trouble.

If you are looking for something a little easier, you might try **Analytic Psychology: Its Theory and Practice**, which is a collection of lectures and is available in paperback. Or read **Man and His Symbols**, which is available in several editions ranging from large ones with many color pictures to an inexpensive paperback. If you want a smattering of Jung, try a collection of his writings, such as Modern Library's **The Basic Writings of C. G. Jung**.

The best book I've ever read about Jung, however, is the autobiographical **Memories, Dreams, Reflections**, written with his student Aniela Jaffé. It makes a good introduction, assuming you've read something like the preceding chapter first.

For a great Jung web site, with leads to many other sites, see Matthew Clapp's **Jung Index** at http://www.jungindex.net/

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OTTO RANK

[1884 - 1939]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
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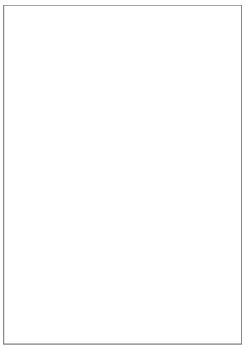
A fascination with mythology, literature, art, and religion was hardly restricted to Carl Jung and Sigmund Freud. In fact, it comes up again and again among personality psychologists. It is especially prominent in Otto Rank.

The hero

One of his earliest works was ***The Myth of the Birth of the Hero***, in which he examines such birth myths as those of the Babylonian kings Gilgamesh and Sargon, the Hindu hero Karna, The Persian king Cyrus, The Greek heroes Oedipus, Hercules, Paris, and Perseus, the Roman founders Romulus and Remus, the Celtic hero Tristan, the Germanic heroes Siegfried and Lohengrin, and even Moses, Buddha, and Jesus.



He finds the same pattern over and over again: There is a king and queen or god and goddess or other highly placed couple; something makes the hero's conception difficult or impossible; there is a dream or oracle prophesizing his birth, often including a warning of danger to the father; the infant hero is usually left to die in a box, basket, or small boat, floating on the water; he is rescued and nurtured by either animals or people of very low birth; he grows up, discovers his true parents, takes revenge on his father, and finally receives the honors due him.

Rank finds the myths relatively simple to understand: As children, we worship our parents. But as we get older, they begin to get in our way, and we discover they were not all they seemed. The myth reflects a wish in all of us for a return to the comforting days when we thought our parents were perfect and gave us the attention we felt we deserved. The box or basket symbolizes the womb, and the waters our birth. The "people of low birth" symbolize our weak and unappreciative parents. The king and queen symbolize what they should be like. And the revenge is our anger at how they have mistreated us.

But notice that Rank doesn't bring sexuality into the picture, and doesn't refer to a collective unconscious. The myths are simply the expressions different cultures have given to common childhood experiences. His interpretation may not be perfect, but its humility is refreshing!

The artist

Rank also tackles the difficult issue of artistic creativity. On the one hand, Rank says, the artist has a particularly strong tendency towards glorification of his own will. Unlike the rest of us, he feels compelled to remake reality in his own image. And yet a true artist also needs immortality, which he can only achieve by identifying himself with the collective will of his culture and religion. Good art could be understood as a joining of the material and the spiritual, the specific and the universal, or the individual and humanity.

This joining doesn't come easily, though. It begins with the **will**, Rank's word for the ego, but an ego imbued with power. We are all born with a will to be ourselves, to be free of domination. In early childhood, we exercise our will in our efforts to do things independently of our parents. Later, we fight the domination of other authorities, including the inner authority of our sexual drives. How our struggle for independence goes determines the type of person we become. Rank describes three basic types:

First, there is the **adapted type**. These people learn to "will" what they have been forced to do. They obey authority, their society's moral code, and, as best as they can, their sexual impulses. This is a passive, duty-bound creature that Rank suggests is, in fact, the average person.

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Second, there is the **neurotic type**. These people have a much stronger will than the average person, but it is totally engaged in the fight against external and internal domination. They even fight the expression of their own will, so there is no will left over to actually do anything with the freedom won. Instead, they worry and feel guilty about being so "willful." They are, however, at a higher level of moral development than the adapted type.

Third, there is the **productive type**, which Rank also refers to as the artist, the genius, the creative type, the self-conscious type, and, simply, the human being. Instead of fighting themselves, these people accept and affirm themselves, and create an ideal, which functions as a positive focus for will. The artist creates himself or herself, and then goes on to create a new world as well.

Life and death

Another interesting idea Rank introduced was the contest between life and death. He felt we have a "**life instinct**" that pushes us to become individuals, competent and independent, and a "**death instinct**" that pushes us to be part of a family, community, or humanity. We also feel a certain fear of these two. The "**fear of life**" is the fear of separation, loneliness, and alienation; the "**fear of death**" is the fear of getting lost in the whole, stagnating, being no-one.

Our lives are filled with separations, beginning with birth. Rank's earliest work, in fact, concerned **birth trauma**, the idea that the anxiety experienced during birth was the model for all anxiety experienced afterwards. After birth, there's weaning and discipline and school and work and heartbreaks.... But avoiding these separations is, literally, avoiding life and choosing death – never finding out what you can do, never leaving your family or small town, never leaving the womb!

So we must face our fears, recognizing that, to be fully developed, we must embrace both life and death, become individuals and nurture our relationships with others.

Otto Rank never founded a "school" of psychology like Freud and Jung did, but his influences can be found everywhere. He has had a significant impact on Carl Rogers, a more subtle one on the older Adler, as well as Fromm and Horney, and an influence on the existentialists, especially Rollo May. Other people have "reinvented" his ideas, and we can find bits and pieces of Otto Rank in competence motivation, reactance theory, and terror management theory.

If you would like to learn more about Otto Rank's theory, his most important works are ***Art and Artist***, ***Truth and Reality***, and ***Will Therapy***.

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ALFRED ADLER

[1870 – 1937]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

I would like to introduce Alfred Adler by talking about someone Adler never knew: Theodore Roosevelt. Born to Martha and Theodore Senior in Manhattan on October 27, 1858, he was said to be a particularly beautiful baby who needed no help entering his new world. His parents were strong, intelligent, handsome, and quite well-to-do. It should have been an idyllic childhood

But "Teedie," as he was called, was not as healthy as he first appeared. He had severe asthma, and tended to catch colds easily, develop coughs and fevers, and suffer from nausea and diarrhea. He was small and thin. His voice was reedy, and remained so even in adulthood. He became malnourished and was often forced by his asthma to sleep sitting up in chairs. Several times, he came dangerously close to dying from lack of oxygen.

Not to paint too negative a picture, Teedie was an active boy – some would say over-active – and had a fantastic personality. He was full of curiosity about nature and would lead expeditions of cousins to find mice, squirrels, snakes, frogs, and anything else that could be dissected or pickled. His repeated confinement when his asthma flared up turned him to books, which he devoured throughout his life. He may have been sickly, but he certainly had a desire to live!

After traveling through Europe with his family, his health became worse. He had grown taller but no more muscular. Finally, with encouragement from the family doctor, Roosevelt Senior encouraged the boy, now twelve, to begin lifting weights. Like anything else he tackled, he did this enthusiastically. He got healthier, and for the first time in his life got through a whole month without an attack of asthma.

When he was thirteen, he became aware of another defect of his: When he found that he couldn't hit anything with the rifle his father had given him. When friends read a billboard to him – he didn't realize it had writing on it – it was discovered that he was terribly nearsighted!

In the same year, he was sent off to the country on his own after a bad attack of asthma. On the way, he was waylaid by a couple of other boys his own age. He found that not only couldn't he defend himself, he couldn't even lay a hand on them. He later announced to his father his intention to learn to box. By the time he went to Harvard, he was not only a healthier Teddy Roosevelt, but was a regular winner of a variety of athletic contests.

The rest, as they say, is history. "Teedie" Roosevelt went on to become a successful New York assemblyman, North Dakota cowboy, New York commissioner of police, Assistant secretary of the Navy, lieutenant colonel of the "Rough Riders," the Governor of New York, and best-selling author, all by the age of forty. With the death of President William McKinley in 1901, Theodore Roosevelt became the youngest president of the United States.

How is it that someone so sickly should become so healthy, vigorous, and successful? Why is it that some children, sickly or not, thrive, while others wither away? Is the drive that Roosevelt had peculiar to him, or is it something that lies in each of us? These kinds of questions intrigued a young Viennese physician named Alfred Adler, and led him to develop his theory, called **Individual Psychology**.

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Biography

Alfred Adler was born in the suburbs of Vienna on February 7, 1870, the third child, second son, of a Jewish grain merchant and his wife. As a child, Alfred developed rickets, which kept him from walking until he was four years old. At five, he nearly died of pneumonia. It was at this age that he decided to be a physician.

Alfred was an average student and preferred playing outdoors to being cooped up in school. He was quite outgoing, popular, and active, and was known for his efforts at outdoing his older brother, Sigmund.

He received a medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1895. During his college years, he became attached to a group of socialist students, among which he found his wife-to-be, Raissa Timofeyewna Epstein. She was an intellectual and social activist who had come from Russia to study in Vienna. They married in 1897 and eventually had four children, two of whom became psychiatrists.

He began his medical career as an opthamologist, but he soon switched to general practice, and established his office in a lower-class part of Vienna, across from the Prater, a combination amusement park and circus. His clients included circus people, and it has been suggested (Furtmuller, 1964) that the unusual strengths and weaknesses of the performers led to his insights into **organ inferiorities** and **compensation**.

He then turned to psychiatry, and in 1907 was invited to join Freud's discussion group. After writing papers on organic inferiority, which were quite compatible with Freud's views, he wrote, first, a paper concerning an **aggression instinct**, which Freud did not approve of, and then a paper on children's feelings of inferiority, which suggested that Freud's sexual notions be taken more metaphorically than literally.

Although Freud named Adler the president of the Viennese Analytic Society and the co-editor of the organization's newsletter, Adler didn't stop his criticism. A debate between Adler's supporters and Freud's was arranged, but it resulted in Adler, with nine other members of the organization, resigning to form the Society for Free Psychoanalysis in 1911. This organization became The Society for Individual Psychology in the following year.

During World War I, Adler served as a physician in the Austrian Army, first on the Russian front, and later in a children's hospital. He saw first hand the damage that war does, and his thought turned increasingly to he concept of **social interest**. He felt that if humanity was to survive, it had to change its ways!

After the war, he was involved in various projects, including clinics attached to state schools and the training of teachers. In 1926, he went to the United States to lecture, and he eventually accepted a visiting position at the Long Island College of Medicine. In 1934, he and his family left Vienna forever. On May 28, 1937, during a series of lectures at Aberdeen University, he died of a heart attack.

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Theory

Alfred Adler postulates a single "drive" or motivating force behind all our behavior and experience. By the time his theory had gelled into its most mature form, he called that motivating force the **striving for perfection**. It is the desire we all have to fulfill our potentials, to come closer and closer to our ideal. It is, as many of you will already see, very similar to the more popular idea of self-actualization.

"Perfection" and "ideal" are troublesome words, though. On the one hand, they are very positive goals. Shouldn't we all be striving for the ideal? And yet, in psychology, they are often given a rather negative connotation. Perfection and ideals are, practically by definition, things you can't reach. Many people, in fact, live very sad and painful lives trying to be perfect! As you will see, other theorists, like Karen Horney and Carl Rogers, emphasize this problem. Adler talks about it, too. But he sees this negative kind of idealism as a perversion of the more positive understanding. We will return to this in a little while.

Striving for perfection was not the first phrase Adler used to refer to his single motivating force. His earliest phrase was the **aggression drive**, referring to the reaction we have when other drives, such as our need to eat, be sexually satisfied, get things done, or be loved, are frustrated. It might be better called the assertiveness drive, since we tend to think of aggression as physical and negative. But it was Adler's idea of the aggression drive that first caused friction between him and Freud. Freud was afraid that it would detract from the crucial position of the sex drive in psychoanalytic theory. Despite Freud's dislike for the idea, he himself introduced something very similar much later in his life: the death instinct.

Another word Adler used to refer to basic motivation was **compensation**, or striving to overcome. Since we all have problems, short-comings, inferiorities of one sort or another, Adler felt, earlier in his writing, that our personalities could be accounted for by the ways in which we do – or don't – compensate or overcome those problems. The idea still plays an important role in his theory, as you will see, but he rejected it as a label for the basic motive because it makes it sound as if it is your problems that cause you to be what you are.

One of Adler's earliest phrases was **masculine protest**. He noted something pretty obvious in his culture (and by no means absent from our own): Boys were held in higher esteem than girls. Boys wanted, often desperately, to be thought of as strong, aggressive, in control – i.e. "masculine" – and not weak, passive, or dependent – i.e. "feminine." The point, of course, was that men are somehow basically better than women. They do, after all, have the power, the education, and apparently the talent and motivation needed to do "great things," and women don't.

You can still hear this in the kinds of comments older people make about little boys and girls: If a baby boy fusses or demands to have his own way (masculine protest!), they will say he's a natural boy; If a little girl is quiet and shy, she is praised for her femininity; If, on the other hand, the boy is quiet and shy, they worry that he might grow up to be a sissy; Or if a girl is assertive and gets her way, they call her a "tomboy" and will try to reassure you that she'll grow out of it!

But Adler did not see men's assertiveness and success in the world as due to some innate superiority. He saw it as a reflection of the fact that boys are encouraged to be assertive in life, and girls are discouraged. Both boys and girls, however, begin life with the capacity for "protest!" Because so many people misunderstood him to mean that men are, innately, more assertive, lead him to limit his use of the phrase.

The last phrase he used, before switching to striving for perfection, was **striving for superiority**. His use of this phrase reflects one of the philosophical roots of his ideas: Friederich Nietzsche developed a philosophy that considered the will to power the basic motive of human life. Although striving for superiority does refer to the desire to be better, it also contains the idea that we want to be better than others, rather than better in our own right. Adler later tended to use striving for superiority more in reference to unhealthy or neurotic striving.

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Life style

A lot of this playing with words reflects Adler's groping towards a really different kind of personality theory than that represented by Freud's. Freud' theory was what we nowadays would call a reductionistic one: He tried most of his life to get the concepts down to the physiological level. although he admitted failure in the end, life is nevertheless explained in terms of basic physiological needs. In addition, Freud tended to "carve up" the person into smaller theoretical concepts – the id, ego, and superego – as well.

Adler was influenced by the writings of Jan Smuts, the South African philosopher and statesman. Smuts felt that, in order to understand people, we have to understand them more as unified wholes than as a collection of bits and pieces, and we have to understand them in the context of their environment, both physical and social. This approach is called **holism**, and Adler took it very much to heart.

First, to reflect the idea that we should see people as wholes rather than parts, he decided to label his approach to psychology **individual psychology**. The word individual means literally "un-divided."

Second, instead of talking about a person's personality, with the traditional sense of internal traits, structures, dynamics, conflicts, and so on, he preferred to talk about **style of life** (nowadays, "lifestyle"). Life style refers to how you live your life, how you handle problems and interpersonal relations. Here's what he himself had to say about it: "The style of life of a tree is the individuality of a tree expressing itself and molding itself in an environment. We recognize a style when we see it against a background of an environment different from what we expect, for then we realize that every tree has a life pattern and is not merely a mechanical reaction to the environment."

Teleology

The last point – that lifestyle is "not merely a mechanical reaction" – is a second way in which Adler differs dramatically from Freud. For Freud, the things that happened in the past, such as early childhood trauma, determine what you are like in the present. Adler sees motivation as a matter of moving towards the future, rather than being driven, mechanistically, by the past. We are drawn towards our goals, our purposes, our ideals. This is called **teleology**.

Moving things from the past into the future has some dramatic effects. Since the future is not here yet, a teleological approach to motivation takes the necessity out of things. In a traditional mechanistic approach, cause leads to effect: If a, b, and c happen, then x, y, and z must, of necessity, happen. But you don't have to reach your goals or meet your ideals, and they can change along the way. Teleology acknowledges that life is hard and uncertain, but it always has room for change!

Another major influence on Adler's thinking was the philosopher Hans Vaihinger, who wrote a book called **The Philosophy of "As If."** Vaihinger believed that ultimate truth would always be beyond us, but that, for practical purposes, we need to create partial truths. His main interest was science, so he gave as examples such partial truths as protons an electrons, waves of light, gravity as distortion of space, and so on. Contrary to what many of us non-scientists tend to assume, these are not things that anyone has seen or proven to exist: They are useful constructs. They work for the moment, let us do science, and hopefully will lead to better, more useful constructs. We use them "as if" they were true. He called these partial truths **fictions**.

Vaihinger, and Adler, pointed out that we use these fictions in day to day living as well. We behave as if we knew the world would be here tomorrow, as if we were sure what good and bad are all about, as if everything we see is as we see it, and so on. Adler called this **fictional finalism**. You can understand the phrase most easily if you think about an example: Many people behave as if there were a heaven or a hell in their personal future. Of course, there may be a heaven or a hell, but most of us don't think of this as a proven fact. That makes it a "fiction" in Vaihinger's and Adler's sense of the word. And finalism refers to the teleology of it: The fiction lies in the future, and yet influences our behavior today.

Adler added that, at the center of each of our lifestyles, there sits one of these fictions, an important one about who we are and where we are going.

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Social interest

Second in importance only to striving for perfection is the idea of **social interest** or social feeling (originally called **Gemeinschaftsgefuhl** or "community feeling"). In keeping with his holism, it is easy to see that anyone "striving for perfection" can hardly do so without considering his or her social environment. As social animals, we simply don't exist, much less thrive, without others, and even the most resolute people-hater forms that hatred in a social context!

Adler felt that social concern was not simply inborn, nor just learned, but a combination of both: It is based on an innate disposition, but it has to be nurtured to survive. That it is to some extent innate is shown by the way babies and small children often show sympathy for others without having been taught to do so. Notice how, when one baby in a nursery begins to cry, they all begin to cry. Or how, when we walk into a room where people are laughing, we ourselves begin to smile.

And yet, right along with the examples of how generous little children can be to others, we have examples of how selfish and cruel they can be. Although we instinctively seem to know that what hurts him can hurt me, and vice versa, we also instinctively seem to know that, if we have to choose between it hurting him and it hurting me, we'll take "hurting him" every time! So the tendency to empathize must be supported by parents and the culture at large. Even if we disregard the possibilities of conflict between my needs and yours, empathy involves feeling the pain of others, an in a hard world, that can quickly become overwhelming. Much easier to just "toughen up" and ignore that unpleasant empathy – unless society steps in on empathy's behalf!

One misunderstanding Adler wanted to avoid was the idea that social interest was somehow another version of extraversion. Americans in particular tend to see social concern as a matter of being open and friendly and slapping people on the back and calling them by their first names. Some people may indeed express their social concern this way; But other people just use that kind of behavior to further their own ends. Adler meant social concern or feeling not in terms of particular social behaviors, but in the much broader sense of caring for family, for community, for society, for humanity, even for life. Social concern is a matter of being useful to others.

On the other hand, a lack of social concern is, for Adler, the very definition of mental ill-health: All failures – neurotics, psychotics, criminals, drunkards, problem children, suicides, perverts, and prostitutes – are failures because they are lacking in social interest.... Their goal of success is a goal of personal superiority, and their triumphs have meaning only to themselves.

Inferiority

Here we are, all of us, "pulled" towards fulfillment, perfection, self-actualization. And yet some of us – the failures – end up terribly unfulfilled, baldly imperfect, and far from self-actualized. And all because we lack social interest, or, to put it in the positive form, because we are too self-interested. So what makes so many of us self-interested?

Adler says it's a matter of being overwhelmed by our **inferiority**. If you are moving along, doing well, feeling competent, you can afford to think of others. If you are not, if life is getting the best of you, then your attentions become increasingly focussed on yourself.

Obviously, everyone suffers from inferiority in one form or another. For example, Adler began his theoretical work considering **organ inferiority**, that is, the fact that each of us has weaker, as well as stronger, parts of our anatomy or physiology. Some of us are born with heart murmurs, or develop heart problems early in life; Some have weak lungs, or kidneys, or early liver problems; Some of us stutter or lisp; Some have diabetes, or asthma, or polio; Some have weak eyes, or poor hearing, or a poor musculature; Some of us have innate tendencies to being heavy, others to being skinny; Some of us are retarded, some of us are deformed; Some of us are terribly tall or terribly short; And so on and so on.

Adler noted that many people respond to these organic inferiorities with **compensation**. They make up for

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their deficiencies in some way: The inferior organ can be strengthened and even become stronger than it is in others; Or other organs can be overdeveloped to take up the slack; Or the person can psychologically compensate for the organic problem by developing certain skills or even certain personality styles. There are, as you well know, many examples of people who overcame great physical odds to become what those who are better endowed physically wouldn't even dream of!

Sadly, there are also many people who cannot handle their difficulties, and live lives of quiet despair. I would guess that our optimistic, up-beat society serious underestimates their numbers.

But Adler soon saw that this is only part of the picture. Even more people have **psychological inferiorities**. Some of as are told that we are dumb, or ugly, or weak. Some of us come to believe that we are just plain no good. In school, we are tested over and over, and given grades that tell us we aren't as good as the next person. Or we are demeaned for our pimples or our bad posture and find ourselves without friends or dates. Or we are forced into basketball games, where we wait to see which team will be stuck with us. In these examples, it's not a matter of true organic inferiority – we are not really retarded or deformed or weak – but we learn to believe that we are. Again, some compensate by becoming good at what we feel inferior about. More compensate by becoming good at something else, but otherwise retaining our sense of inferiority. And some just never develop any self esteem at all.

If the preceding hasn't hit you personally yet, Adler also noted an even more general form of inferiority: The natural inferiority of children. all children are, by nature, smaller, weaker, less socially and intellectually competent, than the adults around them. Adler suggested that, if we look at children's games, toys, and fantasies, they tend to have one thing in common: The desire to grow up, to be big, to be an adult. This kind of compensation is really identical with striving for perfection! Many children, however, are left with the feeling that other people will always be better than they are.

If you are overwhelmed by the forces of inferiority – whether it is your body hurting, the people around you holding you in contempt, or just the general difficulties of growing up – you develop an **inferiority complex**. Looking back on my own childhood, I can see several sources for later inferiority complexes: Physically, I've tended to be heavy, with some real "fat boy" stages along the way; Also, because I was born in Holland, I didn't grow up with the skills of baseball, football, and basketball in my genes; Finally, my artistically talented parents often left me – unintentionally – with the feeling that I'd never be as good as they were. So, as I grew up, I became shy and withdrawn, and concentrated on the only thing I was good at, school. It took a long time for me to realize my self-worth.

If you weren't "super-nerd," you may have had one of the most common inferiority complexes I've come across: "Math phobia!" Perhaps it started because you could never remember what seven times eight was. Every year, there was some topic you never quite got the hang of. Every year, you fell a little further behind. And then you hit the crisis point: Algebra. How could you be expected to know what "x" is when you still didn't know what seven times eight was?

Many, many people truly believe that they are not meant to do math, that they are missing that piece of their brains or something. I'd like to tell you here and now that anyone can do math, if they are taught properly and when they are really ready. That aside, you've got to wonder how many people have given up being scientists, teachers, business people, or even going to college, because of this inferiority complex.

But the inferiority complex is not just a little problem, it's a **neurosis**, meaning it's a life-size problem. You become shy and timid, insecure, indecisive, cowardly, submissive, compliant, and so on. You begin to rely on people to carry you along, even manipulating them into supporting you: "You think I'm smart / pretty / strong / sexy / good, don't you?" Eventually, you become a drain on them, and you may find yourself by yourself. Nobody can take all that self-centered whining for long!

There is another way in which people respond to inferiority besides compensation and the inferiority complex: You can also develop a **superiority complex**. The superiority complex involves covering up your inferiority by pretending to be superior. If you feel small, one way to feel big is to make everyone else feel even smaller! Bullies, braggarts, and petty dictators everywhere are the prime example. More subtle

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examples are the people who are given to attention-getting dramatics, the ones who feel powerful when they commit crimes, and the ones who put others down for their gender, race, ethnic origins, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, weight, height, etc. etc. Even more subtle still are the people who hide their feelings of worthlessness in the delusions of power afforded by alcohol and drugs.

Psychological types

Although all neurosis is, for Adler, a matter of insufficient social interest, he did note that three types could be distinguished based on the different levels of **energy** they involved:

The first is the **ruling type**. They are, from childhood on, characterized by a tendency to be rather aggressive and dominant over others. Their energy – the strength of their striving after personal power – is so great that they tend to push over anything or anybody who gets in their way. The most energetic of them are bullies and sadists; somewhat less energetic ones hurt others by hurting themselves, and include alcoholics, drug addicts, and suicides.

The second is the **leaning type**. They are sensitive people who have developed a shell around themselves which protects them, but they must rely on others to carry them through life's difficulties. They have low energy levels and so become dependent. When overwhelmed, they develop what we typically think of as neurotic symptoms: phobias, obsessions and compulsions, general anxiety, hysteria, amnesias, and so on, depending on individual details of their lifestyle.

The third type is the **avoiding type**. These have the lowest levels of energy and only survive by essentially avoiding life – especially other people. When pushed to the limits, they tend to become psychotic, retreating finally into their own personal worlds.

There is a fourth type as well: the **socially useful type**. This is the healthy person, one who has both social interest and energy. Note that without energy, you can't really have social interest, since you wouldn't be able to actually do anything for anyone!

Adler noted that his four types looked very much like the four types proposed by the ancient Greeks. They, too, noticed that some people are always sad, others always angry, and so on. But they attributed these temperaments (from the same root as temperature) to the relative presence of four bodily fluids called **humors**.

If you had too much yellow bile, you would be **choleric** (hot and dry) and angry all the time. The choleric is, roughly, the ruling type.

If you had too much phlegm, you would be **phlegmatic** (cold and wet) and be sluggish. This is roughly the leaning type.

If you had too much black bile – and we don't know what the Greeks were referring to here – you would be **melancholy** (cold and dry) and tend to be sad constantly. This is roughly the avoiding type.

And, if you had a lot of blood relative to the other humors, you be in a good humor, **sanguine** (warm and moist). This naturally cheerful and friendly person represents the socially useful type.

One word of warning about Adler's types: Adler believed very strongly that each person is a unique individual with his or her own unique lifestyle. The idea of types is, for him, only a **heuristic** device, meaning a useful fiction, not an absolute reality!

Childhood

Adler, like Freud, saw personality or lifestyle as something established quite early in life. In fact, the **prototype** of your lifestyle tends to be fixed by about five years old. New experiences, rather than change that prototype, tend to be interpreted in terms of the prototype, "force fit," in other words, into preconceived

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notions, just like new acquaintances tend to get "force fit" into our stereotypes.

Adler felt that there were three basic childhood situations that most contribute to a faulty lifestyle. The first is one we've spoken of several times: organ inferiorities, as well as early childhood diseases. They are what he called "overburdened," and if someone doesn't come along to draw their attention to others, they will remain focussed on themselves. Most will go through life with a strong sense of inferiority; A few will overcompensate with a superiority complex. Only with the encouragement of loved ones will some truly compensate.

The second is **pampering**. Many children are taught, by the actions of others, that they can take without giving. Their wishes are everyone else's commands. This may sound like a wonderful situation, until you realize that the pampered child fails in two ways: First, he doesn't learn to do for himself, and discovers later that he is truly inferior; And secondly, he doesn't learn any other way to deal with others than the giving of commands. And society responds to pampered people in only one way: hatred.

The third is **neglect**. A child who is neglected or abused learns what the pampered child learns, but learns it in a far more direct manner: They learn inferiority because they are told and shown every day tat they are of no value; They learn selfishness because they are taught to trust no one. If you haven't known love, you don't develop a capacity for it later. We should note that the neglected child includes not only orphans and the victims of abuse, but the children whose parents are never there, and the ones raised in a rigid, authoritarian manner.

Birth order

Adler must be credited as the first theorist to include not only a child's mother and father and other adults as early influence on the child, but the child's brothers and sisters as well. His consideration of the effects of siblings and the order in which they were born is probably what Adler is best-known for. I have to warn you, though, that Adler considered birth-order another one of those heuristic ideas – useful fictions – that contribute to understanding people, but must be not be taken too seriously.

The **only child** is more likely than others to be pampered, with all the ill results we've discussed. After all, the parents of the only child have put all their eggs in one basket, so to speak, and are more likely to take special care – sometimes anxiety-filled care – of their pride and joy. If the parents are abusive, on the other hand, the only child will have to bear that abuse alone.

The **first child** begins life as an only child, with all the attention to him- or herself. Sadly, just as things are getting comfortable, the second child arrives and "**dethrones**" the first. At first, the child may battle for his or her lost position. He or she might try acting like the baby – after all, it seems to work for the baby! – only to be rebuffed and told to grow up. Some become disobedient and rebellious, others sullen and withdrawn. Adler believes that first children are more likely than nay other to become problem children. More positively, first children are often precocious. They tend to be relatively solitary and more conservative than the other children in the family.

The **second child** is in a very different situation: He or she has the first child as a sort of "pace-setter," and tends to become quite competitive, constantly trying to surpass the older child. They often succeed, but many feel as if the race is never done, and they tend to dream of constant running without getting anywhere. Other "middle" children will tend to be similar to the second child, although each may focus on a different "competitor."

The **youngest child** is likely to be the most pampered in a family with more than one child. After all, he or she is the only one who is never dethroned! And so youngest children are the second most likely source of problem children, just behind first children. On the other hand, the youngest may also feel incredible inferiority, with everyone older and "therefore" superior. But, with all those "pace-setters" ahead, the youngest can also be driven to exceed all of them.

Who is a first, second, or youngest child isn't as obvious as it might seem. If there is a long stretch between

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children, they may not see themselves and each other the same way as if they were closer together. There are eight years between my first and second daughter and three between the second and the third: That would make my first daughter an only child, my second a first child, and my third the second and youngest! And if some of the children are boys and some girls, it makes a difference as well. A second child who is a girl might not take her older brother as someone to compete with; A boy in a family of girls may feel more like the only child; And so on. As with everything in Adler's system, birth order is to be understood in the context of the individual's own special circumstances.

Diagnosis

In order to help you to discover the "fictions" your lifestyle is based upon, Adler would look at a great variety of things – your birth-order position, for example. First, he might examine you and your medical history for any possible organic roots to your problem. A serious illness, for example, may have side effects that closely resemble neurotic and psychotic symptoms.

In your very first session with you, he might ask for your **earliest childhood memory**. He is not so much looking for the truth here as for an indication of that early prototype of your present lifestyle. If your earliest memory involves security and a great deal of attention, that might indicate pampering; If you recall some aggressive competition with your older brother, that might suggest the strong strivings of a second child and the "ruling" type of personality; If your memory involves neglect and hiding under the sink, it might mean severe inferiority and avoidance; And so on.

He might also ask about any childhood problems you may have had: Bad habits involving eating or the bathroom might indicate ways in which you controlled your parents; Fears, such as a fear of the dark or of being left alone, might suggest pampering; Stuttering is likely to mean that speech was associated with anxiety; Overt aggression and stealing may be signs of a superiority complex; Daydreaming, isolation, laziness, and lying may be various ways of avoiding facing one's inferiorities.

Like Freud and Jung, dreams (and daydreams) were important to Adler. He took a more direct approach to them, though: Dreams are an expression of your style of life and, far from contradicting your daytime feelings, are unified with your conscious life. Usually, they reflect the goals you have and the problems you face in reaching them. If you can't remember any dreams, Adler isn't put off: Go ahead and fantasize right then and there. Your fantasies will reflect your lifestyle just as well.

Adler would also pay attention to how you express yourself: Your posture, the way you shake hands, the gestures you use, how you move, your "body language," as we say today. He notes that pampered people often lean against something! Even your sleep postures may contribute some insight: A person who sleeps in the fetal position with the covers over his or her head is clearly different from one who sprawls over the entire bed completely uncovered!

He would also want to know the exogenous factors, the events that triggered the symptoms that concern you. He gives a number of common triggers: Sexual problems, like uncertainty, guilt, the first time, impotence, and so on; The problems women face, such as pregnancy and childbirth and he onset and end of menstruation; Your love life, dating, engagement, marriage, and divorce; Your work life, including school, exams, career decisions, and the job itself; And mortal danger or the loss of a loved one.

Last, and not least, Adler was open to the less rational and scientific, more art-like side of diagnosis: He suggested we not ignore empathy, intuition, and just plain guess-work!

Therapy

There are considerable differences between Adler's therapy and Freud's: First, Adler preferred to have everyone sitting up and talking face to face. Further, he went to great lengths to avoid appearing too authoritarian. In fact, he advised that the therapist never allow the patient to force him into the role of an

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authoritarian figure, because that allows the patient to play some of the same games he or she is likely to have played many times before: The patient may set you up as a savior, only to attack you when you inevitably reveal your humanness. By pulling you down, they feel as if they are raising themselves, with their neurotic lifestyles, up.

This is essentially the explanation Adler gave for resistance: When a patient forgets appointments, comes in late, demands special favors, or generally becomes stubborn and uncooperative, it is not, as Freud thought, a matter of repression. Rather, resistance is just a sign of the patient's lack of courage to give up their neurotic lifestyle.

The patient must come to understand the nature of his or her lifestyle and its roots in self-centered fictions. This understanding or insight cannot be forced: If you just tell someone "look, here is your problem!" he or she will only pull away from you and look for ways of bolstering their present fictions. Instead, A patient must be brought into such a state of feeling that he likes to listen, and wants to understand. Only then can he be influenced to live what he has understood. (Ansbacher and Ansbacher, 1956, p. 335.) It is the patient, not the therapist, who is ultimately responsible for curing him- or herself.

Finally, the therapist must encourage the patient, which means awakening his or her social interest, and the energy that goes with it. By developing a genuine human relationship with the patient, the therapist provides the basic form of social interest, which the patient can then transfer to others.

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Discussion

Although Adler's theory may be less interesting than Freud's, with its sexuality, or Jung's, with its mythology, it has probably struck you as the most common-sensical of the three. Students generally like Adler and his theory. In fact, quite a few personality theorists like him, too. Maslow, for example, once said that, the older he gets, the more right Adler seems. If you have some knowledge of Carl Rogers' brand of therapy, you may have noticed how similar it is to Adler's. And a number of students of personality theories have noted that the theorists called Neo-Freudians – Horney, Fromm, and Sullivan – should really have been called Neo-Adlerians.

And so the "positives" of Adler's theory don't really need to be listed: His clear descriptions of people's complaints, his straight-forward and common-sense interpretations of their problems, his simple theoretical structure, his trust and even affection for the common person, all make his theory both comfortable and highly influential.

Problems

Criticisms of Adler tend to involve the issue of whether or not, or to what degree, his theory is scientific. The mainstream of psychology today is experimentally oriented, which means, among other things, that the concepts a theory uses must be measurable and manipulable. This in turn means that an experimental orientation prefers physical or behavioral variables. Adler, as you saw, uses basic concepts that are far from physical and behavioral: Striving for perfection? How do you measure that? Or compensation? Or feelings of inferiority? Or social interest? The experimental method also makes a basic assumption: That all things operate in terms of cause and effect. Adler would certainly agree that physical things do so, but he would adamantly deny that people do! Instead, he takes the teleological route, that people are "determined" by their ideals, goals, values, "final fictions." Teleology takes the necessity out of things: A person doesn't have to respond a certain way to a certain circumstance; A person has choices to make; A person creates his or her own personality or lifestyle. From the experimental perspective, these things are illusions that a scientist, even a personality theorist, dare not give in to.

Even if you are open to the teleological approach, though, there are criticisms you can make regarding how scientific Adler's theory is: Many of the details of his theory are too anecdotal, that is, are true in particular cases, but don't necessarily have the generality Adler seems to claim for them. A first child (even broadly defined) doesn't necessarily feel dethroned, nor a second child necessarily feel competitive, for example.

Adler could, however, respond to these criticisms very easily: First, didn't we just finish saying that, if you accept teleology, nothing about human personality is necessary. And secondly, didn't he go to great lengths to explain his ideas about fictional finalism? All of his concepts are useful constructs, not absolute truths, and science is just a matter of creating increasingly useful constructs. So if you have better ideas, let's hear them!

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Readings

If you are interested in learning more about Alfred Adler's theory, go straight to Ansbacher and Ansbacher's **The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler**. They take selections from his writings, organize them, and add running commentary. It introduces all of his ideas in a very readable fashion.

His own books include **Understanding Human Nature**, **Problems of Neurosis**, **The Practice and Theory of Individual Psychology**, and **Social Interest: A Challenge to Mankind**.

You can find early and recent work by Adler and others in English in **The International Journal of Individual Psychology**.

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KAREN HORNEY

[1885 – 1952]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
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Biography

Karen Horney was born September 16, 1885, to Clotilde and Berndt Wackels Danielson. Her father was a ship's captain, a religious man, and an authoritarian. His children called him "the Bible thrower," because, according to Horney, he did! Her mother, who was known as Sonni, was a very different person – Berndt's second wife, 19 years his junior, and considerably more urbane. Karen also had an older brother, also named Berndt, for whom she cared deeply, as well as four older siblings from her father's previous marriage.

Karen Horney's childhood seems to have been one of misperceptions: For example, while she paints a picture of her father as a harsh disciplinarian who preferred her brother Berndt over her, he apparently brought her gifts from all over the world and even took her on three long sea voyages with him – a very unusual thing for sea captains to do in those days! Nevertheless, she felt deprived of her father's affections, and so became especially attached to her mother, becoming, as she put it, "her little lamb."

At the age of nine, she changed her approach to life, and became ambitious and even rebellious. She said "If I couldn't be pretty, I decided I would be smart," which is only unusual in that she actually was pretty! Also during this time, she developed something of a crush on her own brother. Embarrassed by her attentions, as you might expect of a young teenage boy, he pushed her away. This led to her first bout with depression – a problem that would plague her the rest of her life.

In early adulthood came several years of stress. In 1904, her mother divorced her father and left him with Karen and young Berndt. In 1906, she entered medical school, against her parents' wishes and, in fact, against the opinions of polite society of the time. While there, she met a law student named Oscar Horney, whom she married in 1909. In 1910, Karen gave birth to Brigitte, the first of her three daughters. In 1911, her mother Sonni died. The strain of these events were hard on Karen, and she entered psychoanalysis.

As Freud might have predicted, she had married a man not unlike her father: Oscar was an authoritarian as harsh with his children as the captain had been with his. Horney notes that she did not intervene, but rather considered the atmosphere good for her children and encouraging their independence. Only many years later did hindsight change her perspective on childrearing.

In 1923, Oskar's business collapsed and he developed meningitis. He became a broken man, morose and argumentative. Also in 1923, Karen's brother died at the age of 40 of a pulmonary infection. Karen became very depressed, to the point of swimming out to a sea piling during a vacation with thoughts of committing suicide.

Karen and her daughters moved out of Oskar's house in 1926 and, four years later, moved to the U.S., eventually settling in Brooklyn. It may seem odd today, but in the 1930's, Brooklyn was the intellectual capital of the world, due most importantly to the influx of Jewish refugees from Germany. it was here that she became friends with such intellectuals as Erich Fromm and Harry Stack Sullivan, even pausing to have an affair with the former. And it was here that she developed her theories on neurosis, based on her experiences as a psychotherapist.

She practiced, taught, and wrote until her death in 1952.

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Theory

Horney's theory is perhaps the best theory of **neurosis** we have. First, she offered a different way of viewing neurosis. She saw it as much more continuous with normal life than previous theorists. Specifically, she saw neurosis as an attempt to make life bearable, as a way of "interpersonal control and coping." This is, of course, what we all strive to do on a day-to-day basis, only most of us seem to be doing alright, while the neurotic seems to be sinking fast.

In her clinical experience, she discerned ten particular patterns of neurotic needs. They are based on things that we all need, but they have become distorted in several ways by the difficulties of some people's lives:

Let's take the first need, for affection and approval, as an example. We all need affection, so what makes such a need neurotic? First, the need is unrealistic, unreasonable, indiscriminate. For example, we all need affection, but we don't expect it from everyone we meet. We don't expect great outpourings of affection from even our close friends and relations. We don't expect our loved ones to show affection at all times, in all circumstances. We don't expect great shows of love while our partners are filing out tax forms, for example. And, we realize that there may be times in our lives where we have to be self-sufficient.

Second, the neurotic's need is much more intense, and he or she will experience great **anxiety** if the need is not met, or if it even appears that it may not be met in the future. It is this, of course, that leads to the unrealistic nature of the need. Affection, to continue the example, has to be shown clearly at all times, in all circumstances, by all people, or the panic sets in. The neurotic has made the need too central to their existence.

The **neurotic needs** are as follows:

1. The neurotic need for affection and approval, the indiscriminate need to please others and be liked by them.

2. The neurotic need for a partner, for someone who will take over one's life. This includes the idea that love will solve all of one's problems. Again, we all would like a partner to share life with, but the neurotic goes a step or two too far.

3. The neurotic need to restrict one's life to narrow borders, to be undemanding, satisfied with little, to be inconspicuous. Even this has its normal counterpart. Who hasn't felt the need to simplify life when it gets too stressful, to join a monastic order, disappear into routine, or to return to the womb?

4. The neurotic need for power, for control over others, for a facade of omnipotence. We all seek strength, but the neurotic may be desperate for it. This is dominance for its own sake, often accompanied by a contempt for the weak and a strong belief in one's own rational powers.

5. The neurotic need to exploit others and get the better of them. In the ordinary person, this might be the need to have an effect, to have impact, to be heard. In the neurotic, it can become manipulation and the belief that people are there to be used. It may also involve a fear of being used, of looking stupid. You may have noticed that the people who love practical jokes more often than not cannot take being the butt of such a joke themselves!

6. The neurotic need for social recognition or prestige. We are social creatures, and sexual ones, and like to be appreciated. But these people are overwhelmingly concerned with appearances and popularity. They fear being ignored, be thought plain, "uncool," or "out of it."

7. The neurotic need for personal admiration. We need to be admired for inner qualities as well as outer ones. We need to feel important and valued. But some people are more desperate, and need to remind everyone of their importance – "Nobody recognizes genius," "I'm the real power behind the scenes, you know," and so on. Their fear is of being thought nobodies, unimportant and meaningless.

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8. The neurotic need for personal achievement. Again, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with achievement – far from it! But some people are obsessed with it. They have to be number one at everything they do. Since this is, of course, quite a difficult task, you will find these people devaluing anything they cannot be number one in! If they are good runners, then the discus and the hammer are "side shows." If academic abilities are their strength, physical abilities are of no importance, and so on.

9. The neurotic need for self-sufficiency and independence. We should all cultivate some autonomy, but some people feel that they shouldn't ever need anybody. They tend to refuse help and are often reluctant to commit to a relationship.

10. The neurotic need for perfection and unassailability. To become better and better at life and our special interests is hardly neurotic, but some people are driven to be perfect and scared of being flawed. They can't be caught making a mistake and need to be in control at all times.

As Horney investigated these neurotic needs, she began to recognize that they can be clustered into three broad **coping strategies**:

I. **Compliance**, which includes needs one, two, and three.

II. **Aggression**, including needs four through eight.

III. **Withdrawal**, including needs nine, ten, and three. She added three here because it is crucial to the illusion of total independence and perfection that you limit the breadth of your life!

In her writings, she used a number of other phrases to refer to these three strategies. Besides compliance, she referred to the first as the **moving-toward strategy** and the **self-effacing solution**. One should also note that it is the same as Adler's getting or leaning approach, or the phlegmatic personality.

Besides aggression, the second was referred to as **moving-against** and the **expansive solution**. It is the same as Alder's ruling or dominant type, or the choleric personality.

And, besides withdrawal, she called the third **moving-away-from** and the **resigning solution**. It is somewhat like Adler's avoiding type, the melancholy personality.

Development

It is true that some people who are abused or neglected as children suffer from neuroses as adults. What we often forget is that most do not. If you have a violent father, or a schizophrenic mother, or are sexually molested by a strange uncle, you may nevertheless have other family members that love you, take care of you, and work to protect you from further injury, and you will grow up to be a healthy, happy adult. It is even more true that the great majority of adult neurotics did not in fact suffer from childhood neglect or abuse! So the question becomes, if it is not neglect or abuse that causes neurosis, what does?

Horney's answer, which she called the "basic evil," is **parental indifference**, a lack of warmth and affection in childhood. Even occasional beatings or an early sexual experience can be overcome, if the child feels wanted and loved.

The key to understanding parental indifference is that it is a matter of the child's perception, and not the parents' intentions. "The road to hell," it might pay to remember, "is paved with good intentions." A well-intentioned parent may easily communicate indifference to children with such things as showing a preference for one child over another, blaming a child for what they may not have done, overindulging one moment and

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rejecting another, neglecting to fulfill promises, disturbing a child's friendships, making fun of a child's thinking, and so on. Please notice that many parents – even good ones – find themselves doing these things because of the many pressures they may be under. Other parents do these things because they themselves are neurotic, and place their own needs ahead of their children's

Horney noticed that, in contrast to our stereotypes of children as weak and passive, their first reaction to parental indifference is anger, a response she calls **basic hostility**. To be frustrated first leads to an effort at protesting the injustice!

Some children find this hostility effective, and over time it becomes a habitual response to life's difficulties. In other words, they develop an aggressive coping strategy. They say to themselves, "If I have power, no one can hurt me."

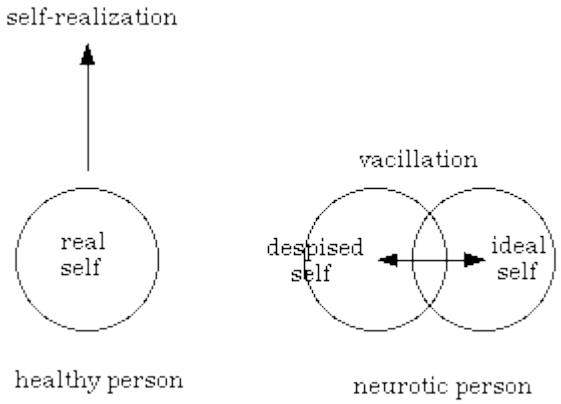
Most children, however, find themselves overwhelmed by **basic anxiety**, which in children is mostly a matter of fear of helplessness and abandonment. For survival's sake, basic hostility must be suppressed and the parents won over. If this seems to work better for the child, it may become the preferred coping strategy – compliance. They say to themselves, "If I can make you love me, you will not hurt me."

Some children find that neither aggression nor compliance eliminate the perceived parental indifference. They "solve" the problem by withdrawing from family involvement into themselves, eventually becoming sufficient unto themselves – the third coping strategy. They say, "If I withdraw, nothing can hurt me."

Self theory

Horney had one more way of looking at neurosis – in terms of self images. For Horney, the **self** is the core of your being, your potential. If you were healthy, you would have an accurate conception of who you are, and you would then be free to realize that potential (self-realization).

The neurotic has a different view of things. The neurotics self is "split" into a **despised self** and an **ideal self**. Other theorists postulate a "looking-glass" self, the you you think others see. If you look around and see (accurately or not) others despising you, then you take that inside you as what you assume is the real you. On the other hand, if you are lacking in some way, that implies there are certain ideals you should be living up to. You create an ideal self out of these "shoulds." Understand that the ideal self is not a positive goal; it is unrealistic and ultimately impossible. So the neurotic swings back and forth between hating themselves and pretending to be perfect.



Horney described this stretching between the despised and ideal selves as "the tyranny of the shoulds" and neurotic "striving for glory:"

> The compliant person believes "I should be sweet, self-sacrificing, saintly."
> The aggressive person says "I should be powerful, recognized, a winner."
> The withdrawing person believes "I should be independent, aloof, perfect."

And while vacillating between these two impossible selves, the neurotic is alienated from their true core and prevented from actualizing their potentials.

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Discussion

At first glance, it may appear that Horney stole some of Adler's best ideas. It is clear, for example, that her three coping strategies are very close to Adler's three types. It is, of course, quite conceivable that she was influenced by Adler. But if you look at how she derived her three strategies – by collapsing groups of neurotic needs – you see that she simply came to the same conclusions from a different approach. There is no question, of course, that Adler and Horney (and Fromm and Sullivan) form an unofficial school of psychiatry. They are often called neo-Freudians, although that is rather inaccurate. Unfortunately, the other common term is the Social Psychologists which, while accurate, is a term already used for an area of study.

Please notice how Horney's self theory fleshes out Adler's theory about the differences between healthy and neurotic striving for perfection, and (to get ahead of ourselves a bit) how similar this conception is to Carl Rogers'. I usually feel that, when different people come up with similar ideas relatively independently, this is a good sign we're getting at something valuable!

Karen Horney had a couple more interesting ideas that should be mentioned. First, she criticized Freud's idea of penis envy. Although she conceded that it did occasionally occur in neurotic women, she felt strongly that it was not anywhere near to a universal. She suggested that what may appear to be signs of penis envy is really justified envy of men's power in this world.

In fact, she suggested, there may also be a male counterpart to penis envy – **womb envy** – in some men who feel envious of a woman's ability to bear children. Perhaps the degree to which many men are driven to succeed, and to have their names live on after them, is in compensation for their inability to more directly extend themselves into the future by means of carrying, bearing, and nurturing their children!

A second idea, one that still gets little respect in the psychological community, is **self-analysis**. Horney wrote one of the earliest "self-help" books, and suggested that, with relatively minor neurotic problems, we could be our own psychiatrists. You can see how this might threaten a few of the delicate egos who make their livings as therapists! I am always surprised at the negative reaction some of my colleagues have to people like Joyce Brothers, the famous psychologist-columnist. Apparently, if you aren't working within the official guidelines, your work is dismissed as "pop psych."

The major negative comment I might make about Horney is that her theory is limited to the neurotic. Besides leaving out psychotics and other problems, she leaves out the truly healthy person. Nevertheless, since she does put neurosis and health on a single continuum, she does speak to the neurotic in all of us.

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References

Karen Horney's best book is **Neurosis and Human Growth** (1950). It is the best book on neurosis ever, in my humble opinion.

She wrote more "pop" versions called **The Neurotic Personality of our Time** (1937) and **Our Inner Conflicts** (1945).

Her thoughts on therapy can be found in **New Ways in Psychoanalysis** (1939).

For an early insight into feminist psychology, read **Feminine Psychology** (1967).

And to read about self-analysis read **Self-Analysis** (1942).

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ALBERT ELLIS

[1913 –]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

Since I began putting these personality theories on the internet, I have received requests to add this or that theorist, sometimes with the added notion that I must be a total dunderhead to have left out such a genius! I added Allport, for example, on the basis of one such request. But most I did not add, because, however much the writer loves the genius, the genius is rarely up to the standards set by theorists such as Rogers or Horney, much less Jung or Binswanger. But Albert Ellis has gotten my attention! Although his is admittedly a "clinical" theory (i.e. devoted primarily to advancing a form of therapy), it is, in my opinion, as sophisticated as any.

To simplify my life, I have used, with permission of the Albert Ellis Institute [http://www.rebt.org/], pieces of two articles to present Ellis's theory.

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From **A Sketch of Albert Ellis**, by Gary Gregg

Ellis was born in Pittsburgh in 1913 and raised in New York City. He made the best of a difficult childhood by using his head and becoming, in his words, "a stubborn and pronounced problem-solver." A serious kidney disorder turned his attention from sports to books, and the strife in his family (his parents were divorced when he was 12) led him to work at understanding others.

In junior high school Ellis set his sights on becoming the Great American Novelist. He planned to study accounting in high school and college, make enough money to retire at 30, and write without the pressure of financial need. The Great Depression put an end to his vision, but he made it through college in 1934 with a degree in business administration from the City University of New York. His first venture in the business world was a pants-matching business he started with his brother. They scoured the New York garment auctions for pants to match their customer's still-usable coats. In 1938, he became the personnel manager for a gift and novelty firm.

Ellis devoted most of his spare time to writing short stories, plays, novels, comic poetry, essays and nonfiction books. By the time he was 28, he had finished almost two dozen full-length manuscripts, but had not been able to get them published. He realized his future did not lie in writing fiction, and turned exclusively to nonfiction, to promoting what he called the "sex-family revolution."

As he collected more and more materials for a treatise called "The Case for Sexual Liberty," many of his friends began regarding him as something of an expert on the subject. They often asked for advice, and Ellis discovered that he liked counseling as well as writing. In 1942 he returned to school, entering the clinical-psychology program at Columbia. He started a part-time private practice in family and sex counseling soon after he received his master's degree in 1943.

At the time Columbia awarded him a doctorate in 1947 Ellis had come to believe that psychoanalysis was the deepest and most effective form of therapy. He decided to undertake a training analysis, and "become an outstanding psychoanalyst the next few years." The psychoanalytic institutes refused to take trainees without M.D.s, but he found an analyst with the Karen Horney group who agreed to work with him. Ellis completed a full analysis and began to practice classical psychoanalysis under his teacher's direction.

In the late 1940s he taught at Rutgers and New York University, and was the senior clinical psychologist at the Northern New Jersey Mental Hygiene Clinic. He also became the chief psychologist at the New Jersey Diagnostic Center and then at the New Jersey Department of Institutions and Agencies.

But Ellis' faith in psychoanalysis was rapidly crumbling. He discovered that when he saw clients only once a week or even every other week, they progressed as well as when he saw them daily. He took a more active role, interjecting advice and direct interpretations as he did when he was counseling people with family or sex problems. His clients seemed to improve more quickly than when he used passive psychoanalytic procedures. And remembering that before he underwent analysis, he had worked through many of his own problems by reading and practicing the philosophies or Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Spinoza and Bertrand Russell, he began to teach his clients the principles that had worked for him.

By 1955 Ellis had given up psychoanalysis entirely, and instead was concentrating on changing people's behavior by confronting them with their irrational beliefs and persuading them to adopt rational ones. This role was more to Ellis' taste, for he could be more honestly himself. "When I became rational-emotive," he said, "my own personality processes really began to vibrate."

He published his first book on REBT, How to Live with a Neurotic, in 1957. Two years later he organized the Institute for Rational Living, where he held workshops to teach his principles to other therapists. The Art and Science of Love, his first really successful book, appeared in 1960, and he has now published 54 books and over 600 articles on REBT, sex and marriage. He is currently the President of the Institute for Rational-Emotive Therapy in New York, which offers a full-time training program, and operates a large psychological clinic.

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Theory

REBT – Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy – begins with **ABC**! A is for activating experiences, such as family troubles, unsatisfying work, early childhood traumas, and all the many things we point to as the sources of our unhappiness. B stands for beliefs, especially the irrational, self-defeating beliefs that are the actual sources of our unhappiness. And C is for consequences, the neurotic symptoms and negative emotions such as depression panic, and rage, that come from our beliefs.

Although the activating experiences may be quite real and have caused real pain, it is our irrational beliefs that create long-term, disabling problems! Ellis adds D and E to ABC: The therapist must dispute (D) the irrational beliefs, in order for the client to ultimately enjoy the positive psychological effects (E) of rational beliefs.

For example, "a depressed person feels sad and lonely because he erroneously thinks he is inadequate and deserted." Actually, depressed people perform just as well as non-depressed people. So, a therapist should show the depressed person his or her successes, and attack the belief that they are inadequate, rather than attacking the mood itself!

Although it is not important to therapy to pin-point the source of these irrational beliefs, it is understood that they are the result of "philosophical conditioning," habits not unlike the habit of answering the phone just because it rings. Further, Ellis says that we are biologically programmed to be susceptible to this kind of conditioning!

These beliefs take the form of absolute statements. Instead of acknowledging a preference or a desire, we make unqualified demands on others, or convince ourselves that we have overwhelming needs. There are a number of typical "thinking errors" people typically engage in, including...

1. ignoring the positive,
2. exaggerating the negative, and
3. overgeneralizing.

I may refuse to see that I do have some friends or that I have had a few successes. I may dwell on and blow out of proportion the hurts I have suffered. I may convince myself that nobody loves me, or that I always screw up.

There are twelve examples of irrational beliefs that Ellis often mentions...

12 Irrational Ideas That Cause and Sustain Neurosis

1. The idea that it is a dire necessity for adults to be loved by significant others for almost everything they do – instead of their concentrating on their own self-respect, on winning approval for practical purposes, and on loving rather than on being loved.
2. The idea that certain acts are awful or wicked, and that people who perform such acts should be severely damned – instead of the idea that certain acts are self-defeating or antisocial, and that people who perform such acts are behaving stupidly, ignorantly, or neurotically, and would be better helped to change. People's poor behaviors do not make them rotten individuals.
3. The idea that it is horrible when things are not the way we like them to be – instead of the idea that it is too bad, that we would better try to change or control bad conditions so that they become more satisfactory, and, if that is not possible, we had better temporarily accept and gracefully lump their exis tence.

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4. The idea that human misery is invariably externally caused and is forced on us by outside people and events – instead of the idea that neurosis is largely caused by the view that we take of unfortunate conditions.
5. The idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome we should be terribly upset and endlessly obsess about it – instead of the idea that one would better frankly face it and render it non-dangerous and, when that is not possible, accept the inevitable.
6. The idea that it is easier to avoid than to face life difficulties and self-responsibilities – instead of the idea that the so-called easy way is usually much harder in the long run.
7. The idea that we absolutely need something other or stronger or greater than ourself on which to rely – instead of the idea that it is better to take the risks of thinking and acting less depen dently.
8. The idea that we should be thoroughly competent, intelligent, and achieving in all possible respects – instead of the idea that we would better do rather than always need to do well and accept ourself as a quite imperfect creature, who has general human limitations and specific fallibilities.
9. The idea that because something once strongly affected our life, it should indefinitely affect it – instead of the idea that we can learn from our past experiences but not be overly-attached to or prejudiced by them.
10. The idea that we must have certain and perfect control over things – instead of the idea that the world is full of probability and chance and that we can still enjoy life despite this.
11. The idea that human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction – instead of the idea that we tend to be happiest when we are vitally absorbed in creative pursuits, or when we are devoting ourselves to people or projects outside ourselves.
12. The idea that we have virtually no control over our emotions and that we cannot help feeling disturbed about things – instead of the idea that we have real control over our destructive emotions if we choose to work at changing the musturbatory hypotheses which we often employ to create them.

(From **The Essence of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy** by Albert Ellis, Ph.D. Revised, May 1994.)

To simplify, Ellis also talks about the three main irrational beliefs:

1. "I must be outstandingly competent, or I am worthless."
2. "Others must treat me considerately, or they are absolutely rotten."
3. "The world should always give me happiness, or I will die."

The therapist uses his or her skills to argue against these irrational ideas in therapy, or, even better, leads the client to make the arguments. For example, the therapist may ask...

1. Is there any evidence for this belief?
2. What is the evidence against this belief?
3. What is the worst that can happen if you give up this belief?
4. And what is the best that can happen?

In addition to argument, the REBT therapist uses any other techniques that assist the client in changing their beliefs. They might use group therapy, use unconditional positive regard, provide risk-taking activities, assertiveness training, empathy training, perhaps using role playing techniques to do so, encourage self-management through behavior modification techniques, use systematic desensitization, and so on.

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Unconditional self-acceptance

Ellis has come to emphasize more and more the importance of what he calls "unconditional self-acceptance." He says that, in REBT, no one is damned, no matter how awful their actions, and we should accept ourselves for what we are rather than for what we have achieved.

One approach he mentions is to convince the client of the intrinsic value of him or herself as a human being. Just being alive provides you with value.

He notes that most theories make a great deal out of self-esteem and ego-strength and similar concepts. We are naturally evaluating creatures, and that is fine. But we go from evaluating our traits and our actions to evaluating this vague holistic entity called "self." How can we do this? And what good does it do? Only harm, he believes.

There are, he says, legitimate reasons for promoting one's self or ego: We want to stay alive and be healthy, we want to enjoy life, and so on. But there are far more ways in which promoting the self or ego does harm, as exemplified by these irrational beliefs:

I am special or I am damned.
I must be loved or cared for.
I must be immortal.
I am either good or bad.
I must prove myself.
I must have everything that I want.

He believes very strongly that self-evaluation leads to depression and repression, and avoidance of change. The best thing for human health is that we should stop evaluating ourselves altogether!

But perhaps this idea of a self or an ego is overdrawn. Ellis is quite skeptical about the existence of a "true" or "real" self, ala Horney or Rogers. He especially dislikes the idea that there is a conflict between a self promoted by actualization versus one promoted by society. In fact, he says, one's nature and one's society are more likely to be mutually supporting than antagonistic.

He certainly sees no evidence for a transpersonal self or soul. Buddhism, for example, does quite well without it! And he is skeptical about the altered states of consciousness mystical traditions and transpersonal psychology recommend. In fact, he sees these states as being more inauthentic than transcendent!

On the other hand, he sees his approach as coming out of the ancient Stoic tradition, and supported by such philosophers as Spinoza. He sees additional similarities in existentialism and existential psychology. Any approach that puts the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the individual and his or her beliefs is likely to have commonalities with Ellis's REBT.

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ERICH FROMM

[1900 – 1980]

Personality Theories

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Biography

Erich Fromm was born in 1900 in Frankfurt, Germany. His father was a business man and, according to Erich, rather moody. His mother was frequently depressed. In other words, like quite a few of the people we've looked at, his childhood wasn't very happy.

Like Jung, Erich came from a very religious family, in his case orthodox Jews. Fromm himself later became what he called an atheistic mystic.

In his autobiography, ***Beyond the Chains of Illusion***, Fromm talks about two events in his early adolescence that started him along his path. The first involved a friend of the family's:

> Maybe she was 25 years of age; she was beautiful, attractive, and in addition a painter, the first painter I ever knew. I remember having heard that she had been engaged but after some time had broken the engagement; I remember that she was almost invariably in the company of her widowed father. As I remember him, he was an old, uninteresting, and rather unattractive man, or so I thought (maybe my judgment was somewhat biased by jealousy). Then one day I heard the shocking news: her father had died, and immediately afterwards, she had killed herself and left a will which stipulated that she wanted to be buried with her father. (p. 4)

As you can imagine, this news hit the 12 year old Erich hard, and he found himself asking what many of us might ask: why? Later, he began finding some answers – partial ones, admittedly – in Freud.

The second event was even larger: World War I. At the tender age of 14, he saw the extremes that nationalism could go to. All around him, he heard the message: We (Germans, or more precisely, Christian Germans) are great; They (the English and their allies) are cheap mercenaries. The hatred, the "war hysteria," frightened him, as well it should.

So again he wanted to understand something irrational – the irrationality of mass behavior – and he found some answers, this time in the writings of Karl Marx.

To finish Fromm's story, he received his PhD from Heidelberg in 1922 and began a career as a psychotherapist. He moved to the U.S. in 1934 – a popular time for leaving Germany! – and settled in New York City, where he met many of the other great refugee thinkers that gathered there, including Karen Horney, with whom he had an affair.

Toward the end of his career, he moved to Mexico City to teach. He had done considerable research into the relationship between economic class and personality types there. He died in 1980 in Switzerland.

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Theory

As his biography suggests, Fromm's theory is a rather unique blend of Freud and Marx. Freud, of course, emphasized the unconscious, biological drives, repression, and so on. In other words, Freud postulated that our characters were determined by biology. Marx, on the other hand, saw people as determined by their society, and most especially by their economic systems.

He added to this mix of two deterministic systems something quite foreign to them: The idea of **freedom**. He allows people to **transcend** the determinisms that Freud and Marx attribute to them. In fact, Fromm makes freedom the central characteristic of human nature!

There are, Fromm points out, examples where determinism alone operates. A good example of nearly pure biological determinism, ala Freud, is animals (at least simple ones). Animals don't worry about freedom – their instincts take care of everything. Woodchucks, for example, don't need career counseling to decide what they are going to be when they grow up: They are going to be woodchucks!

A good example of socioeconomic determinism, ala Marx, is the traditional society of the Middle Ages. Just like woodchucks, few people in the Middle Ages needed career counseling: They had fate, the Great Chain of Being, to tell them what to do. Basically, if your father was a peasant, you'd be a peasant. If your father was a king, that's what you'd become. And if you were a woman, well, there was only one role for women.

Today, we might look at life in the Middle Ages, or life as an animal, and cringe. But the fact is that the lack of freedom represented by biological or social determinism is easy. Your life has structure, meaning, there are no doubts, no cause for soul-searching, you fit in and never suffered an identity crisis.

Historically speaking, this simple, if hard, life began to get shaken up with the Renaissance. In the Renaissance, people started to see humanity as the center of the universe, instead of God. In other words, we didn't just look to the church (and other traditional establishments) for the path we were to take. Then came the Reformation, which introduced the idea of each of us being individually responsible for our own soul's salvation. And then came democratic revolutions such as the American and the French revolutions. Now all of a sudden we were supposed to govern ourselves! And then came the industrial revolution, and instead of tilling the soil or making things with our hands, we had to sell our labor in exchange for money. All of a sudden, we became employees and consumers! Then came socialist revolutions such as the Russian and the Chinese, which introduced the idea of participatory economics. You were no longer responsible only for your own well-being, but for fellow workers as well!

So, over a mere 500 years, the idea of the individual, with individual thoughts, feelings, moral conscience, freedom, and responsibility, came into being. but with individuality came isolation, alienation, and bewilderment. Freedom is a difficult thing to have, and when we can we tend to flee from it.

Fromm describes three ways in which we **escape from freedom**:

1. **Authoritarianism**. We seek to avoid freedom by fusing ourselves with others, by becoming a part of an authoritarian system like the society of the Middle Ages. There are two ways to approach this. One is to submit to the power of others, becoming passive and compliant. The other is to become an authority yourself, a person who applies structure to others. Either way, you escape your separate identity.

Fromm referred to the extreme version of authoritarianism as **masochism** and **sadism**, and points out that both feel compelled to play their separate roles, so that even the sadist, with all his apparent power over the masochist, is not free to choose his actions. But milder versions of authoritarianism are everywhere. In many classes, for example, there is an implicit contract between students and professors: Students demand structure, and the professor sticks to his notes. It seems innocuous and even natural, but this way the students avoid taking any responsibility for their learning, and the professor can avoid taking on the real issues of his field.

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2. **Destructiveness**.. Authoritarians respond to a painful existence by, in a sense, eliminating themselves: If there is no me, how can anything hurt me? But others respond to pain by striking out against the world: If I destroy the world, how can it hurt me? It is this escape from freedom that accounts for much of the indiscriminate nastiness of life – brutality, vandalism, humiliation, vandalism, crime, terrorism....

Fromm adds that, if a person's desire to destroy is blocked by circumstances, he or she may redirect it inward. The most obvious kind of self-destructiveness is, of course, suicide. But we can also include many illnesses, drug addiction, alcoholism, even the joys of passive entertainment. He turns Freud's death instinct upside down: Self-destructiveness is frustrated destructiveness, not the other way around.

3. **Automaton conformity**. Authoritarians escape by hiding within an authoritarian hierarchy. But our society emphasizes equality! There is less hierarchy to hide in (though plenty remains for anyone who wants it, and some who don't). When we need to hide, we hide in our mass culture instead. When I get dressed in the morning, there are so many decisions! But I only need to look at what you are wearing, and my frustrations disappear. Or I can look at the television, which, like a horoscope, will tell me quickly and effectively what to do. If I look like, talk like, think like, feel like... everyone else in my society, then I disappear into the crowd, and I don't need to acknowledge my freedom or take responsibility. It is the horizontal counterpart to authoritarianism.

The person who uses automaton conformity is like a social chameleon: He takes on the coloring of his surroundings. Since he looks like a million other people, he no longer feels alone. He isn't alone, perhaps, but he's not himself either. The automaton conformist experiences a split between his genuine feelings and the colors he shows the world, very much along the lines of Horney's theory.

In fact, since humanity's "true nature" is freedom, any of these escapes from freedom alienates us from ourselves. Here's what Fromm had to say:

> Man is born as a freak of nature, being within nature and yet transcending it. He has to find principles of action and decision making which replace the principles of instincts. he has to have a frame of orientation which permits him to organize a consistent picture of the world as a condition for consistent actions. He has to fight not only against the dangers of dying, starving, and being hurt, but also against another anger which is specifically human: that of becoming insane. In other words, he has to protect himself not only against the danger of losing his life but also against the danger of losing his mind. (Fromm, 1968, p. 61)

I should add here that freedom is in fact a complex idea, and that Fromm is talking about "true" personal freedom, rather than just political freedom (often called liberty): Most of us, whether they are free or not, tend to like the idea of political freedom, because it means that we can do what we want. A good example is the sexual sadist (or masochist) who has a psychological problem that drives his behavior. He is not free in the personal sense, but he will welcome the politically free society that says that what consenting adults do among themselves is not the state's business! Another example involves most of us today: We may well fight for freedom (of the political sort), and yet when we have it, we tend to be conformist and often rather irresponsible. We have the vote, but we fail to use it! Fromm is very much for political freedom – but he is especially eager that we make use of that freedom and take the responsibility that goes with it.

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Families

Which of the escapes from freedom you tend to use has a great deal to do with what kind of family you grew up in. Fromm outlines two kinds of unproductive families.

1. **Symbiotic families**. Symbiosis is the relationship two organisms have who cannot live without each other. In a symbiotic family, some members of the family are "swallowed up" by other members, so that they do not fully develop personalities of their own. The more obvious example is the case where the parent "swallows" the child, so that the child's personality is merely a reflection of the parent's wishes. In many traditional societies, this is the case with many children, especially girls.

The other example is the case where the child "swallows" the parent. In this case, the child dominates or manipulates the parent, who exists essentially to serve the child. If this sounds odd, let me assure you it is common, especially in traditional societies, especially in the relationship between a boy and his mother. Within the context of the particular culture, it is even necessary: How else does a boy learn the art of authority he will need to survive as an adult?

In reality, nearly everyone in a traditional society learns both how to dominate and how to be submissive, since nearly everyone has someone above them and below them in the social hierarchy. Obviously, the authoritarian escape from freedom is built-in to such a society. But note that, for all that it may offend our modern standards of equality, this is the way people lived for thousands of years. It is a very stable social system, it allows for a great deal of love and friendship, and billions of people live in it still.

2. **Withdrawing families**. In fact, the main alternative is most notable for its cool indifference, if not cold hatefulness. Although withdrawal as a family style has always been around, it has come to dominate some societies only in the last few hundred years, that is, since the bourgeoisie – the merchant class – arrive on the scene in force.

The "cold" version is the older of the two, found in northern Europe and parts of Asia, and wherever merchants are a formidable class. Parents are very demanding of their children, who are expected to live up to high, well-defined standards. Punishment is not a matter of a slap upside the head in full anger and in the middle of dinner; it is instead a formal affair, a full-fledged ritual, possibly involving cutting switches and meeting in the woodshed. Punishment is cold-blooded, done "for your own good." Alternatively, a culture may use guilt and withdrawal of affection as punishment. Either way, children in these cultures become rather strongly driven to succeed in whatever their culture defines as success.

This puritanical style of family encourages the destructive escape from freedom, which is internalized until circumstances (such as war) allow its release. I might add that this kind of family more immediately encourages perfectionism – living by the rules – which is also a way of avoiding freedom that Fromm does not discuss. When the rules are more important than people, destructiveness is inevitable.

The second withdrawing kind of family is the modern family, found in the most advanced parts of the world, most notably the USA. Changes in attitudes about child rearing have lead many people to shudder at the use of physical punishment and guilt in raising children. The newer idea is to raise your children as your equals. A father should be a boy's best buddy; a mother should be a daughter's soul mate. But, in the process of controlling their emotions, the parents become coolly indifferent. They are, in fact, no longer really parents, just cohabitants with their children. The children, now without any real adult guidance, turn to their peers and to the media for their values. This is the modern, shallow, television family!

The escape from freedom is particularly obvious here: It is automaton conformity. Although this is still very much a minority family in the world (except, of course, on TV!), this is the one Fromm worries about the most. It seems to portent the future.

What makes up a good, healthy, productive family? Fromm suggests it is a family where parents take the

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responsibility to teach their children reason in an atmosphere of love. Growing up in this sort of family, children learn to acknowledge their freedom and to take responsibility for themselves, and ultimately for society as a whole.

The social unconscious

But our families mostly just reflect our society and culture. Fromm emphasizes that we soak up our society with our mother's milk. It is so close to us that we usually forget that our society is just one of an infinite number of ways of dealing with the issues of life. We often think that our way of doing things is the only way, the natural way. We have learned so well that it has all become unconscious – the social unconscious, to be precise. So, many times we believe that we are acting according to our own free will, but we are only following orders we are so used to we no longer notice them.

Fromm believes that our social unconscious is best understood by examining our economic systems. In fact, he defines, and even names, five personality types, which he calls orientations, in economic terms! If you like, you can take a personality test made up of lists of adjectives Fromm used to describe his orientations.

[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/frommtest.html]

1. **The receptive orientation**. These are people who expect to get what they need. if they don't get it immediately, they wait for it. They believe that all goods and satisfactions come from outside themselves. This type is most common among peasant populations. It is also found in cultures that have particularly abundant natural resources, so that one need not work hard for one's sustenance (although nature may also suddenly withdraw its bounty!). it is also found at the very bottom of any society: Slaves, serfs, welfare families, migrant workers... all are at the mercy of others.

This orientation is associated with symbiotic families, especially where children are "swallowed" by parents, and with the masochistic (passive) form of authoritarianism. It is similar to Freud's oral passive, Adler's leaning-getting, and Horney's compliant personality. In its extreme form, it can be characterized by adjectives such as submissive and wishful. In a more moderate form, adjectives such as accepting and optimistic are more descriptive.

2. **The exploitative orientation**. These people expect to have to take what they need. In fact, things increase in value to the extent that they are taken from others: Wealth is preferably stolen, ideas plagiarized, love achieved by coercion. This type is prevalent among history's aristocracies, and in the upper classes of colonial empires. Think of the English in India for example: Their position was based entirely on their power to take from the indigenous population. Among their characteristic qualities is the ability to be comfortable ordering others around! We can also see it in pastoral barbarians and populations who rely on raiding (such as the Vikings).

The exploitative orientation is associated with the "swallowing" side of the symbiotic family, and with the masochistic style of authoritarianism. They are Freud's oral aggressive, Adler's ruling-dominant, and Horney's aggressive types. In extremes, they are aggressive, conceited, and seducing. Mixed with healthier qualities, they are assertive, proud, captivating.

3. **The hoarding orientation**. hoarding people expect to keep. They see the world as possessions and potential possessions. Even loved ones are things to possess, to keep, or to buy. Fromm, drawing on Karl Marx, relates this type to the bourgeoisie, the merchant middle class, as well as richer peasants and crafts people. He associates it particularly with the Protestant work ethic and such groups as our own Puritans.

Hoarding is associated with the cold form of withdrawing family, and with destructiveness. I might add that

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there is a clear connection with perfectionism as well. Freud would call it the anal retentive type, Adler (to some extent) the avoiding type, and Horney (a little more clearly) the withdrawing type. In its pure form, it means you are stubborn, stingy, and unimaginative. If you are a milder version of hoarding, you might be steadfast, economical, and practical.

4. **The marketing orientation**. The marketing orientation expects to sell. Success is a matter of how well I can sell myself, package myself, advertise myself. My family, my schooling, my jobs, my clothes – all are an advertisement, and must be "right." Even love is thought of as a transaction. Only the marketing orientation thinks up the marriage contract, wherein we agree that I shall provide such and such, and you in return shall provide this and that. If one of us fails to hold up our end of the arrangement, the marriage is null and void – no hard feelings (perhaps we can still be best of friends!) This, according to Fromm, is the orientation of the modern industrial society. This is our orientation!

This modern type comes out of the cool withdrawing family, and tend to use automaton conformity as its escape from freedom. Adler and Horney don't have an equivalent, but Freud might: This is at least half of the vague phallic personality, the type that lives life as flirtation. In extreme, the marketing person is opportunistic, childish, tactless. Less extreme, and he or she is purposeful, youthful, social. Notice today's values as expressed to us by our mass media: Fashion, fitness, eternal youth, adventure, daring, novelty, sexuality... these are the concerns of the "yuppie," and his or her less-wealthy admirers. The surface is everything! Let's go bungee-jumping!

5. **The productive orientation**. There is a healthy personality as well, which Fromm occasionally refers to as the person without a mask. This is the person who, without disavowing his or her biological and social nature, nevertheless does not shirk away from freedom and responsibility. This person comes out of a family that loves without overwhelming the individual, that prefers reason to rules, and freedom to conformity.

The society that gives rise to the productive type (on more than a chance basis) doesn't exist yet, according to Fromm. He does, of course, have some ideas about what it will be like. He calls it **humanistic communitarian socialism**. That's quite a mouthful, and made up of words that aren't exactly popular in the USA, but let me explain: Humanistic means oriented towards human beings, and not towards some higher entity – not the all-powerful State nor someone's conception of God. Communitarian means composed of small communities (*Gesellschaften*, in German), as opposed to big government or corporations. Socialism means everyone is responsible for the welfare of everyone else. Thus understood, it's hard to argue with Fromm's idealism!

Fromm says that the first four orientations (which others might call neurotic) are living in **the having mode**. They focus on consuming, obtaining, possessing.... They are defined by what they have. Fromm says that "I have it" tends to become "it has me," and we become driven by our possessions!

The productive orientation , on the other hand, lives in **the being mode**. What you are is defined by your actions in this world. You live without a mask, experiencing life, relating to people, being yourself.

He says that most people, being so used to the having mode, use the word have to describe their problems: "Doctor, I have a problem: I have insomnia. Although I have a beautiful home, wonderful children, and a happy marriage, I have many worries." He is looking to the therapist to remove the bad things, and let him keep the good ones, a little like asking a surgeon to take out your gall bladder. What you should be saying is more like "I am troubled. I am happily married, yet I cannot sleep...." By saying you have a problem, you are avoiding facing the fact that you are the problem – i.e. you avoid, once again, taking responsibility for your life.

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Orientation	*Society*	*Family*	*Escape from Freedom*
receptive	peasant society	symbiotic (passive)	authoritarian (masochistic)
exploitative	aristocratic society	symbiotic (active)	authoritarian (sadistic)
hoarding	bourgeois society	withdrawing (puritanical)	perfectionist to destructive
marketing	modern society	withdrawing (infantile)	automaton conformist
productive	humanistic communitarian socialism	loving and reasoning	freedom and responsibility acknowledged and accepted

Evil

Fromm was always interested in trying to understand the really evil people of this world – not just one's who were confused or mislead or stupid or sick, but the one's who, with full consciousness of the evil of their acts, performed them anyway: Hitler, Stalin, Charles Manson, Jim Jones, and so on, large and small.

All the orientations we've talked about, productive and non-productive, in the having mode or the being mode, have one thing in common: They are all efforts at life. Like Horney, Fromm believed that even the most miserable neurotic is at the least trying to cope with life. They are, to use his word, **biophilous**, life-loving.

But there is another type of person he calls **necrophilous** – the lovers of death. They have the passionate attraction to all that is dead, decayed, putrid, sickly; it is the passion to transform that which is alive into something unalive; to destroy for the sake of destruction; the exclusive interest in all that is purely mechanical. It is the passion "to tear apart living structures."

If you think back to high school, you may remember a few misfits: They were real horror movie aficionados. They may have made models of torture devices and guillotines. They loved to play war games. They liked to blow things up with their chemistry sets. They got a kick out of torturing small animals. They treasured their guns. They were really into mechanical devices. The more sophisticated the technology, the happier they were. Beavis and Butthead are modeled after these kids.

I remember watching an interview on TV once, back during the little war in Nicaragua. There were plenty of American mercenaries among the Contras, and one in particular had caught the reporters eye. He was a munitions expert – someone who blew up bridges, buildings, and, of course, the occasional enemy soldier. When asked how he got into this line of work, he smiled and told the reporter that he might not like the story. You see, when he was a kid, he liked to put firecrackers up the backside of little birds he had caught, light the fuses, let them go, and watch them blow up. This man was a necrophiliac.

Fromm makes a few guesses as to how such a person happens. He suggested that there may be some genetic flaw that prevents them from feeling or responding to affection. It may also be a matter of a life so full of frustration that the person spends the rest of their life in a rage. And finally, he suggests that it may be a matter of growing up with a necrophilous mother, so that the child has no one to learn love from. It is very possible that some combination of these factors is at work. And yet there is still the idea that these people know what they are doing, are conscious of their evil, and choose it. It is a subject that would bear more study!

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biophilous		necrophilous
Having Mode	receptive exploitative hoarding marketing	
Being Mode	productive	

Human Needs

Erich Fromm, like many others, believed that we have needs that go far beyond the basic, physiological ones that some people, like Freud and many behaviorists, think explain all of our behavior. He calls these **human needs**, in contrast to the more basic **animal needs**. And he suggests that the human needs can be expressed in one simple statement: The human being needs *to find an answer to his existence.*

Fromm says that helping us to answer this question is perhaps the major purpose of culture. In a way, he says, all cultures are like religions, trying to explain the meaning of life. Some, of course, do so better than others.

A more negative way of expressing this need is to say that we need *to avoid insanity,* and he defines neurosis as an effort to satisfy the need for answers that doesn't work for us. He says that every neurosis is a sort of private religion, one we turn to when our culture no longer satisfies.

He lists five human needs:

1. Relatedness

As human beings, we are aware of our separateness from each other, and seek to overcome it. Fromm calls this our need for relatedness, and views it as love in the broadest sense. Love, he says, "is union with somebody, or something, outside oneself, under the condition of retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self." (p 37 of The Sane Society). It allows us to *transcend* our separateness without denying us our uniqueness.

The need is so powerful that sometimes we seek it in unhealthy ways. For example, some seek to eliminate their isolation by submitting themselves to another person, to a group, or to their conception of a God. Others look to eliminate their isolation by dominating others. Either way, these are not satisfying: Your separateness is not overcome.

Another way some attempt to overcome this need is by denying it. The opposite of relatedness is what Fromm calls *narcissism***.** Narcissism – the love of self – is natural in infants, in that they don't perceive themselves as separate from the world and others to begin with. But in adults, it is a source of pathology. Like the schizophrenic, the narcissist has only one reality: the world of his own thoughts, feelings, and needs. His world becomes what he wants it to be, and he loses contact with reality.

2. Creativity

Fromm believes that we all desire to overcome, to *transcend,* another fact of our being: Our sense of being passive creatures. We want to be creators. There are many ways to be creative: We give birth, we plant seeds, we make pots, we paint pictures, we write books, we love each other. Creativity is, in fact, an expression of love.

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Unfortunately, some don't find an avenue for creativity. Frustrated, they attempt to transcend their passivity by becoming *destroyers* instead. Destroying puts me "above" the things – or people – I destroy. It makes me feel powerful. We can hate as well as love. But in the end, it fails to bring us that sense of transcendence we need.

3. Rootedness

We also need roots. We need to feel at home in the universe, even though, as human beings, we are somewhat alienated from the natural world.

The simplest version is to maintain our ties to our mothers. But to grow up means we have to leave the warmth of our mothers' love. To stay would be what Fromm calls a kind of psychological *incest*. In order to manage in the difficult world of adulthood, we need to find new, boader roots. We need to discover our *brotherhood* (and sisterhood) with humanity.

This, too has its pathological side: For example, the schhizophrenic tries to retreat into a womb-like existence, one where, you might say, the umbilical cord has never been cut. There is also the neurotic who is afraid to leave his home, even to get the mail. And there's the fanatic who sees his tribe, his country, his church... as the only good one, the only real one. Everyone else is a dangerous outsider, to be avoided or even destroyed.

4. A sense of identity

"Man may be defined as the animal that can say 'I.'" (p 62 of The Sane Society) Fromm believes that we need to have a sense of identity, of *individuality*, in order to stay sane.

This need is so powerful that we are sometimes driven to find it, for example by doing anything for signs of status, or by trying desperately to *conform*. We sometimes will even give up our lives in order to remain a part of our group. But this is only pretend identity, an identity we take from others, instead of one we develop ourselves, and it fails to satisfy our need.

5. A frame of orientation

Finally, we need to understand the world and our place in it. Again, our society – and especially the religious aspects of our culture – often attempts to provide us with this understanding. Things like our myths, our philosophies, and our sciences provide us with structure.

Fromm says this is really two needs: First, we need a frame of orientation – almost anything will do. Even a bad one is better than none! And so people are generally quite gullible. We want to believe, sometimes even desperately. If we don't have an explanation handy, we will make one up, via *rationalization*.

The second aspect is that we want to have a good frame of orientation, one that is useful, accurate. This is where *reason* comes in. It is nice that our parents and others provide us with explanations for the world and our lives, but if they don't hold up, what good are they? A frame of orientation needs to be rational.

Fromm adds one more thing: He says we don't just want a cold philosophy or material science. We want a frame of orientation that provides us with meaning. We want understanding, but we want a *warm*, human understanding.

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Discussion

Fromm, in some ways, is a transition figure or, if you prefer, a theorist that brings other theories together. Most significantly for us, he draws together the Freudian and neo-Freudian theories we have been talking about (especially Adler's and Horney's) and the humanistic theories we will discuss later. He is, in fact, so close to being an existentialist that it almost doesn't matter! I believe interest in his ideas will rise as the fortune of existential psychology does.

Another aspect of his theory is fairly unique to him: his interest in the economic and cultural roots of personality. No one before or since has put it so directly: Your personality is to a considerable extent a reflection of such issues as social class, minority status, education, vocation, religious and philosophical background, and so forth. This has been a very under-represented view, perhaps because of its association with Marxism. But it is, I think, inevitable that we begin to consider it more and more, especially as a counterbalance to the increasing influence of biological theories.

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References

Fromm is an excellent and exciting writer. You can find the basics of his theory in **Escape from Freedom** (1941) and **Man for Himself** (1947).

His interesting treatise on love in the modern world is called **The Art of Loving** (1956).

My favorite of his books is **The Sane Society** (1955), which perhaps should have been called "the insane society" because most of it is devoted to demonstrating how crazy our world is right now, and how that leads to our psychological difficulties.

He has also written "the" book on aggression, **The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness** (1973), which includes his ideas on necrophilia.

He has written many other great books, including ones on Christianity, Marxism, and Zen Buddhism!

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B. F. SKINNER

[1904 – 1990]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Biography

Burrhus Frederic Skinner was born March 20, 1904, in the small Pennsylvania town of Susquehanna. His father was a lawyer, and his mother a strong and intelligent housewife. His upbringing was old-fashioned and hard-working.

Burrhus was an active, out-going boy who loved the outdoors and building things, and actually enjoyed school. His life was not without its tragedies, however. In particular, his brother died at the age of 16 of a cerebral aneurysm.

Burrhus received his BA in English from Hamilton College in upstate New York. He didn't fit in very well, not enjoying the fraternity parties or the football games. He wrote for school paper, including articles critical of the school, the faculty, and even Phi Beta Kappa! To top it off, he was an atheist – in a school that required daily chapel attendance.

He wanted to be a writer and did try, sending off poetry and short stories. When he graduated, he built a study in his parents' attic to concentrate, but it just wasn't working for him.

Ultimately, he resigned himself to writing newspaper articles on labor problems, and lived for a while in Greenwich Village in New York City as a "bohemian." After some traveling, he decided to go back to school, this time at Harvard. He got his masters in psychology in 1930 and his doctorate in 1931, and stayed there to do research until 1936.

Also in that year, he moved to Minneapolis to teach at the University of Minnesota. There he met and soon married Yvonne Blue. They had two daughters, the second of which became famous as the first infant to be raised in one of Skinner's inventions, the air crib. Although it was nothing more than a combination crib and playpen with glass sides and air conditioning, it looked too much like keeping a baby in an aquarium to catch on.

In 1945, he became the chairman of the psychology department at Indiana University. In 1948, he was invited to come to Harvard, where he remained for the rest of his life. He was a very active man, doing research and guiding hundreds of doctoral candidates as well as writing many books. While not successful as a writer of fiction and poetry, he became one of our best psychology writers, including the book ***Walden II***, which is a fictional account of a community run by his behaviorist principles.

August 18, 1990, B. F. Skinner died of leukemia after becoming perhaps the most celebrated psychologist since Sigmund Freud.

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Theory

B. F. Skinner's entire system is based on **operant conditioning**. The organism is in the process of "operating" on the environment, which in ordinary terms means it is bouncing around its world, doing what it does. During this "operating," the organism encounters a special kind of stimulus, called a **reinforcing stimulus**, or simply a reinforcer. This special stimulus has the effect of increasing the **operant** – that is, the behavior occurring just before the reinforcer. This is operant conditioning: "the behavior is followed by a consequence, and the nature of the consequence modifies the organisms tendency to repeat the behavior in the future."

Imagine a rat in a cage. This is a special cage (called, in fact, a "Skinner box") that has a bar or pedal on one wall that, when pressed, causes a little mechanism to release a foot pellet into the cage. The rat is bouncing around the cage, doing whatever it is rats do, when he accidentally presses the bar and – hey, presto! – a food pellet falls into the cage! The operant is the behavior just prior to the reinforcer, which is the food pellet, of course. In no time at all, the rat is furiously peddling away at the bar, hoarding his pile of pellets in the corner of the cage.

> *A behavior followed by a reinforcing stimulus results in an increased probability of that behavior occurring in the future.*

What if you don't give the rat any more pellets? Apparently, he's no fool, and after a few futile attempts, he stops his bar-pressing behavior. This is called **extinction** of the operant behavior.

> *A behavior no longer followed by the reinforcing stimulus results in a decreased probability of that behavior occurring in the future.*

Now, if you were to turn the pellet machine back on, so that pressing the bar again provides the rat with pellets, the behavior of bar-pushing will "pop" right back into existence, much more quickly than it took for the rat to learn the behavior the first time. This is because the return of the reinforcer takes place in the context of a reinforcement history that goes all the way back to the very first time the rat was reinforced for pushing on the bar!

Schedules of reinforcement

Skinner likes to tell about how he "accidentally – i.e. operantly – came across his various discoveries. For example, he talks about running low on food pellets in the middle of a study. Now, these were the days before "Purina rat chow" and the like, so Skinner had to make his own rat pellets, a slow and tedious task. So he decided to reduce the number of reinforcements he gave his rats for whatever behavior he was trying to condition, and, lo and behold, the rats kept up their operant behaviors, and at a stable rate, no less. This is how Skinner discovered **schedules of reinforcement**!

Continuous reinforcement is the original scenario: Every time that the rat does the behavior (such as pedal-pushing), he gets a rat goodie.

The **fixed ratio schedule** was the first one Skinner discovered: If the rat presses the pedal three times, say, he gets a goodie. Or five times. Or twenty times. Or "x" times. There is a fixed ratio between behaviors and reinforcers: 3 to 1, 5 to 1, 20 to 1, etc. This is a little like "piece rate" in the clothing manufacturing industry: You get paid so much for so many shirts.

The **fixed interval schedule** uses a timing device of some sort. If the rat presses the bar at least once during a particular stretch of time (say 20 seconds), then he gets a goodie. If he fails to do so, he doesn't get a goodie. But even if he hits that bar a hundred times during that 20 seconds, he still only gets one goodie! One

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strange thing that happens is that the rats tend to "pace" themselves: They slow down the rate of their behavior right after the reinforcer, and speed up when the time for it gets close.

Skinner also looked at **variable schedules**. Variable ratio means you change the "x" each time – first it takes 3 presses to get a goodie, then 10, then 1, then 7 and so on. Variable interval means you keep changing the time period – first 20 seconds, then 5, then 35, then 10 and so on.

In both cases, it keeps the rats on their rat toes. With the variable interval schedule, they no longer "pace" themselves, because they can no longer establish a "rhythm" between behavior and reward. Most importantly, these schedules are very resistant to extinction. It makes sense, if you think about it. If you haven't gotten a reinforcer for a while, well, it could just be that you are at a particularly "bad" ratio or interval! Just one more bar press, maybe this'll be the one!

This, according to Skinner, is the mechanism of gambling. You may not win very often, but you never know whether and when you'll win again. It could be the very next time, and if you don't roll them dice, or play that hand, or bet on that number this once, you'll miss on the score of the century!

Shaping

A question Skinner had to deal with was how we get to more complex sorts of behaviors. He responded with the idea of **shaping**, or "the method of successive approximations." Basically, it involves first reinforcing a behavior only vaguely similar to the one desired. Once that is established, you look out for variations that come a little closer to what you want, and so on, until you have the animal performing a behavior that would never show up in ordinary life. Skinner and his students have been quite successful in teaching simple animals to do some quite extraordinary things. My favorite is teaching pigeons to bowl!

I used shaping on one of my daughters once. She was about three or four years old, and was afraid to go down a particular slide. So I picked her up, put her at the end of the slide, asked if she was okay and if she could jump down. She did, of course, and I showered her with praise. I then picked her up and put her a foot or so up the slide, asked her if she was okay, and asked her to slide down and jump off. So far so good. I repeated this again and again, each time moving her a little up the slide, and backing off if she got nervous. Eventually, I could put her at the top of the slide and she could slide all the way down and jump off. Unfortunately, she still couldn't climb up the ladder, so I was a very busy father for a while.

This is the same method that is used in the therapy called **systematic desensitization**, invented by another behaviorist named **Joseph Wolpe**. A person with a phobia – say of spiders – would be asked to come up with ten scenarios involving spiders and panic of one degree or another. The first scenario would be a very mild one – say seeing a small spider at a great distance outdoors. The second would be a little more scary, and so on, until the tenth scenario would involve something totally terrifying – say a tarantula climbing on your face while you're driving your car at a hundred miles an hour! The therapist will then teach you how to relax your muscles – which is incompatible with anxiety. After you practice that for a few days, you come back and you and the therapist go through your scenarios, one step at a time, making sure you stay relaxed, backing off if necessary, until you can finally imagine the tarantula while remaining perfectly tension-free.

This is a technique quite near and dear to me because I did in fact have a spider phobia, and did in fact get rid of it with systematic desensitization. It worked so well that, after one session (beyond the original scenario-writing and muscle-training session) I could go out an pick up a daddy-long-legs. Cool.

Beyond these fairly simple examples, shaping also accounts for the most complex of behaviors. You don't, for example, become a brain surgeon by stumbling into an operating theater, cutting open someone's head, successfully removing a tumor, and being rewarded with prestige and a hefty paycheck, along the lines of the rat in the Skinner box. Instead, you are gently shaped by your environment to enjoy certain things, do well in school, take a certain bio class, see a doctor movie perhaps, have a good hospital visit, enter med school, be encouraged to drift towards brain surgery as a speciality, and so on. This could be something your parents

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were carefully doing to you, as if you were a rat in a cage. But much more likely, this is something that was more or less unintentional.

Aversive stimuli

An **aversive stimulus** is the opposite of a reinforcing stimulus, something we might find unpleasant or painful.

> *A behavior followed by an aversive stimulus results in a decreased probability of the behavior occurring in the future.*

This both defines an aversive stimulus and describes the form of conditioning known as **punishment**. If you shock a rat for doing x, it'll do a lot less of x. If you spank Johnny for throwing his toys he will throw his toys less and less (maybe).

On the other hand, if you remove an already active aversive stimulus after a rat or Johnny performs a certain behavior, you are doing **negative reinforcement**. If you turn off the electricity when the rat stands on his hind legs, he'll do a lot more standing. If you stop your perpetually nagging when I finally take out the garbage, I'll be more likely to take out the garbage (perhaps). You could say it "feels so good" when the aversive stimulus stops, that this serves as a reinforcer!

> *Behavior followed by the removal of an aversive stimulus results in an increased probability of that behavior occurring in the future.*

Notice how difficult it can be to distinguish some forms of negative reinforcement from positive reinforcement: If I starve you, is the food I give you when you do what I want a positive – i.e. a reinforcer? Or is it the removal of a negative – i.e. the aversive stimulus of hunger?

Skinner (contrary to some stereotypes that have arisen about behaviorists) doesn't "approve" of the use of aversive stimuli – not because of ethics, but because they don't work well! Notice that I said earlier that Johnny will maybe stop throwing his toys, and that I perhaps will take out the garbage? That's because whatever was reinforcing the bad behaviors hasn't been removed, as it would've been in the case of extinction. This hidden reinforcer has just been "covered up" with a conflicting aversive stimulus. So, sure, sometimes the child (or me) will behave – but it still feels good to throw those toys. All Johnny needs to do is wait till you're out of the room, or find a way to blame it on his brother, or in some way escape the consequences, and he's back to his old ways. In fact, because Johnny now only gets to enjoy his reinforcer occasionally, he's gone into a variable schedule of reinforcement, and he'll be even more resistant to extinction than ever!

Behavior modification

Behavior modification – often referred to as **b-mod** – is the therapy technique based on Skinner's work. It is very straight-forward: Extinguish an undesirable behavior (by removing the reinforcer) and replace it with a desirable behavior by reinforcement. It has been used on all sorts of psychological problems – addictions, neuroses, shyness, autism, even schizophrenia – and works particularly well with children. There are examples of back-ward psychotics who haven't communicated with others for years who have been conditioned to behave themselves in fairly normal ways, such as eating with a knife and fork, taking care of their own hygiene needs, dressing themselves, and so on.

There is an offshoot of b-mod called the **token economy**. This is used primarily in institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, juvenile halls, and prisons. Certain rules are made explicit in the institution, and behaving yourself appropriately is rewarded with tokens – poker chips, tickets, funny money, recorded notes,

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etc. Certain poor behavior is also often followed by a withdrawal of these tokens. The tokens can be traded in for desirable things such as candy, cigarettes, games, movies, time out of the institution, and so on. This has been found to be very effective in maintaining order in these often difficult institutions.

There is a drawback to token economy: When an "inmate" of one of these institutions leaves, they return to an environment that reinforces the kinds of behaviors that got them into the institution in the first place. The psychotic's family may be thoroughly dysfunctional. The juvenile offender may go right back to "the 'hood." No one is giving them tokens for eating politely. The only reinforcements may be attention for "acting out," or some gang glory for robbing a Seven-Eleven. In other words, the environment doesn't travel well!

Walden II

Skinner started his career as an English major, writing poems and short stories. He has, of course, written a large number of papers and books on behaviorism. But he will probably be most remembered by the general run of readers for his book ***Walden II***, wherein he describes a utopia-like commune run on his operant principles.

People, especially the religious right, came down hard on his book. They said that his ideas take away our freedom and dignity as human beings. He responded to the sea of criticism with another book (one of his best) called ***Beyond Freedom and Dignity***. He asked: What do we mean when we say we want to be free? Usually we mean we don't want to be in a society that punishes us for doing what we want to do. Okay – aversive stimuli don't work well anyway, so out with them! Instead, we'll only use reinforcers to "control" society. And if we pick the right reinforcers, we will feel free, because we will be doing what we feel we want!

Likewise for dignity. When we say "she died with dignity," what do we mean? We mean she kept up her "good" behaviors without any apparent ulterior motives. In fact, she kept her dignity because her reinforcement history has led her to see behaving in that "dignified" manner as more reinforcing than making a scene.

The bad do bad because the bad is rewarded. The good do good because the good is rewarded. There is no true freedom or dignity. Right now, our reinforcers for good and bad behavior are chaotic and out of our control – it's a matter of having good or bad luck with your "choice" of parents, teachers, peers, and other influences. Let's instead take control, as a society, and design our culture in such a way that good gets rewarded and bad gets extinguished! With the right **behavioral technology**, we can **design culture**.

Both freedom and dignity are examples of what Skinner calls **mentalistic constructs** – unobservable and so useless for a scientific psychology. Other examples include defense mechanisms, the unconscious, archetypes, fictional finalisms, coping strategies, self-actualization, consciousness, even things like hunger and thirst. The most important example is what he refers to as the **homunculus** – Latin for "the little man" – that supposedly resides inside us and is used to explain our behavior, ideas like soul, mind, ego, will, self, and, of course, personality.

Instead, Skinner recommends that psychologists concentrate on observables, that is, the environment and our behavior in it.

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Readings

Whether you agree with him or not, Skinner is a good writer and fun to read.

I've already mentioned ***Walden II*** and ***Beyond Freedom and Dignity*** (1971).

The best summary of his theory is the book ***About Behaviorism*** (1974).

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HANS EYSENCK

[1916 - 1997]

AND OTHER TEMPERAMENT THEORISTS

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

This chapter is devoted to theories of temperament. Temperament is that aspect of our personalities that is genetically based, inborn, there from birth or even before. That does not mean that a temperament theory says we don't also have aspects of our personality that are learned! They just have a focus on "nature," and leave "nurture" to other theorists!

The issue of personality types, including temperament, is as old as psychology. In fact, it is a good deal older. The ancient Greeks, to take the obvious example, had given it considerable thought, and came up with two dimensions of temperament, leading to four "types," based on what kind of fluids (called humors) they had too much or too little of. This theory became popular during the middle ages.

The **sanguine** type is cheerful and optimistic, pleasant to be with, comfortable with his or her work. According to the Greeks, the sanguine type has a particularly abundant supply of blood (hence the name sanguine, from sanguis, Latin for blood) and so also is characterized by a healthful look, including rosy cheeks.

The **choleric** type is characterized by a quick, hot temper, often an aggressive nature. The name refers to bile (a chemical that is excreted by the gall bladder to aid in digestion). Physical features of the choleric person include a yellowish complexion and tense muscles.

Next, we have the **phlegmatic** temperament. These people are characterized by their slowness, laziness, and dullness. The name obviously comes from the word phlegm, which is the mucus we bring up from our lungs when we have a cold or lung infection. Physically, these people are thought to be kind of cold, and shaking hands with one is like shaking hands with a fish.

Finally, there's the **melancholy** temperament. These people tend to be sad, even depressed, and take a pessimistic view of the world. The name has, of course, been adopted as a synonym for sadness, but comes from the Greek words for black bile. Now, since there is no such thing, we don't quite know what the ancient Greeks were referring to. But the melancholy person was thought to have too much of it!

These four types are actually the corners of two dissecting lines: **temperature** and **humidity**. Sanguine people are warm and wet. Choleric people are warm and dry. Phlegmatic people are cool and wet. Melancholy people are cool and dry. There were even theories suggesting that different climates were related to different types, so that Italians (warm and moist) were sanguine, Arabs (warm and dry) were choleric, Russians (cool and dry) were melancholy, and Englishmen (cool and wet) were phlegmatic!

What might surprise you is that this theory, based on so little, has actually had an influence on several modern theorists. Adler, for example, related these types to his four personalities. But, more to the point, Ivan Pavlov, of classical conditioning fame, used the humors to describe his dogs' personalities.

One of the things Pavlov tried with his dogs was conflicting conditioning – ringing a bell that signaled food at the same time as another bell that signaled the end of the meal. Some dogs took it well, and maintain their cheerfulness. Some got angry and barked like crazy. Some just laid down and fell asleep. And some whimpered and whined and seemed to have a nervous breakdown. I don't need to tell you which dog is which temperament!

Pavlov believed that he could account for these personality types with two dimensions: On the one hand there is the overall level of arousal (called excitation) that the dogs' brains had available. On the other, there was the ability the dogs' brains had of changing their level of arousal – i.e. the level of inhibition that their brains had available. Lots of arousal, but good inhibition: sanguine. Lots of arousal, but poor inhibition: choleric. Not much arousal, plus good inhibition: phlegmatic. Not much arousal, plus poor inhibition: melancholy. Arousal would be analogous to warmth, inhibition analogous to moisture! This became the inspiration for Hans Eysenck's theory.

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Biography

Hans Eysenck was born in Germany on March 4, 1916. His parents were actors who divorced when he was only two, and so Hans was raised by his grandmother. He left there when he was 18 years old, when the Nazis came to power. As an active Jewish sympathizer, his life was in danger.

In England, he continued his education, and received his Ph.D. in Psychology from the University of London in 1940. During World War II, he served as a psychologist at an emergency hospital, where he did research on the reliability of psychiatric diagnoses. The results led him to a life-long antagonism to main-stream clinical psychology.

After the war, he taught at the University of London, as well as serving as the director of the psychology department of the Institute of Psychiatry, associated with Bethlehem Royal Hospital. He has written 75 books and some 700 articles, making him one of the most prolific writers in psychology. Eysenck retired in 1983 and continued to write until his death on September 4, 1997.

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Theory

Eysenck's theory is based primarily on physiology and genetics. Although he is a behaviorist who considers learned habits of great importance, he considers personality differences as growing out of our genetic inheritance. He is, therefore, primarily interested in what is usually called temperament.

Eysenck is also primarily a research psychologist. His methods involve a statistical technique called factor analysis. This technique extracts a number of "dimensions" from large masses of data. For example, if you give long lists of adjectives to a large number of people for them to rate themselves on, you have prime raw material for factor analysis.

Imagine, for example, a test that included words like "shy," "introverted," "outgoing," "wild," and so on. Obviously, shy people are likely to rate themselves high on the first two words, and low on the second two. Outgoing people are likely to do the reverse. Factor analysis extracts dimensions – factors – such as shy-outgoing from the mass of information. The researcher then examines the data and gives the factor a name such as "introversion-extraversion." There are other techniques that will find the "best fit" of the data to various possible dimension, and others still that will find "higher level" dimensions – factors that organize the factors, like big headings organize little headings.

Eysenck's original research found two main dimensions of temperament: neuroticism and extraversion-introversion. Let's look at each one...

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is the name Eysenck gave to a dimension that ranges from normal, fairly calm and collected people to one's that tend to be quite "nervous." His research showed that these nervous people tended to suffer more frequently from a variety of "nervous disorders" we call neuroses, hence the name of the dimension. But understand that he was not saying that people who score high on the neuroticism scale are necessarily neurotics – only that they are more susceptible to neurotic problems.

Eysenck was convinced that, since everyone in his data-pool fit somewhere on this dimension of normality-to-neuroticism, this was a true temperament, i.e. that this was a genetically-based, physiologically-supported dimension of personality. He therefore went to the physiological research to find possible explanations.

The most obvious place to look was at the **sympathetic nervous system**. This is a part of the autonomic nervous system that functions separately from the central nervous system and controls much of our emotional responsiveness to emergency situations. For example, when signals from the brain tell it to do so, the sympathetic nervous systems instructs the liver to release sugar for energy, causes the digestive system to slow down, opens up the pupils, raises the hairs on your body (goosebumps), and tells the adrenal glands to release more adrenalin (epinephrine). The adrenalin in turn alters many of the body's functions and prepares the muscles for action. The traditional way of describing the function of the sympathetic nervous system is to say that it prepares us for "fight or flight."

Eysenck hypothesized that some people have a more responsive sympathetic nervous system than others. Some people remain very calm during emergencies; some people feel considerable fear or other emotions; and some are terrified by even very minor incidents. He suggested that this latter group had a problem of sympathetic hyperactivity, which made them prime candidates for the various neurotic disorders.

Perhaps the most "archetypal" neurotic symptom is the **panic attack**. Eysenck explained panic attacks as something like the positive feedback you get when you place a microphone too close to a speaker: The small sounds entering the mike get amplified and come out of the speaker, and go into the mike, get amplified again, and come out of the speaker again, and so on, round and round, until you get the famous squeal that we all loved to produce when we were kids. (Lead guitarists like to do this too to make some of their long, wailing sounds.)

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Well, the panic attack follows the same pattern: You are mildly frightened by something – crossing a bridge, for example. This gets your sympathetic nervous system going. That makes you more nervous, and so more susceptible to stimulation, which gets your system even more in an uproar, which makes you more nervous and more susceptible.... You could say that the neuroticistic person is responding more to his or her own panic than to the original object of fear! As someone who has had panic attacks, I can vouch for Eysenck's description – although his explanation remains only a hypothesis.

Extraversion-introversion

His second dimension is extraversion-introversion. By this he means something very similar to what Jung meant by the same terms, and something very similar to our common-sense understanding of them: Shy, quiet people "versus" out-going, even loud people. This dimension, too, is found in everyone, but the physiological explanation is a bit more complex.

Eysenck hypothesized that extraversion-introversion is a matter of the balance of "inhibition" and "excitation" in the brain itself. These are ideas that Pavlov came up with to explain some of the differences he found in the reactions of his various dogs to stress. **Excitation** is the brain waking itself up, getting into an alert, learning state. **Inhibition** is the brain calming itself down, either in the usual sense of relaxing and going to sleep, or in the sense of protecting itself in the case of overwhelming stimulation.

Someone who is extraverted, he hypothesized, has good, strong inhibition: When confronted by traumatic stimulation – such as a car crash – the extravert's brain inhibits itself, which means that it becomes "numb," you might say, to the trauma, and therefore will remember very little of what happened. After the car crash, the extravert might feel as if he had "blanked out" during the event, and may ask others to fill them in on what happened. Because they don't feel the full mental impact of the crash, they may be ready to go back to driving the very next day.

The introvert, on the other hand, has poor or weak inhibition: When trauma, such as the car crash, hits them, their brains don't protect them fast enough, don't in any way shut down. Instead, they are highly alert and learn well, and so remember everything that happened. They might even report that they saw the whole crash "in slow motion!" They are very unlikely to want to drive anytime soon after the crash, and may even stop driving altogether.

Now, how does this lead to shyness or a love of parties? Well, imagine the extravert and the introvert both getting drunk, taking off their clothes, and dancing buck naked on a restaurant table. The next morning, the extravert will ask you what happened (and where are his clothes). When you tell him, he'll laugh and start making arrangements to have another party. The introvert, on the other hand, will remember every mortifying moment of his humiliation, and may never come out of his room again. (I'm very introverted, and again I can vouch to a lot of this experientially! Perhaps some of you extraverts can tell me if he describes your experiences well, too – assuming, of course, that you can remember you experiences!)

One of the things that Eysenck discovered was that violent criminals tend to be non-neuroticistic extraverts. This makes common sense, if you think about it: It is hard to imagine somebody who is painfully shy and who remembers their experiences and learns from them holding up a Seven-Eleven! It is even harder to imagine someone given to panic attacks doing so. But please understand that there are many kinds of crime besides the violent kind that introverts and neurotics might engage in!

Neuroticism and extraversion-introversion

Another thing Eysenck looked into was the interaction of the two dimensions and what that might mean in regard to various psychological problems. He found, for example, that people with phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder tended to be quite introverted, whereas people with conversion disorders (e.g. hysterical paralysis) or dissociative disorders (e.g. amnesia) tended to be more extraverted.

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Here's his explanation: Highly neuroticistic people over-respond to fearful stimuli; If they are introverts, they will learn to avoid the situations that cause panic very quickly and very thoroughly, even to the point of becoming panicky at small symbols of those situations – they will develop phobias. Other introverts will learn (quickly and thoroughly) particular behaviors that hold off their panic – such as checking things many times over or washing their hands again and again.

Highly neuroticistic extraverts, on the other hand, are good at ignoring and forgetting the things that overwhelm them. They engage in the classic defense mechanisms, such as denial and repression. They can conveniently forget a painful weekend, for example, or even "forget" their ability to feel and use their legs.

Psychoticism

Eysenck came to recognize that, although he was using large populations for his research, there were some populations he was not tapping. He began to take his studies into the mental institutions of England. When these masses of data were factor analyzed, a third significant factor began to emerge, which he labeled psychoticism.

Like neuroticism, high psychoticism does not mean you are psychotic or doomed to become so – only that you exhibit some qualities commonly found among psychotics, and that you may be more susceptible, given certain environments, to becoming psychotic.

As you might imagine, the kinds of qualities found in high psychoticistic people include a certain recklessness, a disregard for common sense or conventions, and a degree of inappropriate emotional expression. It is the dimension that separates those people who end up institutions from the rest of humanity!

For a highly abbreviated minitest: [http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/eysenckminitest.html]

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Discussion

Hans Eysenck was an iconoclast – someone who enjoyed attacking established opinion. He was an early and vigorous critic of the effectiveness of psychotherapy, especially the Freudian variety. He also criticized the scientific nature of much of the academic varieties of psychology. As a hard-core behaviorist, he felt that only the scientific method (as he understood it) could give us an accurate understanding of human beings. As a statistician, he felt that mathematical methods were essential. As a physiologically-oriented psychologist, he felt that physiological explanations were the only valid ones.

Of course, we can argue with him on all these points: Phenomenology and other qualitative methods are also considered scientific by many. Some things are not so easily reduced to numbers, and factor analysis in particular is a technique not all statisticians approve of. And it is certainly debatable that all things must have a physiological explanation – even B. F. Skinner, the arch-behaviorist, thought more in terms of conditioning – a psychological process – than in terms of physiology.

And yet, his descriptions of various types of people, and of how they can be understood physically, ring particularly true. And most parents, teachers, and child psychologists will more than support the idea that kids have built-in differences in their personalities that begin at birth (and even before), and which no amount of re-education will touch. Although I personally am not a behaviorist, dislike statistics, and am more culturally oriented that biologically, I agree with the basics of Eysenck's theory. You, of course, have to make up your own mind!

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References

It's hard to pick out just a few of Eysenck's books – there are so many!

"The" text on his theory is probably **The Biological Basis of Personality** (1967), but it is a bit hard.

The more "pop" book is **Psychology is about People** (1972).

If you are interested in psychoticism, try **Psychoticism as a Dimension of Personality** (1976).

And if you want to understand his view of criminality, see **Crime and Personality** (1964).

His unusual, but interesting, theory about personality and cancer and heart disease – he thinks personality is more significant than smoking, for example! – is summarized in **Psychology Today** (December, 1989).

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OTHER TEMPERAMENT THEORIES

There have been literally dozens of other attempts at discovering the basic human temperaments. Here are a few of the better known theories.

Your body and your personality

In the 1950's, **William Sheldon** (b. 1899) became interested in the variety of human bodies. He built upon earlier work done by **Ernst Kretschmer** in the 1930's. Kretschmer believed that there was a relationship between three different physical types and certain psychological disorders. Specifically, he believed that the short, round **pyknic** type was more prone to cyclothymic or bipolar disorders, and that the tall thin **asthenic** type (a too a lesser degree the muscular **athletic** thype) was more prone to schizophrenia. His research, although involving thousands of institutionalized patients, was suspect because he failed to control for age and the schizophrenics were considerably younger than the bipolar patients, and so more likely to be thinner.

Sheldon developed a precise measurement system that summarized body shapes with three numbers. These numbers referred to how closely you matched three "types:"

1. **Ectomorphs**: Slender, often tall, people, with long arms and legs and fine features.
2. **Mesomorphs**: Stockier people, with broad shoulders and good musculature.
3. **Endomorphs**: Chubby people, tending to "pear-shaped."

Noting that these three "types" have some pretty strong stereotypical personalities associated with them, he decided to test the idea. He came up with another three numbers, this time referring how closely you match three personality "types:"

1. **Cerebrotonics**: Nervous types, relatively shy, often intellectual.
2. **Somatotonics**: Active types, physically fit and energetic.
3. **Viscerotonics**: Sociable types, lovers of food and physical comforts.

He theorized that the connection between the three physical types and the three personality types was embryonic development. In the early stages of our prenatal development, we are composed of three layers or "skins:" the ectoderm or outer layer, which develops into skin and nervous system; the mesoderm or middle layer, which develops into muscle; and the endoderm or inner layer, which develops into the viscera.

Some embryos show stronger development in one layer or another. He suggested that those who show strong ectoderm development would become ectomorphs, with more skin surface and stronger neural development (including the brain – hence cerebrotonic!). Those with strong mesoderm development would become mesomorphs, with lots of muscle (or body – hence somatotonic!). And those with strong endomorph development would become endomorphs, with well developed viscera and a strong attraction to food (hence viscerotonic!) And his measurements backed him up.

Now at several points above, I used "types" with quotes. This is an important point: He sees these two sets of three numbers as dimensions or traits, not as types ("pigeon-holes") at all. In other words, we are all more-or-less ecto-, meso-, AND endomorphs, as well as more-or-less cerebro-, somato-, AND viscerotonic!

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Thirty-five Factors

Raymond Cattell (b. 1905) is another prolific theorist-researcher like Eysenck who has made extensive use of the factor-analysis method, although a slightly different version. In his early research, he isolated 16 personality factors, which he composed into a test called, of course, the **16PF**!

Later research added seven more factors to the list. Even later research added twelve "pathological" factors found using items from the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory).

A "second order" factor analysis on the total of 35 factors revealed eight "deeper" factors, as follows, in order of strength:

QI. Exvia (Extraversion)

QII. Anxiety (Neuroticism)

QIII. Corteria ("cortical alertness," practical and realistic)

QIV. Independence (strong loner types)

QV. Discreetness (socially shrewd types)

QVI. Subjectivity (distant and out-of-it)

QVII. Intelligence (IQ!)

QVIII. Good Upbringing (stable, docile, the salt of the earth)

Baby Twins

Arnold Buss (b. 1924) and **Robert Plomin** (b. 1948), both working at the University of Colorado at the time, took a different approach: If some aspect of our behavior or personality is supposed to have a genetic, inborn basis, we should find it more clearly in infants than in adults.

So Buss and Plomin decided to study infants. Plus, since identical twins have the same genetic inheritance, we should see them sharing any genetically based aspects of personality. If we compare identical twins with fraternal twins (who are simply brothers or sisters, genetically speaking), we can pick out things that are more likely genetic from things that are more likely due to the learning babies do in their first few months.

Buss and Plomin asked mothers of twin babies to fill out questionnaires about their babies' behavior and personality. Some babies were identical and others fraternal. Using statistical techniques similar to factor analysis, they separated out which descriptions were more likely genetic from which were more likely learned. They found four dimensions of temperament:

1. **Emotionality-impassiveness**: How emotional and excitable were the babies? Some were given to emotional outbursts of distress, fear, and anger – others were not. This was their strongest temperament dimension.
2. **Sociability-detachment**: How much did the babies enjoy, or avoid, contact and interaction with people. Some babies are "people people," others are "loners."
3. **Activity-lethargy**: How vigorous, how active, how energetic were the babies? Just like adults, some babies are always on the move, fidgety, busy – and some are not.
4. **Impulsivity-deliberateness**: How quickly did the babies "change gears," move from one interest to another? Some people quickly act upon their urges, others are more careful and deliberate.

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The last one is the weakest of the four, and in the original research showed up only in boys. That doesn't mean girls can't be impulsive or deliberate – only that they seemed to learn their style, while boys seem to come one way or the other straight from the womb. But their later research found the dimension in girls as well, just not quite so strongly. It is interesting that impulse problem such as hyperactivity and attention deficit are more common among boys than girls, as if to show that, while girls can be taught to sit still and pay attention, some boys cannot.

The Magic Number

In the last couple of decades, an increasing number of theorists and researchers have come to the conclusion that five is the "magic number" for temperament dimensions. The first version, called **The Big Five**, was introduced in 1963 by **Warren Norman**. It was a fresh reworking of an Air Force technical report by **E. C. Tuppes** and **R. E. Christal**, who in turn had done a re-evaluation of Cattell's original 16 Personality Factors research.

But it wasn't until **R. R. McCrae** and **P. T. Costa, Jr.**, presented their version, called **The Five Factor Theory**, in 1990, that the idea realy took hold of the individual differences research community. When they introduced the **NEO** Personality Inventory, many people felt, and continue to feel, that we'd finally hit the motherload!

Here are the five factors, and some defining adjectives:

1. **Extraversion**

    adventurous
    assertive
    frank
    sociable
    talkative

    vs. **Introversion**

        quiet
        reserved
        shy
        unsociable

2. **Agreeableness**

    altruistic
    gentle
    kind
    sympathetic
    warm

3. **Conscientiousness**

    competent
    dutiful
    orderly
    responsible
    thorough

4. **Emotional Stability** (Norman)

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calm
relaxed
stable

vs. **Neuroticism** (Costa and McCrae)

angry
anxious
depressed

5. **Culture** (Norman) or **Openness to Experience** (Costa and McCrae)

cultured
esthetic
imaginative
intellectual
open

For a Big Five "mini-test,": [http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/bigfiveminitest.html]

The PAD Model

Albert Mehrabian has a three-dimensional temperament model that has been well received. It is based on his three-dimensional model of emotions. he theorizes that you can describe just about any emotion with these three dimensions: **pleasure-displeasure** (P), **arousal-nonarousal** (A), and **dominance-submissiveness** (D).

He reasons that, while we all vary from situation to situation and time to time on these three emotional dimensions, some of us are more likely to respond one way or another – i.e. we have a temperamental disposition to certain emotional responses. He uses the same PAD initials for the temperaments: **Trait Pleasure-Displeasure**, **Trait Arousability**, and **Trait Dominance-Submisiveness**.

"P" means that, overall, you experience more pleasure than displeasure. It relates positively to extraversion, affiliation, nurturance, empathy, and achievement, and negatively to neuroticism, hostility, and depression.

"A" means that you respond strongly to unusual, complex, or changing situations. It relates to emotionality, neuroticism, sensitivity, introversion, schizophrenia, heart disease, eating disorders, and lots more.

"D" means that you feel in control over your life. It relates positively to extraversion, assertiveness, competitiveness, affiliation, social skills, and nurturance, and negatively to neuroticism, tension, anxiety, introversion, conformity, and depression.

Parallels

Although you may feel a bit overwhelmed with all the various theories, personality theorists in fact are more encouraged than discouraged: It is fascinating to us that all these different theorists, often coming from very different directions, still manage to come up with very parallel sets of temperament dimensions!

First, every theorist puts Extraversion-Introversion and Neuroticism/ Emotional Stability/ Anxiety into their lists. Few personologists have any doubts about these!

Eysenck adds Psychoticism, which some of his followers are re-evaluating as an aggressive, impulsive,

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sensation-seeking factor. That to some extent matches up with Buss and Plomin's Impulsivity, and may be the opposite of Big Five's Agreeableness and Conscientiousness.

Buss and Plomin's theory fits best with Sheldon's: Cerebrotonics are Emotional (and not Sociable), Somatotonics are Active (and not Emotional), and Viscerotonics are Sociable (and not Active). In other words, the factors of these two models are "rotated" slightly from each other!

Cattell's factors, other than Exvia and Anxiety, are a little harder to place. Discreteness looks a little like Agreeableness, and Corteria a bit like the opposite of Agreeableness; Good Upbringing looks like Conscientiousness; Independence, perhaps with Intelligence, looks a little bit like Culture. Subjectivity, Corteria, and Independence together might be similar to Eysenck's Psychoticism.

Mehrabian's PAD factors are a little tougher to line up with the others, which makes sense considering the different theoretical roots. But we can see that Arousability is a lot like Neuroticism / Emotionality and that Dominance is a lot like Extraversion / Sociability. Pleasure seems related to Extraversion plus non-Neuroticism.

We can also look at Jung and the Myers-Briggs test: Extraversion and Introversion are obvious. Feeling (vs. Thinking) sounds a bit like Agreeableness. Judging (vs. Perceiving) sounds like Conscientiousness. And Intuiting (vs. Sensing) sounds a little like Culture. It helps to recall that Jung saw these types and functions as essentially genetic – i.e. temperaments!

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Bibliography

I can only give you places to start investigating these various theories.

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Buss and Plomin's Work is best summarized in Buss's text book, **Personality: Temperament, Social Behavior, and the Self**.

For Norman, go to Norman's "Toward an adequate taxonomy of personality attributes" in **The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology** (1966, pp. 574-583).

For McCrae and Costa, see **Personality in Adulthood** (1990) as well as an entire issue of **The Journal of Personality** devoted to the research (#60, 1992).

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ALBERT BANDURA

[1925 – present]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Biography

Albert Bandura was born December 4, 1925, in the small town of Mundare in northern Alberta, Canada. He was educated in a small elementary school and high school in one, with minimal resources, yet a remarkable success rate. After high school, he worked for one summer filling holes on the Alaska Highway in the Yukon.

He received his bachelors degree in Psychology from the University of British Columbia in 1949. He went on to the University of Iowa, where he received his Ph.D. in 1952. It was there that he came under the influence of the behaviorist tradition and learning theory.

While at Iowa, he met Virginia Varns, an instructor in the nursing school. They married and later had two daughters. After graduating, he took a postdoctoral position at the Wichita Guidance Center in Wichita, Kansas.

In 1953, he started teaching at Stanford University. While there, he collaborated with his first graduate student, Richard Walters, resulting in their first book, ***Adolescent Aggression***, in 1959.

Bandura was president of the APA in 1973, and received the APA's Award for Distinguished Scientific Contributions in 1980. He continues to work at Stanford to this day.

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Theory

Behaviorism, with its emphasis on experimental methods, focuses on variables we can observe, measure, and manipulate, and avoids whatever is subjective, internal, and unavailable – i.e. mental. In the experimental method, the standard procedure is to manipulate one variable, and then measure its effects on another. All this boils down to a theory of personality that says that one's environment causes one's behavior.

Bandura found this a bit too simplistic for the phenomena he was observing – aggression in adolescents – and so decided to add a little something to the formula: He suggested that environment causes behavior, true; but behavior causes environment as well. He labeled this concept **reciprocal determinism**: The world and a person's behavior cause each other.

Later, he went a step further. He began to look at personality as an interaction among three "things:" the environment, behavior, and the person's psychological processes. These psychological processes consist of our ability to entertain images in our minds, and language. At the point where he introduces imagery, in particular, he ceases to be a strict behaviorist, and begins to join the ranks of the cognitivists. In fact, he is often considered a "father" of the cognitivist movement!

Adding imagery and language to the mix allows Bandura to theorize much more effectively than someone like, say, B. F. Skinner, about two things that many people would consider the "strong suit" of the human species: observational learning (modeling) and self-regulation.

Observational learning, or modeling

Of the hundreds of studies Bandura was responsible for, one group stands out above the others – **the bobo doll studies**. He made of film of one of his students, a young woman, essentially beating up a bobo doll. In case you don't know, a bobo doll is an inflatable, egg-shape balloon creature with a weight in the bottom that makes it bob back up when you knock him down. Nowadays, it might have Darth Vader painted on it, but back then it was simply "Bobo" the clown.

The woman punched the clown, shouting "sockeroo!" She kicked it, sat on it, hit with a little hammer, and so on, shouting various aggressive phrases. Bandura showed his film to groups of kindergartners who, as you might predict, liked it a lot. They then were let out to play. In the play room, of course, were several observers with pens and clipboards in hand, a brand new bobo doll, and a few little hammers.

And you might predict as well what the observers recorded: A lot of little kids beating the daylights out of the bobo doll. They punched it and shouted "sockeroo," kicked it, sat on it, hit it with the little hammers, and so on. In other words, they imitated the young lady in the film, and quite precisely at that.

This might seem like a real nothing of an experiment at first, but consider: These children changed their behavior without first being rewarded for approximations to that behavior! And while that may not seem extraordinary to the average parent, teacher, or casual observer of children, it didn't fit so well with standard behavioristic learning theory. He called the phenomenon observational learning or modeling, and his theory is usually called social learning theory.

Bandura did a large number of variations on the study: The model was rewarded or punished in a variety of ways, the kids were rewarded for their imitations, the model was changed to be less attractive or less prestigious, and so on. Responding to criticism that bobo dolls were supposed to be hit, he even did a film of the young woman beating up a live clown. When the children went into the other room, what should they find there but – the live clown! They proceeded to punch him, kick him, hit him with little hammers, and so on.

All these variations allowed Bandura to establish that there were certain steps involved in the modeling process:

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1. **Attention**. If you are going to learn anything, you have to be paying attention. Likewise, anything that puts a damper on attention is going to decrease learning, including observational learning. If, for example, you are sleepy, groggy, drugged, sick, nervous, or "hyper," you will learn less well. Likewise, if you are being distracted by competing stimuli.

Some of the things that influence attention involve characteristics of the model. If the model is colorful and dramatic, for example, we pay more attention. If the model is attractive, or prestigious, or appears to be particularly competent, you will pay more attention. And if the model seems more like yourself, you pay more attention. These kinds of variables directed Bandura towards an examination of television and its effects on kids!

2. **Retention**. Second, you must be able to retain – remember – what you have paid attention to. This is where imagery and language come in: we store what we have seen the model doing in the form of mental images or verbal descriptions. When so stored, you can later "bring up" the image or description, so that you can reproduce it with your own behavior.

3. **Reproduction**. At this point, you're just sitting there daydreaming. You have to translate the images or descriptions into actual behavior. So you have to have the ability to reproduce the behavior in the first place. I can watch Olympic ice skaters all day long, yet not be able to reproduce their jumps, because I can't ice skate at all! On the other hand, if I could skate, my performance would in fact improve if I watch skaters who are better than I am.

Another important tidbit about reproduction is that our ability to imitate improves with practice at the behaviors involved. And one more tidbit: Our abilities improve even when we just imagine ourselves performing! Many athletes, for example, imagine their performance in their mind's eye prior to actually performing.

4. **Motivation**. And yet, with all this, you're still not going to do anything unless you are motivated to imitate, i.e. until you have some reason for doing it. Bandura mentions a number of motives:

a. **past reinforcement**, ala traditional behaviorism.
b. **promised reinforcements** (incentives) that we can imagine.
c. **vicarious reinforcement** – seeing and recalling the model being reinforced.

Notice that these are, traditionally, considered to be the things that "cause" learning. Bandura is saying that they don't so much cause learning as cause us to demonstrate what we have learned. That is, he sees them as motives.

Of course, the negative motivations are there as well, giving you reasons not to imitate someone:

d. **past punishment.**
e. **promised punishment** (threats).
d. **vicarious punishment.**

Like most traditional behaviorists, Bandura says that punishment in whatever form does not work as well as reinforcement and, in fact, has a tendency to "backfire" on us.

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Self-regulation

Self-regulation – controlling our own behavior – is the other "workhorse" of human personality. Here Bandura suggests three steps:

1. **Self-observation.** We look at ourselves, our behavior, and keep tabs on it.

2. **Judgment**. We compare what we see with a standard. For example, we can compare our performance with traditional standards, such as "rules of etiquette." Or we can create arbitrary ones, like "I'll read a book a week." Or we can compete with others, or with ourselves.

3. **Self-response.** If you did well in comparison with your standard, you give yourself rewarding self-responses. If you did poorly, you give yourself punishing self-responses. These self-responses can range from the obvious (treating yourself to a sundae or working late) to the more covert (feelings of pride or shame).

A very important concept in psychology that can be understood well with self-regulation is **self-concept** (better known as self-esteem). If, over the years, you find yourself meeting your standards and life loaded with self-praise and self-reward, you will have a pleasant self-concept (high self-esteem). If, on the other hand, you find yourself forever failing to meet your standards and punishing yourself, you will have a poor self-concept (low self-esteem).

Recall that behaviorists generally view reinforcement as effective, and punishment as fraught with problems. The same goes for self-punishment. Bandura sees three likely results of excessive self-punishment:

a. **compensation** – a superiority complex, for example, and delusions of grandeur.
b. **Inactivity** – apathy, boredom, depression.
c. **Escape** – drugs and alcohol, television fantasies, or even the ultimate escape, suicide.

These have some resemblance to the unhealthy personalities Adler and Horney talk about: an aggressive type, a compliant type, and an avoidant type respectively.

Bandura's recommendations to those who suffer from poor self-concepts come straight from the three steps of self-regulation:

1. **Regarding self-observation** – know thyself! Make sure you have an accurate picture of your behavior.

2. **Regarding standards** – make sure your standards aren't set too high. Don't set yourself up for failure! Standards that are too low, on the other hand, are meaningless.

3. **Regarding self-response** – use self-rewards, not self-punishments. Celebrate your victories, don't dwell on your failures.

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Therapy

Self-control therapy

The ideas behind self-regulation have been incorporated into a therapy technique called self-control therapy. It has been quite successful with relatively simple problems of habit, such as smoking, overeating, and study habits.

1. **Behavioral charts.** Self-observation requires that you keep close tabs on your behavior, both before you begin changes and after. This can involve something as simple as counting how many cigarettes you smoke in a day to complex **behavioral diaries**. With the diary approach, you keep track of the details, the when and where of your habit. This lets you get a grip on what kinds of cues are associated with the habit: Do you smoke more after meals, with coffee, with certain friends, in certain locations...?

2. **Environmental planning.** Taking your lead from your behavioral charts and diaries, you can begin to alter your environment. For example, you can remove or avoid some of those cues that lead to your bad behaviors: Put away the ashtrays, drink tea instead of coffee, divorce that smoking partner.... You can find the time and place best suited for the good alternative behaviors: When and where do you find you study best? And so on.

3. **Self-contracts.** Finally, you arrange to reward yourself when you adhere to your plan, and possibly punish yourself when you do not. These contracts should be written down and witnessed (by your therapist, for example), and the details should be spelled out very explicitly: "I will go out to dinner on Saturday night if I smoke fewer cigarettes this week than last week. I will do paperwork instead if I do not."

You may involve other people and have them control your rewards and punishments, if you aren't strict enough with yourself. Beware, however: This can be murder on your relationships, as you bite their heads off for trying to do what you told them to do!

Modeling therapy

The therapy Bandura is most famous for, however, is modeling therapy. The theory is that, if you can get someone with a psychological disorder to observe someone dealing with the same issues in a more productive fashion, the first person will learn by modeling the second.

Bandura's original research on this involved **herpephobics** – people with a neurotic fear of snakes. The client would be lead to a window looking in on a lab room. In that room is nothing but a chair, a table, a cage on the table with a locked latch, and a snake clearly visible in the cage. The client then watches another person – an actor – go through a slow and painful approach to the snake. He acts terrified at first, but shakes himself out of it, tells himself to relax and breathe normally and take one step at a time towards the snake. He may stop in the middle, retreat in panic, and start all over. Ultimately, he gets to the point where he opens the cage, removes the snake, sits down on the chair, and drapes it over his neck, all the while giving himself calming instructions.

After the client has seen all this (no doubt with his mouth hanging open the whole time), he is invited to try it himself. Mind you, he knows that the other person is an actor – there is no deception involved here, only modeling! And yet, many clients – lifelong phobics – can go through the entire routine first time around, even after only one viewing of the actor! This is a powerful therapy.

One drawback to the therapy is that it isn't easy to get the rooms, the snakes, the actors, etc., together. So Bandura and his students have tested versions of the therapy using recordings of actors and even just imagining the process under the therapist's direction. These methods work nearly as well.

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Discussion

Albert Bandura has had an enormous impact on personality theory and therapy. His straightforward, behaviorist-like style makes good sense to most people. His action-oriented, problem-solving approach likewise appeals to those who want to get things done, rather than philosophize about ids, archetypes, actualization, freedom, and all the many other mentalistic constructs personologists tend to dwell on.

Among academic psychologists, research is crucial, and behaviorism has been the preferred approach. Since the late 1960's, behaviorism has given way to the "cognitive revolution," of which Bandura is considered a part. Cognitive psychology retains the experimentally-oriented flavor of behaviorism, without artificially restraining the researcher to external behaviors, when the mental life of clients and subjects is so obviously important.

This is a powerful movement, and the contributors include some of the most important people in psychology today: Julian Rotter, Walter Mischel, Michael Mahoney, and David Meichenbaum spring to my mind. Also involved are such theorists of therapy as Aaron Beck (cognitive therapy) and Albert Ellis (rational emotive therapy). The followers of George Kelly also find themselves in this camp. And the many people working on personality trait research – such as Buss and Plomin (temperament theory) and McCrae and Costa (five factor theory) – are essentially "cognitive behaviorists" like Bandura.

My gut feeling is that the field of competitors in personality theory will eventually boil down to the cognitivists on the one side and existentialists on the other. Stay tuned!

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Readings

The place to go for Bandura's theory is ***Social Foundations of Thought and Action*** (1986).

If it's a little too dense for you, you might want to try his earlier ***Social Learning Theory*** (1977), or even ***Social Learning and Personality Development*** (1963), which he wrote with Walters.

If aggression is what you're interested in, try ***Aggression: A Social Learning Analysis*** (1973).

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GORDON ALLPORT

[1897 - 1967]

Personality Theories

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Biography

Gordon Allport was born in Montezuma, Indiana, in 1897, the youngest of four brothers. A shy and studious boy, he was teased quite a bit and lived a fairly isolated childhood. His father was a country doctor, which meant that Gordon grew up with his father's patients and nurses and all the paraphernalia of a miniature hospital. Everyone worked hard. His early life was otherwise fairly pleasant and uneventful.

One of Allport's stories is always mentioned in his biographies: When he was 22, he traveled to Vienna. He had arranged to meet with the great Sigmund Freud! When he arrived in Freud's office, Freud simply sat and waited for Gordon to begin. After a little bit, Gordon could no longer stand the silence, and he blurted out an observation he had made on his way to meet Freud. He mentioned that he had seen a little boy on the bus who was very upset at having to sit where a dirty old man had sat previously. Gordon thought this was likely something he had learned from his mother, a very neat and apparently rather domineering type. Freud, instead of taking it as a simple observation, took it to be an expression of some deep, unconscious process in Gordon's mind, and said "And was that little boy you?"

This experience made him realize that depth psychology sometimes digs too deeply, in the same way that he had earlier realized that behaviorism often doesn't dig deeply enough!

Allport received his Ph.D. in Psychology in 1922 from Harvard, following in the foot steps of his brother Floyd, who became an important social psychologist. His career was spent developing his theory, examining such social issues as prejudice, and developing personality tests. He died in Cambridge Massachusetts in 1967.

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Theory

One thing that motivates human beings is the tendency to satisfy biological survival needs, which Allport referred to as **opportunistic functioning**. He noted that opportunistic functioning can be characterized as reactive, past-oriented, and, of course, biological.

But Allport felt that opportunistic functioning was relatively unimportant for understanding most of human behavior. Most human behavior, he believed, is motivated by something very different – functioning in a manner expressive of the self – which he called **propriate functioning**. Most of what we do in life is a matter of being who we are! Propriate functioning can be characterized as proactive, future-oriented, and psychological.

Propriate comes from the word **proprium**, which is Allport's name for that essential concept, the self. He had reviewed hundreds of definitions for that concept and came to feel that, in order to more scientific, it would be necessary to dispense with the common word self and substitute something else. For better or worse, the word proprium never caught on.

To get an intuitive feel for what propriate functioning means, think of the last time you wanted to do something or become something because you really felt that doing or becoming that something would be expressive of the things about yourself that you believe to be most important. Remember the last time you did something to express your self, the last time you told yourself, "that's really me!" Doing things in keeping with what you really are, that's propriate functioning.

The proprium

Putting so much emphasis on the self or proprium, Allport wanted to define it as carefully as possible. He came at that task from two directions, phenomenologically and functionally.

First, phenomenologically, i.e. the self as experienced: He suggested that the self is composed of the aspects of your experiencing that you see as most **essential** (as opposed to incidental or accidental), **warm** (or "precious," as opposed to emotionally cool), and **central** (as opposed to peripheral).

His functional definition became a developmental theory all by itself. The self has seven functions, which tend to arise at certain times of one's life:

1. Sense of body
2. Self-identity
3. Self-esteem
4. Self-extension
5. Self-image
6. Rational coping
7. Propriate striving

Sense of body develops in the first two years of life. We have one, we feel its closeness, its warmth. It has boundaries that pain and injury, touch and movement, make us aware of. Allport had a favorite demonstration of this aspect of self: Imagine spitting saliva into a cup – and then drinking it down! What's the problem? It's the same stuff you swallow all day long! But, of course, it has gone out from your bodily self and become, thereby, foreign to you.

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Self-identity also develops in the first two years. There comes a point were we recognize ourselves as continuing, as having a past, present, and future. We see ourselves as individual entities, separate and different from others. We even have a name! Will you be the same person when you wake up tomorrow? Of course – we take that continuity for granted.

Self-esteem develops between two and four years old. There also comes a time when we recognize that we have value, to others and to ourselves. This is especially tied to a continuing development of our competencies. This, for Allport, is what the "anal" stage is really all about!

Self-extension develops between four and six. Certain things, people, and events around us also come to be thought of as central and warm, essential to my existence. "My" is very close to "me!" Some people define themselves in terms of their parents, spouse, or children, their clan, gang, community, college, or nation. Some find their identity in activities: I'm a psychologist, a student, a bricklayer. Some find identity in a place: my house, my hometown. When my child does something wrong, why do I feel guilty? If someone scratches my car, why do I feel like they just punches me?

Self-image also develops between four and six. This is the "looking-glass self," the me as others see me. This is the impression I make on others, my "look," my social esteem or status, including my sexual identity. It is the beginning of what conscience, ideal self, and persona.

Rational coping is learned predominantly in the years from six till twelve. The child begins to develop his or her abilities to deal with life's problems rationally and effectively. This is analogous to Erikson's "industry."

Propriate striving doesn't usually begin till after twelve years old. This is my self as goals, ideal, plans, vocations, callings, a sense of direction, a sense of purpose. The culmination of propriate striving, according to Allport, is the ability to say that I am the proprietor of my life – i.e. the owner and operator!

(One can't help but notice the time periods Allport uses – they are very close to the time periods of Freud's stages! But please understand that Allport's scheme is **not** a stage theory – just a description of the usual way people develop.)

Traits or dispositions

Now, as the proprium is developing in this way, we are also developing **personal traits**, or **personal dispositions**. Allport originally used the word traits, but found that so many people assumed he meant traits as perceived by someone looking at another person or measured by personality tests, rather than as unique, individual characteristics within a person, that he changed it to dispositions.

A personal disposition is defined as "a generalized neuropsychic structure (peculiar to the individual), with the capacity to render many stimuli functionally equivalent, and to initiate and guide consistent (equivalent) forms of adaptive and stylistic behavior."

A personal disposition produces equivalences in function and meaning between various perceptions, beliefs,

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feelings, and actions that are not necessarily equivalent in the natural world, or in anyone else's mind. A person with the personal disposition "fear of communism" may equate Russians, liberals, professors, strikers, social activists, environmentalists, feminists, and so on. He may lump them all together and respond to any of them with a set of behaviors that express his fear: making speeches, writing letters, voting, arming himself, getting angry, etc.

Another way to put it is to say that dispositions are concrete, easily recognized, consistencies in our behaviors.

Allport believes that traits are essentially unique to each individual: One person's "fear of communism" isn't the same as another's. And you can't really expect that knowledge of other people is going to help you understand any one particular person. For this reason, Allport strongly pushed what he called idiographic methods – methods that focused on studying one person at a time, such as interviews, observation, analysis of letters or diaries, and so on. These are nowadays generally referred to as qualitative methods.

Allport does recognize that within any particular culture, there are **common traits** or dispositions, ones that are a part of that culture, that everyone in that culture recognizes and names. In our culture, we commonly differentiate between introverts and extraverts or liberals and conservatives, and we all know (roughly) what we mean. But another culture may not recognize these. What, for example, would liberal and conservative mean in the middle ages?

Allport recognizes that some traits are more closely tied to the proprium (one's self) than others. **Central traits** are the building blocks of your personality. When you describe someone, you are likely to use words that refer to these central traits: smart, dumb, wild, shy, sneaky, dopey, grumpy.... He noted that most people have somewhere between five and ten of these.

There are also **secondary traits**, ones that aren't quite so obvious, or so general, or so consistent. Preferences, attitudes, situational traits are all secondary. For example, "he gets angry when you try to tickle him," "she has some very unusual sexual preferences," and "you can't take him to restaurants."

But then there are **cardinal traits**. These are the traits that some people have which practically define their life. Someone who spends their life seeking fame, or fortune, or sex is such a person. Often we use specific historical people to name these cardinal traits: Scrooge (greed), Joan of Arc (heroic self-sacrifice), Mother Teresa (religious service), Marquis de Sade (sadism), Machiavelli (political ruthlessness), and so on. Relatively few people develop a cardinal trait. If they do, it tends to be late in life.

Psychological maturity

If you have a well-developed proprium and a rich, adaptive set of dispositions, you have attained psychological maturity, Allport's term for mental health. He lists seven characteristics:

1. Specific, enduring **extensions of self**, i.e. Involvement.
2. Dependable techniques for **warm relating** to others (e.g. trust, empathy, genuineness, tolerance...).
3. **Emotional security** and self-acceptance.
4. Habits of **realistic perception** (as opposed to defensiveness).
5. **Problem-centeredness**, and the development of problem-solving skills.
6. **Self-objectification** – insight into one's own behavior, the ability to laugh at oneself, etc.
7. A unifying **philosophy of life**, including a particular value orientation, differentiated religious sentiment, and a personalized conscience.

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Functional autonomy

Allport didn't believe in looking too much into a person's past in order to understand his present. This belief is most strongly evident in the concept of **functional autonomy**: Your motives today are independent (autonomous) of their origins. It doesn't matter, for example, why you wanted to become a doctor, or why you developed a taste for olives or for kinky sex, the fact is that this is the way you are now!

Functional autonomy comes in two flavors: The first is **perseverative functional autonomy**. This refers essentially to habits – behaviors that no longer serve their original purpose, but still continue. You may have started smoking as a symbol of adolescent rebellion, for example, but now you smoke because you can't quit! Social rituals such as saying "bless you" when someone sneezes had a reason once upon a time (during the plague, a sneeze was a far more serious symptom than it is today!), but now continues because it is seen as polite.

Propriate functional autonomy is something a bit more self-directed than habits. Values are the usual example. Perhaps you were punished for being selfish when you were a child. That doesn't in any way detract from your well-known generosity today – it has become your value!

Perhaps you can see how the idea of functional autonomy may have derived from Allport's frustration with Freud (or the behaviorists). Of course, that hardly means that it's only a defensive belief on Allport's part!

The idea of propriate functional autonomy – values – lead Allport and his associates Vernon and Lindzey to develop a categorization of values (in a book called ***A Study of Values*****,** 1960) and a test of values.

A "demo" of the values test: [http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/valuestest.html]

1. **the theoretical** – a scientist, for example, values truth.
2. **the economic** – a businessperson may value usefulness.
3. **the aesthetic** – an artist naturally values beauty.
4. **the social** – a nurse may have a strong love of people.
5. **the political** – a politician may value power.
6. **the religious** – a monk or nun probably values unity.

Most of us, of course, have several of these values at more moderate levels, plus we may value one or two of these quite negatively. There are modern tests used for helping kids find their careers that have very similar dimensions.

Conclusions

Allport is one of those theorists who was so right about so many things that his ideas have simply passed on into the spirit of the times. His theory is one of the first humanistic theories, and would influence many others, including Kelly, Maslow, and Rogers. One unfortunate aspect of his theory is his original use of the word trait, which brought down the wrath of a number of situationally oriented behaviorists who would have been much more open to his theory if they had bothered to understand it. But that has always been a weakness of psychology in general and personality in particular: Ignorance of the past and the theories and research of others.

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Allport's most significant books are ***Pattern and Growth in Personality*** (1965), ***The Person in Psychology*** (1968), and ***The Nature of Prejudice*** (1954).

He was a good writer, and none of these books are too technical

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GEORGE KELLY

[1905 - 1967]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

George Kelly was teaching physiological psychology at Fort Hays Kansas State College in 1931. It was the time of the dust bowl and the depression. Recognizing the pains and sorrows of the farming families of this part of west-central Kansas, he decided to do something a little more humanitarian with his life: He decided to develop a rural clinical service.

Mind you, this was hardly a money-making operation. Many of his clients had no money. Some couldn't come to him, and so he and his students would travel, sometimes for hours, to them.

At first, Kelly used the standard Freudian training that every psychology Ph.D. received in those days. He had these folks lie down on a couch, free associate, and tell him their dreams. When he saw resistances or symbols of sexual and aggressive needs, he would patiently convey his impressions to them. It was surprising, he thought, how readily these relatively unsophisticated people took to these explanations of their problems. Surely, given their culture, the standard Freudian interpretations should seem terribly bizarre? Apparently, they placed their faith in him, the professional.

Kelly himself, however, wasn't so sure about these standard Freudian explanations. He found them a bit far-fetched at times, not quite appropriate to the lives of Kansan farm families. So, as time went by, he noticed that his interpretations of dreams and such were becoming increasingly unorthodox. In fact, he began "making up" explanations! His clients listened as carefully as before, believed in him as much as ever, and improved at the same slow but steady pace.

It began to occur to him that what truly mattered to these people was that they had an explanation of their difficulties, that they had a way of understanding them. What mattered was that the "chaos" of their lives developed some order. And he discovered that, while just about any order and understanding that came from an authority was accepted gladly, order and understanding that came out of their own lives, their own culture, was even better.

Out of these insights, Kelly developed his theory and philosophy. The theory we'll get to in a while. The philosophy he called **constructive alternativism**. Constructive alternativism is the idea that, while there is only one true reality, reality is always experienced from one or another perspective, or alternative **construction**. I have a construction, you have one, a person on the other side of the planet has one, someone living long ago had one, a primitive person has one, a modern scientist has one, every child has one, even someone who is seriously mentally ill has one.

Some constructions are better than others. Mine, I hope, is better than that of someone who is seriously mentally ill. My physician's construction of my ills is better, I trust, than the construction of the local faith healer. Yet no-one's construction is ever complete – the world is just too complicated, too big, for anyone to have the perfect perspective. And no-one's perspective is ever to be completely ignored. Each perspective is, in fact, a perspective on the ultimate reality, and has some value to that person in that time and place.

In fact, Kelly says, there are an infinite number of alternative constructions one may take towards the world, and if ours is not doing a very good job, we can take another!

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Biography

George Kelly was born on April 28, 1905, on a farm near Perth, Kansas. He was the only child of Theodore and Elfleda Kelly. His father was originally a presbyterian minister who had taken up farming on his doctor's advice. His mother was a former school teacher.

George's schooling was erratic at best. His family moved, by covered wagon, to Colorado when George was young, but they were forced to return to Kansas when water became scarce. From then on, George attended mostly one room schools. Fortunately, both his parents took part in his education. When he was thirteen, he was finally sent off to boarding school in Wichita.

After high school, Kelly was a good example of someone who was both interested in everything and basically directionless. He received a bachelor's degree in 1926 in physics and math from Park College, followed with a master's in sociology from the University of Kansas. Moving to Minnesota, he taught public speaking to labor organizers and bankers and citizenship classes to immigrants.

He moved to Sheldon, Iowa, where he taught and coached drama at a junior college, and met his wife-to-be, Gladys Thompson. After a few short-term jobs, he received a fellowship to go to the University of Edinburgh, where he received a bachelor of education degree in psychology. In 1931, he received his Ph.D. in psychology from the State University of Iowa.

Then, during the depression, he worked at Fort Hays Kansas State College, where he developed his theory and clinical techniques. During World War II, Kelly served as an aviation psychologist with the Navy, followed by a stint at the University of Maryland.

In 1946, he left for Ohio State University, the year after Carl Rogers left, and became the director of its clinical program. It was here that his theory matured, where he wrote his two-volume work, The Psychology of Personal Constructs, and where he influenced a number of graduate students.

In 1965, he began a research position at Brandeis University, where Maslow was working. Sadly, he died soon afterward, on March 6, 1967.

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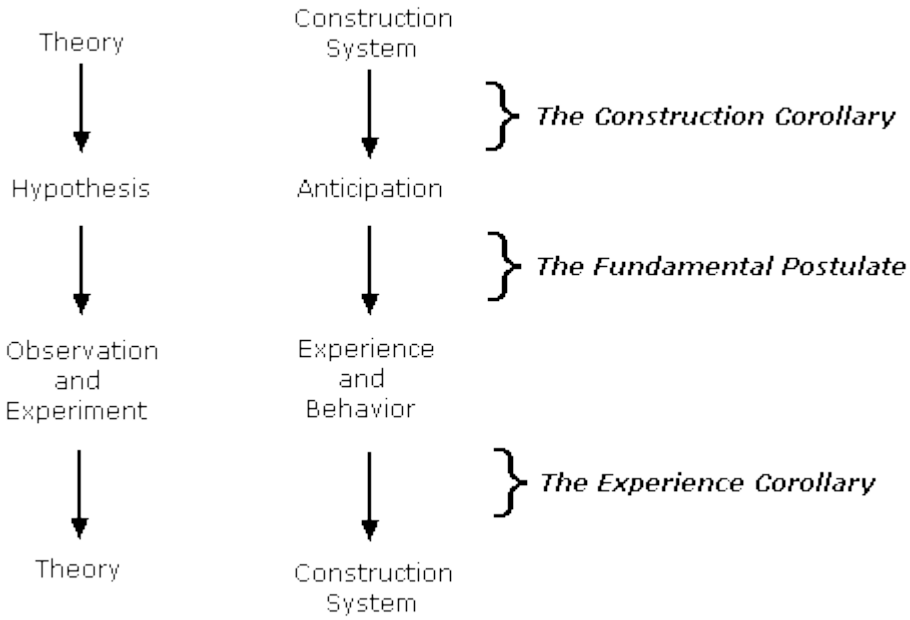
Theory

Kelly's theory begins with what he called his "**fruitful metaphor**." He had noticed long before that scientists, and therapists, often displayed a peculiar attitude towards people: While they thought quite well of themselves, they tended to look down on their subjects or clients. While they saw themselves as engaged in the fine arts of reason and empiricism, they tended to see ordinary people as the victims of their sexual energies or conditioning histories. But Kelly, with his experience with Kansan students and farm people, noted that these ordinary people, too, were engaged in science; they, too, were trying to understand what was going on.

So people – ordinary people – are scientists, too. The have constructions of their reality, like scientists have theories. They have anticipations or expectations, like scientists have hypotheses. They engage in behaviors that test those expectations, like scientists do experiments. They improve their understandings of reality on the bases of their experiences, like scientists adjust their theories to fit the facts. From this metaphor comes Kelly's entire theory.



The fundamental postulate

Kelly organized his theory into a **fundamental postulate** and **11 corollaries**. His fundamental postulate says this: "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events." (This and all subsequent quotations are from Kelly's 1955 The Psychology of Personal Constructs.) This is the central movement in the scientific process: from hypothesis to experiment or observation, i.e. from anticipation to experience and behavior.

By processes, Kelly means your experiences, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and whatever might be left over. All these things are determined, not just by the reality out there, but by your efforts to **anticipate** the world, other people, and yourself, from moment to moment as well as day-to-day and year-to-year.

So, when I look out of my window to find the source of some high-pitched noises, I don't just see exactly and

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completely what is out there. I see that which is in keeping with my expectations. I am ready for birds, perhaps, or children laughing and playing. I am not prepared for a bulldozer that operates with a squeal rather than the usual rumbling, or for a flying saucer landing in my yard. If a UFO were in fact the source of the high-pitched noises, I would not truly perceive it at first. I'd perceive something. I'd be confused and frightened. I'd try to figure out what I'm looking at. I'd engage in all sorts of behaviors to help me figure it out, or to get me away from the source of my anxiety! Only after a bit would I be able to find the right anticipation, the right hypothesis: "Oh my God, it's a UFO!"

If, of course, UFO's were a common place occurrence in my world, upon hearing high-pitched noises I would anticipate birds, kids, or a UFO, an anticipation that could then be quickly refined with a glance out of the window.

The construction corollary

"A person anticipates events by construing their replications."

That is, we **construct** our anticipations using our past experience. We are fundamentally conservative creatures; we expect things to happen as they've happened before. We look for the patterns, the consistencies, in our experiences. If I set my alarm clock, I expect it to ring at the right time, as it has done since time immemorial. If I behave nicely to someone, I expect them to behave nicely back.

This is the step from theory to hypothesis, i.e. from **construction system** (knowledge, understanding) to anticipation.

The experience corollary

"A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replication of events."

When things don't happen the way they have in the past, we have to adapt, to **reconstruct**. This new experience alters our future anticipations. We learn.

This is the step from experiment and observation to validation or reconstruction: Based on the results of our experiment – the behaviors we engage in – or our observation – the experiences we have – we either continue our faith in our theory of reality, or we change the theory.

The dichotomy corollary

"A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs."

We store our experience in the form of **constructs**, which he also referred to as "useful concepts," "convenient fictions," and "transparent templates." You "place" these "templates" on the world, and they guide your perceptions and behaviors.

He often calls them **personal constructs**, emphasizing the fact that they are yours and yours alone, unique to you and no-one else. A construct is not some label or pigeon-hole or dimension I, as a psychologist, lay on you, the "ordinary" person. It is a small bit of how you see the world.

He also calls them **bipolar constructs**, to emphasize their **dichotomous** nature. They have two ends, or **poles**: Where there is thin, there must be fat, where there is tall, there must be short, where there is up, there must be down, and so on. If everyone were fat, then fat would become meaningless, or identical in meaning

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to "everyone." Some people must be skinny in order for fat to have any meaning, and vice versa!

This is actually a very old insight. In ancient China, for example, philosophers made much of yin and yang, the opposites that together make the whole. More recently, Carl Jung talks about it a great deal. Linguists and anthropologists accept it as a given part of language and culture.

A number of psychologists, most notably Gestalt psychologists, have pointed out that we don't so much associate separate things as differentiate things out of a more-or-less whole background. First you see a lot of undifferentiated "stuff" going on (a "buzzing, blooming confusion," as William James called it). Then you learn to pick out of that "stuff" the things that are important, that make a difference, that have meaning for you. The young child doesn't care if you are fat or thin, black or white, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile; Only when the people around him or her convey their prejudices, does the child begin to notice these things.

Many constructs have **names** or are easily nameable: good-bad, happy-sad, introvert-extravert, flourescent-incandescent.... But they need not! They can be unnamed. Babies, even animals, have constructs: food-I-like vs. food-I-spit-out, danger vs. safety, Mommy vs. stranger.

Probably, most of our constructs are **non-verbal**. Think of all the habits that you have that you don't name, such as the detailed movements involved in driving a car. Think about the things you recognize but don't name, such as the formation just beneath your nose? (It's called a philtrum.) Or think about all the subtleties of a feeling like "falling in love."

This is as close as Kelly comes to distinguishing a conscious and an unconscious mind: Constructs with names are more easily thought about. They are certainly more easily talked about! It's as if a name is a handle by which you can grab onto a construct, move it around, show it to others, and so on. And yet a construct that has no name is still "there," and can have every bit as great an effect on your life!

Sometimes, although a construct has names, we pretend to ourselves that one pole doesn't really refer to anything or anybody. For example, a person might say that there aren't any truly bad people in the world. Kelly would say that he or she has **submerged** this pole – something similar to repression.

It might be, you see, that for this person to acknowledge the meaningfulness of "bad" would require them to acknowledge a lot more: Perhaps mom would have to be labeled bad, or dad, or me! Rather than admit something like this, he or she would rather stop using the construct. Sadly, the construct is still there, and shows up in the person's behaviors and feelings.

One more differentiation Kelly makes in regards to constructs is between peripheral and core constructs. **Peripheral** constructs are most constructs about the world, others, and even one's self. **Core** constructs, on the other hand, are the constructs that are most significant to you, that to one extent or another actually define who you are. Write down the first 10 or 20 adjectives that occur to you about yourself – these may very well represent core constructs. Core constructs is the closest Kelly comes to talking about a self.

The organization corollary

"Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events,
a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs."

Constructs are not just floating around unconnected. If they were, you wouldn't be able to use one piece of information to get to another – you wouldn't be able to anticipate! When you are talked into a blind date, and your friend spends a great deal of energy trying to convince you that the person you will be going out with has a great personality, you know, you just know, that they will turn out to look like Quasimodo. How do you get from "great personality" to "Quasimodo?" Organization!

Some constructs are **subordinate** to, or "under," other constructs. There are two versions of this. First, there's a taxonomic kind of subordination, like the "trees" of animal or plant life you learned in high school

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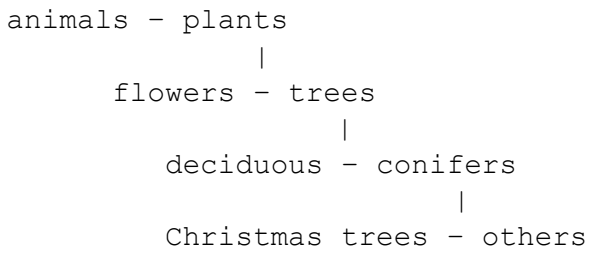
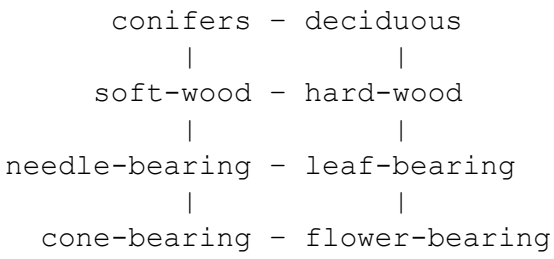
biology. There are living things vs. non-living things, for example; subordinate to living things are, say, plants vs. animals; under plants, there might be trees vs. flowers; under trees, there might be conifers vs. deciduous trees; and so on.

Mind you, these are personal constructs, not scientific constructs, and so this is a personal taxonomy as well. It may be the same as the scientific one in your biology textbook, or it might not be. I still tend to have a species of conifer called Christmas trees.



There is also a definitional kind of subordination, called **constellation**. This involves stacks of constructs, with all their poles aligned. For example, beneath the construct conifers vs. deciduous trees, we may find soft-wood vs. hard-wood, needle-bearing vs. leaf-bearing, cone-bearing vs. flower-bearing, and so on.



This is also the basis for stereotyping: "We" are good, clean, smart, moral, etc., while "they" are bad, dirty, dumb, immoral, etc.

Many constructs, of course, are independent of each other. Plants-animals is **independent** of flourescent-incandescent, to give an obvious example.

Sometimes, the relationship between two constructs is very **tight**. If one construct is consistently used to predict another, you have tight construction. Prejudice would be an example: As soon as you have a label for someone, you automatically assume other things about that person as well. You "jump to conclusions."

When we "do" science, we need to use tight construction. We call this "rigorous thinking," and it is a good thing. Who, after all, would want an engineer to build bridges using scientific rules that only maybe work. People who think of themselves as realistic often prefer tight construction.

But it is a small step from rigorous and realistic to rigid. And this rigidity can become pathological, so that an obsessive-compulsive person has to do things "just so" or break out in anxiety.

On the other hand, sometimes the relationship between constructs is left **loose**: There is a connection, but it is not absolute, not quite necessary. Loose construction is a more flexible way of using constructs. When we go to another country, for example, with some preconceptions about the people. These preconceptions would be prejudicial stereotypes, if we construed them tightly. But if we use them loosely, they merely help us to behave more appropriately in their culture.

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We use loose construction when we fantasize and dream, when anticipations are broken freely and odd combinations are permitted. However, if we use loose construction too often and inappropriately, we appear flaky rather than flexible. Taken far enough, loose construction will land you in an institution.

The **creativity cycle** makes use of these ideas. When we are being creative, we first loosen our constructions – fantasizing and brainstorming alternative constructions. When we find a novel construction that looks like it has some potential, we focus on it and tighten it up. We use the creativity cycle (obviously) in the arts. First we loosen up and get creative in the simplest sense; then tighten things up and give our creations substance. We conceive the idea, then give it form.

We use the creativity cycle in therapy, too. We let go of our unsuccessful models of reality, let our constructs drift, find a novel configuration, pull it into more rigorous shape, and try it out! We'll get back to this later.

The range corollary

"A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events only."

No construct is useful for everything. The gender construct (male-female) is, for most of us, something of importance only with people and a few higher animals such as our pets and cattle. Few of us care what sex flies are, or lizards, or even armadillos. And no-one, I think, applies gender to geological formations or political parties. These things are beyond the **range of convenience** of the gender construct.

Some constructs are very **comprehensive**, or broad in application. Good-bad is perhaps the most comprehensive construct of all, being applicable to nearly anything. Other constructs are very **incidental**, or narrow. Flourescent-incandescent is fairly narrow, applicable only to light bulbs.

But notice that what is relatively narrow for you might be relatively broad for me. A biologist will be interested in the gender of flies, lizards, armadillos, apple trees, philodendra, and so on. Or a philosopher may restrict his or her use of good-bad to specifically moral behaviors, rather than to all kinds of things, people, or beliefs.

The modulation corollary

"The variation in a person's construction system is limited
by the permeability of the constructs within whose range of convenience the variants lie."

Some constructs are "springy," they "modulate," they are **permeable**, which means that they are open to increased range. Other constructs are relatively impermeable.

For example, good-bad is generally quite permeable for most of us. We are always adding new elements: We may never have seen a computer before, or a CD player, or a fax machine, but as soon as we have, we want to know the best brand to buy. Likewise, a person who will look around for a rock if a hammer is not available uses the construct concerning "things to hammer with" in a permeable fashion.

On the other hand, flourescent-incandescent is relatively **impermeable**: It can be used for lighting, but little else is likely to ever be admitted. And people who won't let you sit on tables are keeping their sit-upon constructs quite impermeable.

In case this seems like another way of talking about incidental vs. comprehensive constructs, note that you can have comprehensive but impermeable constructs, such as the one expressed by the person who says "Whatever happened to the good old days? There just don't seem to be any honest people around anymore." In other words, honesty, though broad, is now closed. And there are incidental constructs used permeably, such as when you say "my, but you're looking incandescent today!" Permeability is the very soul of poetry!

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When there is no more "stretch," no more "give" in the range of the constructs you are using, you may have to resort to more drastic measures. **Dilation** is when you broaden the range of your constructs. Let's say you don't believe in ESP. You walk into a party and suddenly you hear a voice in your head and notice someone smiling knowingly at you from across the room! You would have to rather quickly stretch the range of the constructs involving ESP, which had been filled, up to now, with nothing but a few hoaxes.

On the other hand, sometimes events force you to narrow the range of your constructs equally dramatically. This is called **constriction**. An example might be when, after a lifetime of believing that people were moral creatures, you experience the realities of war. The construct including "moral" may shrink out of existence.

Notice that dilation and constriction are rather emotional things. You can easily understand depression and manic states this way. The manic person has dilated a set of constructs about his or her happiness enormously, and shouts "I've never imagined that life could be like this before!" Someone who is depressed, on the other hand, has taken the constructs that relate to life and good things to do with it and constricted them down to sitting alone in the dark.

The choice corollary

"A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct
through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system."

With all these constructs, and all these poles, how do we chose our behaviors? Kelly says that we will choose to do what we anticipate will most likely **elaborate** our construction system, that is, improve our understanding, our ability to anticipate. Reality places limits on what we can experience or do, but we choose how to construe, or interpret, that reality. And we choose to interpret that reality in whatever way we believe will help us the most.

Commonly, our choices are between an adventurous alternative and a safe one. We could try to extend our understanding of, say, human heterosexual interaction (partying) by making the **adventurous** choice of going to more parties, getting to know more people, developing more relationships, and so on.

On the other hand, we might prefer to define our understanding by making the **security** choice: staying home, pondering what might have gone wrong with that last unsuccessful relationship, or getting to know one person better. Which one you choose will depend on which one you think you need.

With all this choosing going on, you might expect that Kelly has had something to say about free will vs. determinism. He has, and what he has to say is very interesting: He sees freedom as being a relative concept. We are not "free" or "unfree;" Some of us are free-er than others; We are free-er in some situations than in others; We are free-er from some forces than from others; And we are free-er under some constructions than under others.

The individuality corollary

"Persons differ from each other in their construction of events."

Since everyone has different experiences, everyone's construction of reality is different. Remember, he calls his theory the theory of personal constructs. Kelly does not approve of classification systems, personality types, or personality tests. His own famous "rep test," as you will see, is not a test in the traditional sense at all.

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The commonality corollary

"To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to the other person."

Just because we are all different doesn't mean we can't be similar. If our construction system – our understanding of reality – is similar, so will be our experiences, our behaviors, and our feelings. For example, if we share the same culture, we'll see things in a similar way, and the closer we are, the more similar we'll be.

In fact, Kelly says that we spend a great deal of our time seeking **validation** from other people. A man sitting himself down at the local bar and sighing "women!" does so with the expectation that his neighbor at the bar will respond with the support of his world view he is at that moment desperately in need of: "Yeah, women! You can't live with 'em and you can't live without 'em." The same scenario applies, with appropriate alterations, to women. And similar scenarios apply as well to kindergarten children, adolescent gangs, the klan, political parties, scientific conferences, and so on. We look for support from those who are similar to ourselves. Only they can know how we truly feel!

The fragmentation corollary

"A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other."

The **fragmentation corollary** says that we can be inconsistent within ourselves. It is, in fact, a rare person who "has it all together" and functions, at all times in all places, as a unified personality. Nearly all of us, for example, have different roles that we play in life: I am a man, a husband, a father, a son, a professor; I am someone with certain ethnic, religious, political, and philosophical identifications; sometimes I'm a patient, or a guest, or a host, or a customer. And I am not quite the same in these various roles.

Often the roles are separated by circumstances. A man might be a cop at night, and act tough, authoritarian, efficient. But in the daytime, he might be a father, and act gentle, tender, affectionate. Since the circumstances are kept apart, the roles don't come into conflict. But heaven forbid the man finds himself in the situation of having to arrest his own child! Or a parent may be seen treating a child like an adult one minute, scolding her the next, and hugging her like a baby the following minute. An observer might frown at the inconsistency. Yet, for most people, these inconsistencies are integrated at higher levels: The parent may be in each case expressing his or her love and concern for the child's well-being.

Some of Kelly's followers have reintroduced an old idea to the study of personality, that each of us is a **community of selves**, rather than just one simple self. This may be true. However, other theorists would suggest that a more unified personality might be healthier, and a "community of selves" is a little too close to multiple personalities for comfort!

The sociality corollary

"To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person."

Even if you are not really similar to another person, you can still relate to them. You can, in fact, "construe how another construes," "psych him out," "get inside her head," "see where he's coming from," and "know what she means." In other words, I can set aside a portion of myself (made possible through the

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fragmentation corollary) to "be" someone else.

This is an important part of **role playing**, because, whenever you play a role, you play it to or with someone, someone you need to understand in order to relate to. Kelly thought this was so important he almost called his theory role theory, except that the name had already been taken. These ideas, in fact, came from the school of thought in sociology founded by George Herbert Mead.

Feelings

The theory so far presented may sound very cognitive, with all its emphasis on constructs and constructions, and many people have said so as their primary criticism of Kelly's theory. In fact, Kelly disliked being called a cognitive theorist. He felt that his "professional constructs" included the more traditional ideas of perception, behavior, and emotion, as well as cognition. So to say he doesn't talk about emotions, for example, is to miss the point altogether.

What you and I would call emotions (or affect, or feelings) Kelly called **constructs of transition**, because they refer to the experiences we have when we move from one way of looking at the world or ourselves to another.

When you are suddenly aware that your constructs aren't functioning well, you feel **anxiety**. You are (as Kelly said) "caught with your constructs down." It can be anything from your checkbook not balancing, to forgetting someone's name during introductions, to an unexpected hallucinogenic trip, to forgetting your own name. When anticipations fail, you feel anxiety. If you've taken a social psychology course, you might recognize the concept as being very similar to cognitive dissonance.

When the anxiety involves anticipations of great changes coming to your core constructs – the ones of greatest importance to you – it becomes a **threat**. For example, you are not feeling well. You think it might be something serious. You go to the doctor. He looks. He shakes his head. He looks again. He gets solemn. He calls in a colleague.... This is "threat." We also feel it when we graduate, get married, become parents for the first time, when roller coasters leave the track, and during therapy.

When you do things that are not in keeping with your core constructs – with your idea of who you are and how you should behave – you feel **guilt**. This is a novel and useful definition of guilt, because it includes situations that people know to be guilt-ridden and yet don't meet the usual criterion of being in some way immoral. If your child falls into a manhole, it may not be your fault, but you will feel guilty, because it violates your belief that it is your duty as a parent to prevent accidents like this. Similarly, children often feel guilty when a parent gets sick, or when parents divorce. And when a criminal does something out of character, something the rest of the world might consider good, he feels guilty about it!

We have talked a lot about adapting to the world when our constructs don't match up with reality, but there is another way: You can try to make reality match up with your constructs. Kelly calls this **aggression**. It includes aggression proper: If someone insults my tie, I can punch his lights out, in which case I can wear my tie in peace. But it also includes things we might today prefer to call assertiveness: Sometimes things are not as they should be, and we should change them to fit our ideals. Without assertiveness, there would be no social progress!

Again, when our core constructs are on the line, aggression may become **hostility**. Hostility is a matter of insisting that your constructs are valid, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Examples might include an elderly boxer still claiming to be "the greatest," a nerd who truly believes he's a Don Juan, or a person in therapy who desperately resists acknowledging that there even is a problem.

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Psychopathology and Therapy

This brings us nicely to Kelly's definition of a **psychological disorder**: "Any personal construction which is used repeatedly in spite of consistent invalidation." The behaviors and thoughts of neurosis, depression, paranoia, schizophrenia, etc., are all examples. So are patterns of violence, bigotry, criminality, greed, addiction, and so on. The person can no longer anticipate well, yet can't seem to learn new ways of relating to the world. He or she is loaded with anxiety and hostility, is unhappy and is making everyone else unhappy, too.

If a person's problem is poor construction, then the solution should be **reconstruction**, a term Kelly was tempted to use for his style of therapy. Psychotherapy involves getting the client to reconstrue, to see things in a different way, from a new perspective, one that allows the choices that lead to elaboration.

Kellian therapists essentially ask their clients to join them in a series of **experiments** concerning the clients' life styles. They may ask their clients to loosen their constructs, to slip them around, to test them, to tighten them up again, to "try them on for size." The intent is to encourage **movement**, essential for any progress.

Kelly, with his background in drama, liked to use **role-playing** (or **enactment**) to encourage movement. He might take the part of your mother and have you express your feelings. After a while, he might ask you to reverse roles with him – you be your mother, and he'll be you! In this way, you become aware of your own construction of your relationship and your mother's construction. Perhaps you will begin to understand her, or see ways in which you might adapt. You may come to a compromise, or discover an entirely new perspective that rises above both.

Kelly's therapy often involves **home-work**, things he would ask you to do outside the therapy situation. His best known technique is called **fixed-role therapy**. First, he asks you for a description of yourself, a couple of pages in the third person, which he calls the **character sketch**. Then he constructs, perhaps with the help of a colleague, another description, called the **fixed-role sketch**, of a pretend person.

He writes this sketch by examining your original sketch carefully and using constructs that are "at right angles" to the constructs you used. This means that the new constructs are independent of the original ones, but they are used in a similar way, that is, they refer to the same range of elements.

If, for example, I use genius-idiot as a construct in dealing with people, I don't give them a lot of room to be somewhere in between, and I don't allow much for change. And, since we use the same constructs on ourselves as we use for others, I don't give myself much slack either. On a really good day, I might call myself a genius. On most days, I'd have no choice, if I used such a dramatic construct, but to call myself an idiot. And idiots stay idiots; they don't turn into geniuses. So, I'd be setting myself up for depression, not to mention for a life with very few friends.

Kelly might write a fixed-role sketch with a construct like skilled-unskilled. This is a much more "humane" construct than genius-idiot. It is much less judgmental: A person can, after all, be skilled in one area, yet unskilled in another. And it allows for change: If I find that I am unskilled in some area of importance, I can, with a little effort, become skilled.

Anyway, Kelly would then ask his client to be the person described in the fixed-role sketch for a week or two. Mind you, this is a full time commitment: He wants you to be this person 24 hours a day, at work, at home, even when you're alone. Kelly found that most people are quite good at this, and even enjoy it. After all, this person is usually much healthier than they are!

Should the client come back and say "Thank you, doc! I believe I'm cured. All I need to do now is be "Dave" instead of "George" for the rest of my life," Kelly would have a surprise in store: He might ask that person to play another fixed-role for a couple of weeks, one that might not be so positive. That's because the intent of this play-acting is not that the therapist give you a new personality. That would quickly come to nothing. The idea is to show you that you do, in fact, have the power to change, to "choose yourself."

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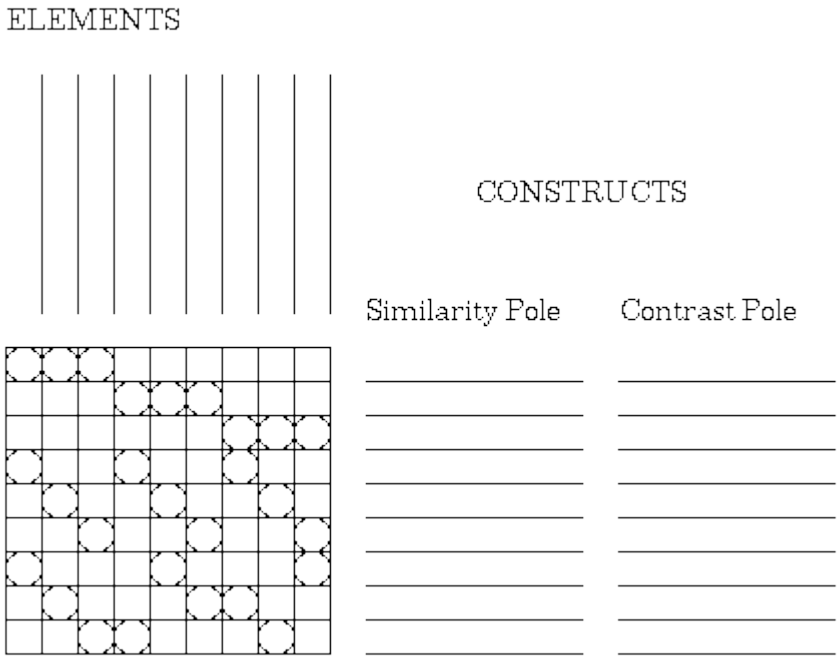
Kellian therapy has, as its goal, opening people up to alternatives, helping them to discover their freedom, allowing them to live up to their potentials. For this reason, and many others, Kelly fits most appropriately among the humanistic psychologists.

Assessment

Perhaps the thing most associated with George Kelly is his **role construct repertory test**, which most people now call the **rep grid**. Not a test in the traditional sense at all, it is a diagnostic, self-discovery, and research tool that has actually become more famous than the rest of his theory.



First, the client names a set of ten to twenty people, called **elements**, likely to be of some importance to the person's life. In therapy, these people are named in response to certain suggestive categories, such as "past lover" and "someone you pity," and would naturally include yourself, your mother and father, and so on.

The therapist or researcher then picks out three of these at a time, and asks you to tell him or her which of the three are similar, and which one is different. And he asks you to give him something to call the similarity and the difference. The similarity label is called the **similarity pole**, and the difference one is called the **contrast pole**, and together they make up one of the constructs you use in social relations. If, for example, you say that you and your present lover are both nervous people, but your former lover was very calm, then nervous is the similarity pole and calm the contrast pole of the construct nervous-calm.

You continue in this fashion, with different combinations of three, until you get about twenty contrasts listed. By eyeballing the list, or by performing certain statistical operations on a completed chart, the list might be narrowed down to ten or so contrasts by eliminating overlaps: Often, our constructs , even though they have different words attached to them, are used in the same way. Nervous-calm, for example, may be used exactly like you use neurotic-healthy or jittery-passive.

In diagnosis and self-discovery uses, you are, of course, encouraged to use constructs that refer to people's behaviors and personalities. But in research uses, you may be asked to give any kind of constructs at all, and you may be asked to give them in response to all sorts of elements. In industrial psychology, for example, people have been asked to compare and contrast various products (for marketing analyses), good and bad examples of a product (for quality control analyses), or different leadership styles. You can find your musical style constructs this way, or your constructs about political figures, or the constructs you use to understand

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personality theories.

In therapy, the rep grid gives the therapist and the client a picture of the client's view of reality that can be discussed and worked with. In marriage therapy, two people can work on the grid with the same set of elements, and their constructs compared and discussed. It isn't sacred: The rep grid is rare among "tests" in that the client is invited to change his or her mind about it at any time. Neither is it assumed to be a complete picture of a person's mental state. It is what it is: a diagnostic tool.

In research, we can take advantage of a number of computer programs that allow for a "measurement" of the distances between constructs or between elements. We get a picture, created by the people themselves, of their world-views. We can compare the views of several people (as long as they use the same elements). We can compare a person's world-view before and after training, or therapy. It is an exciting tool, an unusual combination of the subjective and objective side of personality research.

For more information on the Rep Grid, see The Qualitative Methods Workbook (Part Five)!

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Discussion

Kelly published **The Psychology of Personal Constructs** in 1955. After a brief flurry of interest (and considerable criticism), he and his theory were pretty much forgotten, except by a few loyal students, most of whom were involved more in their clinical practices than in the advancement of the psychology of personality. Curiously, his theory continued to have a modest notoriety in England, particularly among industrial psychologists.

The reasons for this lack of attention are not hard to fathom: The "science" branch of psychology was at that time still rather mired in a behaviorist approach to psychology that had little patience with the subjective side of things; And the clinical side of psychology found people like Carl Rogers much easier to follow. Kelly was a good 20 years ahead of his time. Only recently, with the so-called "cognitive revolution," are people really ready to understand him.

It is ironic that George Kelly, always true to his philosophy of constructive alternativism, felt that, if his theory were still around in ten or twenty years, in a form significantly like the original, there would be cause for concern. Theories, like our individual views of reality, should change, not remain static.

There are legitimate criticisms. First, although Kelly is a very good writer, he chose to reinvent psychology from the ground up, introducing a new set of terms and a new set of metaphors and images. And he went out of his way to avoid being associated with other approaches to the field. This inevitably alienated him from the mainstream.

In a more positive vein, some of the words he invented are now firmly fixed in mainstream psychology (although many still think of them as "trendy!"): Anticipation has been made popular by the famous cognitive psychologist Ulric Neisser; Construct, construction, construal, and all its variations can be found in books and articles right alongside of words like perception and behavior. Sadly, Kelly, just like other innovators, seldom gets any credit for for his innovations, mostly because psychologists are rarely trained to pay much attention to where ideas come from.

The "rep grid" has also become quite popular, especially since computers have made it much easier to use. As I mentioned before, it is a nice blend of the qualitative and the introspective that even critics of Kelly's overall theory have a hard time finding fault with.

Connections

Much of Personal Construct Theory is phenomenological. Kelly acknowledged his sympathies with the phenomenological theories of Carl Rogers, Donald Snygg and Arthur Combs, and the "self-theorists" Prescott Lecky and Victor Raimy. But he was skeptical of phenomenology per se. Like so many people, he assumed that phenomenology was some kind of introspective idealism. As we shall see in later chapters, that is a mistaken assumption.

But a phenomenologist would find much of Kelly's theory quite congenial. For example, Kelly believes that to understand behavior you need to understand how the person construes reality – i.e. how he or she understands it, perceives it – more than what that reality truly is. In fact, he points out that everyone's view – even the hard-core scientist's – is just that: a view. And yet he also notes, emphatically, that there is no danger here of solipsism (the idea that the world is only my idea), because the view has to be of something. This is exactly the meaning of the phenomenologist's basic principle, known as intentionality.

On the other hand, there are aspects of Kelly's theory that are not so congenial to phenomenology. First, he was a true theory-builder, and the technical detail of his theory shows it. Phenomenologists, on the other

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hand, tend to avoid theory. Second, he had high hopes for a rigorous methodology for psychology – even using the experimental scientist as his "fruitful metaphor." Most phenomenologists are much more skeptical about experimentation.

The emphasis on theory-building, fine detail, and the hope for a rigorous methodology do make Kelly very appealing to modern cognitive psychologists. Time will tell whether Kelly will be remembered as a phenomenologist or a cognitivist!

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Readings

The basic reference for George Kelly is the two volume **Psychology of Personal Constructs** (1955). The first three chapters are available in paperback as **A Theory of Personality** (1963).

Another paperback, written especially for the "layperson," is Bannister and Fransella's **Inquiring Man: The Theory of Personal Constructs** (1971).

Kelly wrote a number of very interesting articles as well. Most of them are collected into **Clinical Psychology and Personality: Selected papers of George Kelly**, edited by Brendan Maher (1969).

There are other collections of works, by Kelly and his followers, available. Look especially for collections edited by Don Bannister.

Lastly, there is a Kellian journal, called **The Journal of Personal Construct Psychology**. It includes theoretical and research articles by Kellians and psychologists with similar orientations.

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DONALD SNYGG & ARTHUR W. COMBS

[1904 - 1967] **[1912 - 1999]**

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

Sometimes, a theory fails to gain the attention it deserves because it is too simple, too clear, too practical. Snygg and Combs' theory is a good example. Although it has had a quiet impact on a number of humanists, it didn't have the "pizzazz" other theories did. Although they say very similar things, Carl Rogers' theory sounds more radical, George Kelly's more scientific, and European phenomenology more philosophical. But Snygg and Combs' theory is well worth a look.

The phenomenal field

First, "all behavior, without exception, is completely determined by and pertinent to the **phenomenal field** of the behaving organism." The phenomenal field is our subjective reality, the world we are aware of, including physical objects and people and their behaviors, thoughts, images, fantasies, feelings, and ideas like justice, freedom, equality, and so on. Snygg and Combs emphasize, above all else, that it is this phenomenal field that is the true subject-matter for psychology.

And so, if we wish to understand and predict people's behavior, we need to get at their phenomenal field. Since we can't observe it directly, we need to infer it from the things we can observe. We can record behavior, give various tests, talk to the person, and so on – Snygg and Combs are open to a variety of methods. If we have a variety of observers as well, we will eventually come to understand the person's phenomenal field.

And then you are set to understand and predict the person's behavior, since, as the quote above says, all their behavior will follow as a reasonable, meaningful, purposeful response to the person's phenomenal field.

One motive

Which brings us to Snygg and Combs' understanding of motivation: "The basic need of everyone is to preserve and enhance the **phenomenal self**, and the characteristics of all parts of the field are governed by this need." The phenomenal self is the person's own view of him- or herself. This view is developed over a lifetime, and is based on the person's physical characteristics (as he or she sees them), cultural upbringing (as he or she experiences it), and other, more personal, experiences.

Note that it is the phenomenal self we try to maintain and enhance. This is more than mere physical survival or the satisfaction of basic needs. The body and its needs are a likely part of the self, but not an inevitable one. A teenager who attempts suicide, a soldier seeking martyrdom, or a prisoner on a hunger strike are not serving their bodies well. But they are maintaining, perhaps even enhancing, their own images of who they are. Their physical existences no longer hold the same meanings to them as they might to us.

And note that we are talking not only about maintaining, but about enhancing the self. We don't just want to be what we are. We often want to be more. Snygg and Combs' basic motivational principle contains within it Alfred Adler's ideas about compensation of inferiority and striving for superiority, Abraham Maslow's self-actualization, and all sorts of related concepts.

We become "more," according to Snygg and Combs, by means of **differentiation**, a process that involves pulling a figure out of a background. Learning is not a matter of connecting a stimulus and a response or one stimulus with another or even one response with another. Learning is a matter of improving the quality of one's phenomenal field by extracting some detail from the confusion, because that detail is important, is meaningful, to the person.

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This is, of course, the same thing as George Kelly's idea of constructs: As a child, the color of someone's skin may be irrelevant; later, others show the child that color is important. Color comes out of the background; black is differentiated from white; the contrast is learned. Why? Not, in this case, because the child has been shown a connection between color and the quality of someone's character, but because a child cannot afford to ignore the differentiations his or her "significant others" make.

The example shows how nicely the theory applies to both developmental and social psychological issues. As children and as adults, alone or in the presence of others, we maintain and enhance our sense of who we are by refining and re-refining the differentiation we make.

Applied psychology

Snygg and Combs address clinical concerns by adding the concept of **threat**. Threat is "the awareness of menace to the phenomenal self". Ideally, the threat is met with appropriate actions and new differentiations that enhance the person's ability to deal with similar threats in the future.

If the person doesn't have the organization to deal with the threat in this way, he or she may resort to stop-gap, sand-bag measures that, while they may remove the threat for the moment, don't actually serve the self in the long-run. Defenses, neurotic and psychotic symptoms, and even criminal behavior is explained in this way.

Therapy, then, becomes a matter of freeing clients from the dead-end perceptions and behaviors and cognitions and emotions they have set up to protect themselves from threat. "Therapy is the provision of a facilitating situation wherein the normal drive of the organism for maintenance or enhancement of organization is freed to operate." And, consistent with Snygg and Combs' flexible and pragmatic approach, this can be done by active intervention by a therapist or by enabling the client to discover his or her own differentiations, depending on the individual's needs.

Snygg and Combs also pay a lot of attention to education, and **meaning** is their favorite term here. Learning occurs when the differentiations involved have direct relevance to the individual's needs, that is, when learning is meaningful to that individual.

As long as teachers insist on forcing material that, from the students' perspective, has no relevance to them or their lives, education will be a arduous process. It is curious that a boy who can't remember the times tables can remember baseball statistics back to the stone age, or a girl who can't write a coherent paragraph can tell stories that would make Chaucer proud. If calculus or Shakespeare or any number of subjects we feel children should learn seem to be so difficult for them, it is not because the children are dumb. It is because they don't see any reason for learning them. Teachers must get to know their students, because the motivation to learn is "inside" them, in their phenomenal fields and phenomenal selves.

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Readings

To learn more about their theory, I suggest you read Snygg and Combs' ***Individual Behavior***.

Ten years later, Combs released a new edition, called ***Individual Behavior: A Perceptual Approach to Behavior***, which replaced "phenomenological" with "perceptual," presumably in an effort to make the approach more acceptable to a predominantly behaviorist audience.

Combs, with Donald Avila and William Purkey, also wrote ***Helping Relationships***, which applies the theory to education, social work, therapy, and so on.

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ABRAHAM MASLOW

[1908 – 1970]

Personality Theories

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Biography

Abraham Harold Maslow was born April 1, 1908 in Brooklyn, New York. He was the first of seven children born to his parents, who themselves were uneducated Jewish immigrants from Russia. His parents, hoping for the best for their children in the new world, pushed him hard for academic success. Not surprisingly, he became very lonely as a boy, and found his refuge in books.

To satisfy his parents, he first studied law at the City College of New York (CCNY). After three semesters, he transferred to Cornell, and then back to CCNY. He married Bertha Goodman, his first cousin, against his parents wishes. Abe and Bertha went on to have two daughters.

He and Bertha moved to Wisconsin so that he could attend the University of Wisconsin. Here, he became interested in psychology, and his school work began to improve dramatically. He spent time there working with Harry Harlow, who is famous for his experiments with baby rhesus monkeys and attachment behavior.

He received his BA in 1930, his MA in 1931, and his PhD in 1934, all in psychology, all from the University of Wisconsin. A year after graduation, he returned to New York to work with E. L. Thorndike at Columbia, where Maslow became interested in research on human sexuality.

He began teaching full time at Brooklyn College. During this period of his life, he came into contact with the many European intellectuals that were immigrating to the US, and Brooklyn in particular, at that time – people like Adler, Fromm, Horney, as well as several Gestalt and Freudian psychologists.

Maslow served as the chair of the psychology department at Brandeis from 1951 to 1969. While there he met Kurt Goldstein, who had originated the idea of self-actualization in his famous book, ***The Organism*** (1934). It was also here that he began his crusade for a humanistic psychology – something ultimately much more important to him than his own theorizing.

He spend his final years in semi-retirement in California, until, on June 8 1970, he died of a heart attack after years of ill health.

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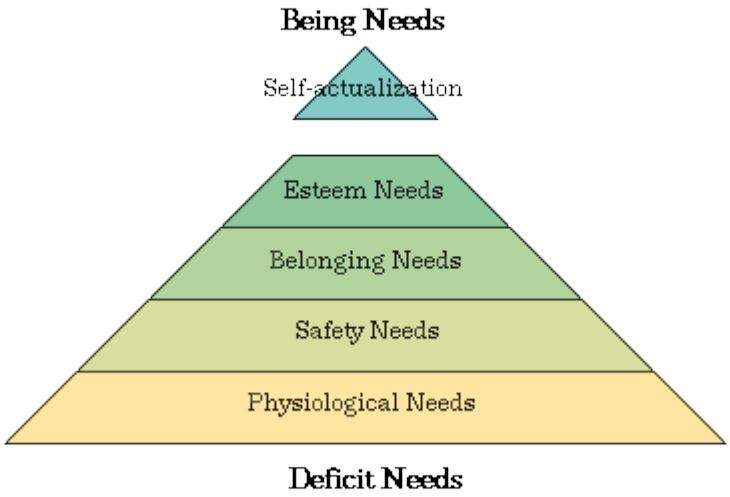
Theory

One of the many interesting things Maslow noticed while he worked with monkeys early in his career, was that some needs take precedence over others. For example, if you are hungry and thirsty, you will tend to try to take care of the thirst first. After all, you can do without food for weeks, but you can only do without water for a couple of days! Thirst is a "stronger" need than hunger. Likewise, if you are very very thirsty, but someone has put a choke hold on you and you can't breath, which is more important? The need to breathe, of course. On the other hand, sex is less powerful than any of these. Let's face it, you won't die if you don't get it!



Maslow took this idea and created his now famous **hierarchy of needs**. Beyond the details of air, water, food, and sex, he laid out five broader layers: the physiological needs, the needs for safety and security, the needs for love and belonging, the needs for esteem, and the need to actualize the self, in that order.

1. **The physiological needs**. These include the needs we have for oxygen, water, protein, salt, sugar, calcium, and other minerals and vitamins. They also include the need to maintain a pH balance (getting too acidic or base will kill you) and temperature (98.6 or near to it). Also, there's the needs to be active, to rest, to sleep, to get rid of wastes (CO2, sweat, urine, and feces), to avoid pain, and to have sex. Quite a collection!

Maslow believed, and research supports him, that these are in fact individual needs, and that a lack of, say, vitamin C, will lead to a very specific hunger for things which have in the past provided that vitamin C – e.g. orange juice. I guess the cravings that some pregnant women have, and the way in which babies eat the most foul tasting baby food, support the idea anecdotally.

2. **The safety and security needs**. When the physiological needs are largely taken care of, this second layer of needs comes into play. You will become increasingly interested in finding safe circumstances, stability, protection. You might develop a need for structure, for order, some limits.

Looking at it negatively, you become concerned, not with needs like hunger and thirst, but with your fears and anxieties. In the ordinary American adult, this set of needs manifest themselves in the form of our urges to have a home in a safe neighborhood, a little job security and a nest egg, a good retirement plan and a bit of insurance, and so on.

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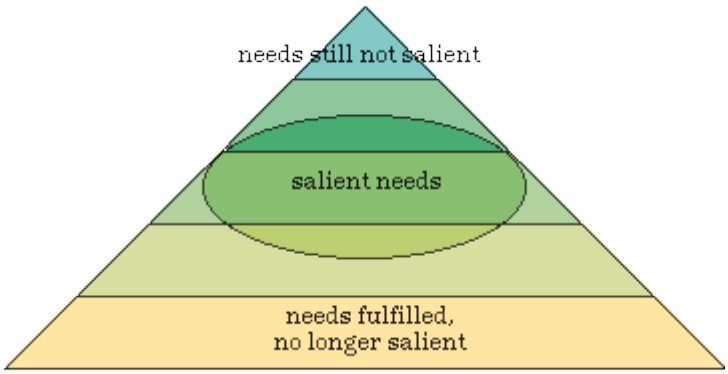
3. **The love and belonging needs**. When physiological needs and safety needs are, by and large, taken care of, a third layer starts to show up. You begin to feel the need for friends, a sweetheart, children, affectionate relationships in general, even a sense of community. Looked at negatively, you become increasing susceptible to loneliness and social anxieties.

In our day-to-day life, we exhibit these needs in our desires to marry, have a family, be a part of a community, a member of a church, a brother in the fraternity, a part of a gang or a bowling club. It is also a part of what we look for in a career.

4. **The esteem needs**. Next, we begin to look for a little self-esteem. Maslow noted two versions of esteem needs, a lower one and a higher one. The lower one is the need for the respect of others, the need for status, fame, glory, recognition, attention, reputation, appreciation, dignity, even dominance. The higher form involves the need for self-respect, including such feelings as confidence, competence, achievement, mastery, independence, and freedom. Note that this is the "higher" form because, unlike the respect of others, once you have self-respect, it's a lot harder to lose!

The negative version of these needs is low self-esteem and inferiority complexes. Maslow felt that Adler was really onto something when he proposed that these were at the roots of many, if not most, of our psychological problems. In modern countries, most of us have what we need in regard to our physiological and safety needs. We, more often than not, have quite a bit of love and belonging, too. It's a little respect that often seems so very hard to get!

All of the preceding four levels he calls **deficit needs**, or **D-needs**. If you don't have enough of something – i.e. you have a deficit – you feel the need. But if you get all you need, you feel nothing at all! In other words, they cease to be motivating. As the old blues song goes, "you don't miss your water till your well runs dry!"



He also talks about these levels in terms of **homeostasis**. Homeostasis is the principle by which your furnace thermostat operates: When it gets too cold, it switches the heat on; When it gets too hot, it switches the heat off. In the same way, your body, when it lacks a certain substance, develops a hunger for it; When it gets enough of it, then the hunger stops. Maslow simply extends the homeostatic principle to needs, such as safety, belonging, and esteem, that we don't ordinarily think of in these terms.

Maslow sees all these needs as essentially survival needs. Even love and esteem are needed for the maintenance of health. He says we all have these needs built in to us genetically, like instincts. In fact, he calls them **instinctoid** – instinct-like – needs.

In terms of overall development, we move through these levels a bit like stages. As newborns, our focus (if not our entire set of needs) is on the physiological. Soon, we begin to recognize that we need to be safe. Soon after that, we crave attention and affection. A bit later, we look for self-esteem. Mind you, this is in the first couple of years!

Under stressful conditions, or when survival is threatened, we can "regress" to a lower need level. When you great career falls flat, you might seek out a little attention. When your family ups and leaves you, it seems that love is again all you ever wanted. When you face chapter eleven after a long and happy life, you suddenly can't think of anything except money.

These things can occur on a society-wide basis as well: When society suddenly flounders, people start clamoring for a strong leader to take over and make things right. When the bombs start falling, they look for

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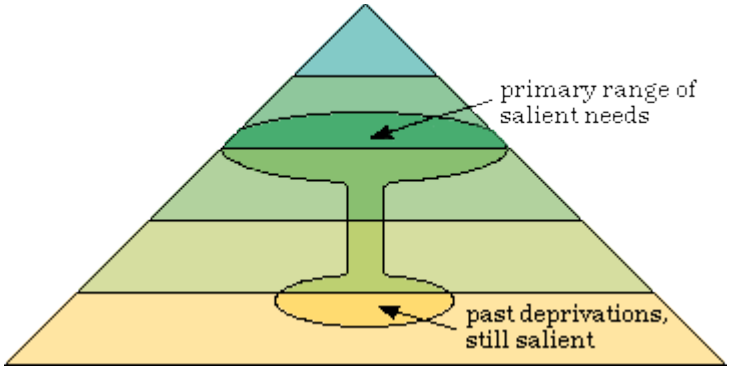
safety. When the food stops coming into the stores, their needs become even more basic.

Maslow suggested that we can ask people for their "**philosophy of the future**" – what would their ideal life or world be like – and get significant information as to what needs they do or do not have covered.

If you have significant problems along your development – a period of extreme insecurity or hunger as a child, or the loss of a family member through death or divorce, or significant neglect or abuse – you may "fixate" on that set of needs for the rest of your life.



This is Maslow's understanding of neurosis. Perhaps you went through a war as a kid. Now you have everything your heart needs – yet you still find yourself obsessing over having enough money and keeping the pantry well-stocked. Or perhaps your parents divorced when you were young. Now you have a wonderful spouse – yet you get insanely jealous or worry constantly that they are going to leave you because you are not "good enough" for them. You get the picture.

Self-actualization

The last level is a bit different. Maslow has used a variety of terms to refer to this level: He has called it **growth motivation** (in contrast to deficit motivation), **being needs** (or **B-needs**, in contrast to D-needs), and **self-actualization**.

These are needs that do not involve balance or homeostasis. Once engaged, they continue to be felt. In fact, they are likely to become stronger as we "feed" them! They involve the continuous desire to fulfill potentials, to "be all that you can be." They are a matter of becoming the most complete, the fullest, "you" – hence the term, self-actualization.

Now, in keeping with his theory up to this point, if you want to be truly self-actualizing, you need to have your lower needs taken care of, at least to a considerable extent. This makes sense: If you are hungry, you are scrambling to get food; If you are unsafe, you have to be continuously on guard; If you are isolated and unloved, you have to satisfy that need; If you have a low sense of self-esteem, you have to be defensive or compensate. When lower needs are unmet, you can't fully devote yourself to fulfilling your potentials.

It isn't surprising, then, the world being as difficult as it is, that only a small percentage of the world's population is truly, predominantly, self-actualizing. Maslow at one point suggested only about two percent!

The question becomes, of course, what exactly does Maslow mean by self-actualization. To answer that, we need to look at the kind of people he called self-actualizers. Fortunately, he did this for us, using a qualitative method called **biographical analysis**.

He began by picking out a group of people, some historical figures, some people he knew, whom he felt clearly met the standard of self-actualization. Included in this august group were Abraham Lincoln, Thomas Jefferson, Albert Einstein, Eleanor Roosevelt, Jane Adams, William James, Albert Schweitzer, Benedict Spinoza, and Alduous Huxley, plus 12 unnamed people who were alive at the time Maslow did his research. He then looked at their biographies, writings, the acts and words of those he knew personally, and so on. From these sources, he developed a list of qualities that seemed characteristic of these people, as opposed to

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the great mass of us.

These people were **reality-centered**, which means they could differentiate what is fake and dishonest from what is real and genuine. They were **problem-centered**, meaning they treated life's difficulties as problems demanding solutions, not as personal troubles to be railed at or surrendered to. And they had a **different perception of means and ends**. They felt that the ends don't necessarily justify the means, that the means could be ends themselves, and that the means – the journey – was often more important than the ends.

The self-actualizers also had a different way of relating to others. First, they enjoyed **solitude**, and were comfortable being alone. And they enjoyed deeper **personal relations** with a few close friends and family members, rather than more shallow relationships with many people.

They enjoyed **autonomy**, a relative independence from physical and social needs. And they **resisted enculturation**, that is, they were not susceptible to social pressure to be "well adjusted" or to "fit in" – they were, in fact, nonconformists in the best sense.

They had an **unhostile sense of humor** – preferring to joke at their own expense, or at the human condition, and never directing their humor at others. They had a quality he called **acceptance of self and others**, by which he meant that these people would be more likely to take you as you are than try to change you into what they thought you should be. This same acceptance applied to their attitudes towards themselves: If some quality of theirs wasn't harmful, they let it be, even enjoying it as a personal quirk. On the other hand, they were often strongly motivated to change negative qualities in themselves that could be changed. Along with this comes **spontaneity and simplicity**: They preferred being themselves rather than being pretentious or artificial. In fact, for all their nonconformity, he found that they tended to be conventional on the surface, just where less self-actualizing nonconformists tend to be the most dramatic.

Further, they had a sense of **humility and respect** towards others – something Maslow also called democratic values – meaning that they were open to ethnic and individual variety, even treasuring it. They had a quality Maslow called **human kinship** or *Gemeinschaftsgefühl* – social interest, compassion, humanity. And this was accompanied by a **strong ethics**, which was spiritual but seldom conventionally religious in nature.

And these people had a certain **freshness of appreciation**, an ability to see things, even ordinary things, with wonder. Along with this comes their ability to be **creative**, inventive, and original. And, finally, these people tended to have more **peak experiences** than the average person. A peak experience is one that takes you out of yourself, that makes you feel very tiny, or very large, to some extent one with life or nature or God. It gives you a feeling of being a part of the infinite and the eternal. These experiences tend to leave their mark on a person, change them for the better, and many people actively seek them out. They are also called mystical experiences, and are an important part of many religious and philosophical traditions.

Maslow doesn't think that self-actualizers are perfect, of course. There were several flaws or **imperfections** he discovered along the way as well: First, they often suffered considerable anxiety and guilt – but realistic anxiety and guilt, rather than misplaced or neurotic versions. Some of them were absentminded and overly kind. And finally, some of them had unexpected moments of ruthlessness, surgical coldness, and loss of humor.

Two other points he makes about these self-actualizers: Their values were "natural" and seemed to flow effortlessly from their personalities. And they appeared to transcend many of the dichotomies others accept as being undeniable, such as the differences between the spiritual and the physical, the selfish and the unselfish, and the masculine and the feminine.

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Metaneeds and metapathologies

Another way in which Maslow approach the problem of what is self-actualization is to talk about the special, driving needs (B-needs, of course) of the self-actualizers. They need the following in their lives in order to be happy:

Truth, rather than dishonesty.
Goodness, rather than evil.
Beauty, not ugliness or vulgarity.
Unity, wholeness, and transcendence of opposites, not arbitrariness or forced choices.
Aliveness, not deadness or the mechanization of life.
Uniqueness, not bland uniformity.
Perfection and necessity, not sloppiness, inconsistency, or accident.
Completion, rather than incompleteness.
Justice and order, not injustice and lawlessness.
Simplicity, not unnecessary complexity.
Richness, not environmental impoverishment.
Effortlessness, not strain.
Playfulness, not grim, humorless, drudgery.
Self-sufficiency, not dependency.
Meaningfulness, rather than senselessness.

At first glance, you might think that everyone obviously needs these. But think: If you are living through an economic depression or a war, or are living in a ghetto or in rural poverty, do you worry about these issues, or do you worry about getting enough to eat and a roof over your head? In fact, Maslow believes that much of the what is wrong with the world comes down to the fact that very few people really are interested in these values – not because they are bad people, but because they haven't even had their basic needs taken care of!

When a self-actualizer doesn't get these needs fulfilled, they respond with **metapathologies** – a list of problems as long as the list of metaneeds! Let me summarize it by saying that, when forced to live without these values, the self-actualizer develops depression, despair, disgust,alienation, and a degree of cynicism.

Maslow hoped that his efforts at describing the self-actualizing person would eventually lead to a "periodic table" of the kinds of qualities, problems, pathologies, and even solutions characteristic of higher levels of human potential. Over time, he devoted increasing attention, not to his own theory, but to humanistic psychology and the human potentials movement.

Toward the end of his life, he inaugurated what he called the **fourth force** in psychology: Freudian and other "depth" psychologies constituted the first force; Behaviorism was the second force; His own humanism, including the European existentialists, were the third force. The fourth force was the **transpersonal psychologies** which, taking their cue from Eastern philosophies, investigated such things as meditation, higher levels of consciousness, and even parapsychological phenomena. Perhaps the best known transpersonalist today is Ken Wilber, author of such books as ***The Atman Project*** and ***The History of Everything***.

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Discussion

Maslow has been a very inspirational figure in personality theories. In the 1960's in particular, people were tired of the reductionistic, mechanistic messages of the behaviorists and physiological psychologists. They were looking for meaning and purpose in their lives, even a higher, more mystical meaning. Maslow was one of the pioneers in that movement to bring the human being back into psychology, and the person back into personality!

At approximately the same time, another movement was getting underway, one inspired by some of the very things that turned Maslow off: computers and information processing, as well as very rationalistic theories such as Piaget's cognitive development theory and Noam Chomsky's linguistics. This, of course, became the cognitive movement in psychology. As the heyday of humanism appeared to lead to little more than drug abuse, astrology, and self indulgence, cognitivism provided the scientific ground students of psychology were yearning for.

But the message should not be lost: Psychology is, first and foremost, about people, real people in real lives, and not about computer models, statistical analyses, rat behavior, test scores, and laboratories.

Some criticism

The "big picture" aside, there are a few criticisms we might direct at Maslow's theory itself. The most common criticism concerns his methodology: Picking a small number of people that he himself declared self-actualizing, then reading about them or talking with them, and coming to conclusions about what self-actualization is in the first place does not sound like good science to many people.

In his defense, I should point out that he understood this, and thought of his work as simply pointing the way. He hoped that others would take up the cause and complete what he had begun in a more rigorous fashion. It is a curiosity that Maslow, the "father" of American humanism, began his career as a behaviorist with a strong physiological bent. He did indeed believe in science, and often grounded his ideas in biology. He only meant to broaden psychology to include the best in us, as well as the pathological!

Another criticism, a little harder to respond to, is that Maslow placed such constraints on self-actualization. First, Kurt Goldstein and Carl Rogers used the phrase to refer to what every living creature does: To try to grow, to become more, to fulfill its biological destiny. Maslow limits it to something only two percent of the human species achieves. And while Rogers felt that babies were the best examples of human self-actualization, Maslow saw it as something achieved only rarely by the young.

Another point is that he asks that we pretty much take care of our lower needs before self-actualization comes to the forefront. And yet we can find many examples of people who exhibited at very least aspects of self-actualization who were far from having their lower needs taken care of. Many of our best artists and authors, for example, suffered from poverty, bad upbringing, neuroses, and depression. Some could even be called psychotic! If you think about Galileo, who prayed for ideas that would sell, or Rembrandt, who could barely keep food on the table, or Toulouse Lautrec, whose body tormented him, or van Gogh, who, besides poor, wasn't quite right in the head, if you know what I mean... Weren't these people engaged in some form of self-actualization? The idea of artists and poets and philosophers (and psychologists!) being strange is so common because it has so much truth to it!

We also have the example of a number of people who were creative in some fashion even while in concentration camps. Trachtenberg, for example, developed a new way of doing arithmetic in a camp. Viktor Frankl developed his approach to therapy while in a camp. There are many more examples.

And there are examples of people who were creative when unknown, became successful only to stop being creative. Ernest Hemingway, if I'm not mistaken, is an example. Perhaps all these examples are exceptions, and the hierarchy of needs stands up well to the general trend. But the exceptions certainly do put some

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doubt into our minds.

I would like to suggest a variation on Maslow's theory that might help. If we take the idea of actualization as Goldstein and Rogers use it, i.e. as the "life force" that drives all creatures, we can also acknowledge that there are various things that interfere with the *full* effectiveness of that life force. If we are deprived of our basic physical needs, if we are living under threatening circumstances, if we are isolated from others, or if we have no confidence in our abilities, we may continue to survive, but it will not be as fulfilling a live as it could be. We will not be *fully* actualizing our potentials! We could even understand that there might be people that actualize *despite* deprivation! If we take the deficit needs as subtracting from actualization, and if we talk about *full* self-actualization rather than self-actualization as a separate category of need, Maslow's theory comes into line with other theories, and the exceptional people who succeed in the face of adversity can be seen as heroic rather than freakish abberations.

I received the following email from Gareth Costello of Dublin, Ireland, which balances my somewhat negative review of Maslow:

> One mild criticism I would have is of your concluding assessment, where you appeal for a broader view of self-actualisation that could include subjects such as van Gogh and other hard-at-heel intellectual/creative giants. This appears to be based on a view that people like van Gogh, etc. were, by virtue of their enormous creativity, 'at least partly' self-actualised.
>
> I favour Maslow's more narrow definition of self-actualisation and would not agree that self-actualisation equates with supreme self-expression. I suspect that self-actualisation is, often, a demotivating factor where artistic creativity is concerned, and that artists such as van Gogh thrived (artistically, if not in other respects) specifically in the absence of circumstances conducive to self-actualisation. Even financially successful artists (e.g. Stravinsky, who was famously good at looking after his financial affairs, as well as affairs of other kinds) do exhibit some of the non-self-actualised 'motivators' that you describe so well.
>
> Self-actualisation implies an outwardness and openness that contrasts with the introspection that can be a pre-requisite for great artistic self-expression. Where scientists can look out at the world around them to find something of profound or universal significance, great artists usually look inside themselves to find something of personal significance - the universality of their work is important but secondary. It's interesting that Maslow seems to have concentrated on people concerned with the big-picture when defining self-actualisation. In Einstein, he selected a scientist who was striving for a theory of the entire physical universe. The philosophers and politicians he analysed were concerned with issues of great relevance to humanity.
>
> This is not to belittle the value or importance of the 'small-picture' - society needs splitters as well as lumpers. But while self-actualisation may be synonymous with psychological balance and health, it does not necessarily lead to professional or creative brilliance in all fields. In some instances, it may remove the driving force that leads people to excel – art being the classic example. So I don't agree that the scope of self-actualisation should be extended to include people who may well have been brilliant, but who were also quite possibly damaged, unrounded or unhappy human beings.
>
> If I had the opportunity to chose between brilliance (alone) or self-actualisation (alone) for my children, I would go for the latter!

Gareth makes some very good points!

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Bibliography

Maslow's books are easy to read and full of interesting ideas.

The best known are ***Toward a Psychology of Being*** (1968), ***Motivation and Personality*** (first edition, 1954, and second edition, 1970), and ***The Further Reaches of Human Nature*** (1971).

Finally, there are many articles by Maslow, especially in the ***Journal of Humanistic Psychology***, which he cofounded.

For more information on-line, go to http://www.nidus.org

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CARL ROGERS

[1902 – 1987]

Personality Theories

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Biography

Carl Rogers was born January 8, 1902 in Oak Park, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, the fourth of six children. His father was a successful civil engineer and his mother was a housewife and devout Christian. His education started in the second grade, because he could already read before kindergarten.

When Carl was 12, his family moved to a farm about 30 miles west of Chicago, and it was here that he was to spend his adolescence. With a strict upbringing and many chores, Carl was to become rather isolated, independent, and self-disciplined.

He went on to the University of Wisconsin as an agriculture major. Later, he switched to religion to study for the ministry. During this time, he was selected as one of ten students to go to Beijing for the "World Student Christian Federation Conference" for six months. He tells us that his new experiences so broadened his thinking that he began to doubt some of his basic religious views.

After graduation, he married Helen Elliot (against his parents' wishes), moved to New York City, and began attending the Union Theological Seminary, a famous liberal religious institution. While there, he took a student organized seminar called "Why am I entering the ministry?" I might as well tell you that, unless you want to change your career, never take a class with such a title! He tells us that most of the participants "thought their way right out of religious work."

Religion's loss was, of course, psychology's gain: Rogers switched to the clinical psychology program of Columbia University, and received his Ph.D. in 1931. He had already begun his clinical work at the Rochester Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. At this clinic, he learned about Otto Rank's theory and therapy techniques, which started him on the road to developing his own approach.

He was offered a full professorship at Ohio State in 1940. In 1942, he wrote his first book, Counseling and Psychotherapy. Then, in 1945, he was invited to set up a counseling center at the University of Chicago. It was while working there that in 1951 he published his major work, Client-Centered Therapy, wherein he outlines his basic theory.

In 1957, he returned to teach at his alma mater, the University of Wisconsisn. Unfortunately, it was a time of conflict within their psychology department, and Rogers became very disillusioned with higher education. In 1964, he was happy to accept a research position in La Jolla, California. He provided therapy, gave speeches, and wrote, until his death in 1987.

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Theory

Roger's theory is a clinical one, based on years of experience dealing with his clients. He has this in common with Freud, for example. Also in common with Freud is that his is a particularly rich and mature theory – well thought-out and logically tight, with broad application.

Not in common with Freud, however, is the fact that Rogers sees people as basically good or healthy – or at very least, not bad or ill. In other words, he sees mental health as the normal progression of life, and he sees mental illness, criminality, and other human problems, as distortions of that natural tendency. Also not in common with Freud is the fact that Rogers' theory is a relatively simple one.

Also not in common with Freud is that Rogers' theory is particularly simple – elegant even! The entire theory is built on a single "force of life" he calls **the actualizing tendency**. It can be defined as the built-in motivation present in every life-form to develop its potentials to the fullest extent possible. We're not just talking about survival: Rogers believes that all creatures strive to make the very best of their existence. If they fail to do so, it is not for a lack of desire.

Rogers captures with this single great need or motive all the other motives that other theorists talk about. He asks us, why do we want air and water and food? Why do we seek safety, love, and a sense of competence? Why, indeed, do we seek to discover new medicines, invent new power sources, or create new works of art? Because, he answers, it is in our nature as living things to do the very best we can!

Keep in mind that, unlike Maslow's use of the term, Rogers applies it to all living creatures. Some of his earliest examples, in fact, include seaweed and mushrooms! Think about it: Doesn't it sometimes amaze you the way weeds will grow through the sidewalk, or saplings crack boulders, or animals survive desert conditions or the frozen north?

He also applied the idea to ecosystems, saying that an ecosystem such as a forest, with all its complexity, has a much greater actualization potential than a simple ecosystem such as a corn field. If one bug were to become extinct in a forest, there are likely to be other creatures that will adapt to fill the gap; On the other hand, one bout of "corn blight" or some such disaster, and you have a dust bowl. The same for us as individuals: If we live as we should, we will become increasingly complex, like the forest, and thereby remain flexible in the face of life's little – and big – disasters.

People, however, in the course of actualizing their potentials, created society and culture. In and of itself, that's not a problem: We are a social creature, it is our nature. But when we created culture, it developed a life of its own. Rather than remaining close to other aspects of our natures, culture can become a force in its own right. And even if, in the long run, a culture that interferes with our actualization dies out, we, in all likelihood, will die with it.

Don't misunderstand: Culture and society are not intrinsically evil! It's more along the lines of the birds of paradise found in Papua-New Guinea. The colorful and dramatic plumage of the males apparently distract predators from females and the young. Natural selection has led these birds towards more and more elaborate tail feathers, until in some species the male can no longer get off the ground. At that point, being colorful doesn't do the male – or the species – much good! In the same way, our elaborate societies, complex cultures, incredible technologies, for all that they have helped us to survive and prosper, may at the same time serve to harm us, and possibly even destroy us.

Details

Rogers tells us that organisms know what is good for them. Evolution has provided us with the senses, the tastes, the discriminations we need: When we hunger, we find food – not just any food, but food that tastes good. Food that tastes bad is likely to be spoiled, rotten, unhealthy. That what good and bad tastes are – our evolutionary lessons made clear! This is called **organismic valuing**.

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Among the many things that we instinctively value is **positive regard**, Rogers umbrella term for things like love, affection, attention, nurturance, and so on. It is clear that babies need love and attention. In fact, it may well be that they die without it. They certainly fail to thrive – i.e. become all they can be.

Another thing – perhaps peculiarly human – that we value is **positive self-regard**, that is, self-esteem, self-worth, a positive self-image. We achieve this positive self-regard by experiencing the positive regard others show us over our years of growing up. Without this self-regard, we feel small and helpless, and again we fail to become all that we can be!

Like Maslow, Rogers believes that, if left to their own devices, animals will tend to eat and drink things that are good for them, and consume them in balanced proportions. Babies, too, seem to want and like what they need. Somewhere along the line, however, we have created an environment for ourselves that is significantly different from the one in which we evolved. In this new environment are such things as refined sugar, flour, butter, chocolate, and so on, that our ancestors in Africa never knew. These things have flavors that appeal to our organismic valuing – yet do not serve our actualization well. Over millions of years, we may evolve to find brocolli more satisfying than cheesecake – but by then, it'll be way too late for you and me.

Our society also leads us astray with **conditions of worth**. As we grow up, our parents, teachers, peers, the media, and others, only give us what we need when we show we are "worthy," rather than just because we need it. We get a drink when we finish our class, we get something sweet when we finish our vegetables, and most importantly, we get love and affection if and only if we "behave!"

Getting positive regard on "on condition" Rogers calls **conditional positive regard**. Because we do indeed need positive regard, these conditions are very powerful, and we bend ourselves into a shape determined, not by our organismic valuing or our actualizing tendency, but by a society that may or may not truly have our best interests at heart. A "good little boy or girl" may not be a healthy or happy boy or girl!

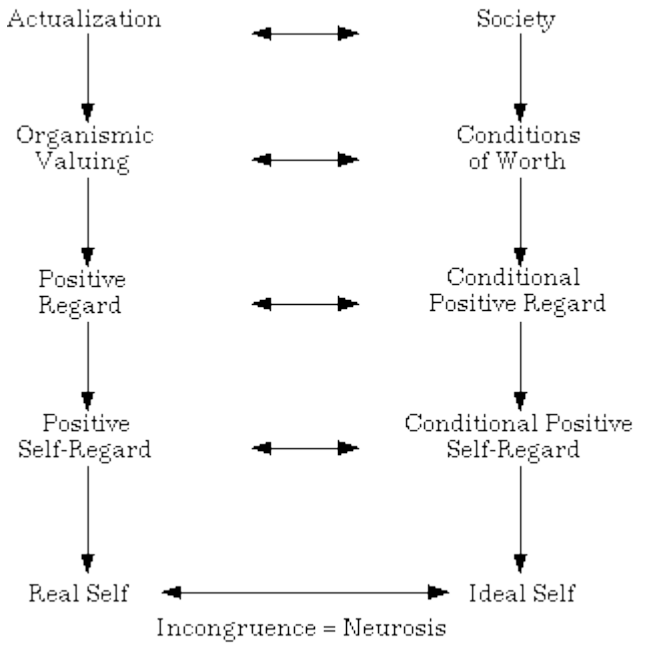
Over time, this "conditioning" leads us to have **conditional positive self-regard** as well. We begin to like ourselves only if we meet up with the standards others have applied to us, rather than if we are truly actualizing our potentials. And since these standards were created without keeping each individual in mind, more often than not we find ourselves unable to meet them, and therefore unable to maintain any sense of self-esteem.

Incongruity

The aspect of your being that is founded in the actualizing tendency, follows organismic valuing, needs and receives positive regard and self-regard, Rogers calls the **real self**. It is the "you" that, if all goes well, you will become.

On the other hand, to the extent that our society is out of synch with the actualizing tendency, and we are forced to live with conditions of worth that are out of step with organismic valuing, and receive only conditional positive regard and self-regard, we develop instead an **ideal self**. By ideal, Rogers is suggesting something not real, something that is always out of our reach, the standard we can't meet.

This gap between the real self and the ideal self, the "I am" and the "I should" is called **incongruity**. The greater the gap, the more incongruity. The more incongruity, the more suffering. In fact,



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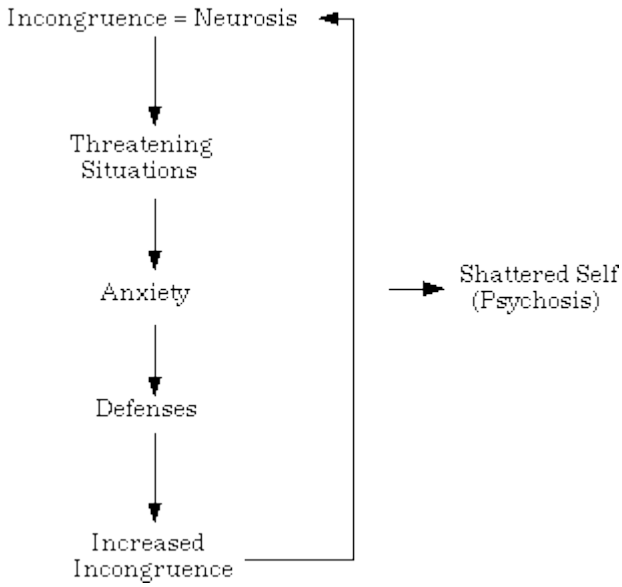
incongruity is essentially what Rogers means by **neurosis**: Being out of synch with your own self. If this all sounds familiar to you, it is precisely the same point made by Karen Horney!

Defenses

When you are in a situation where there is an incongruity between your image of yourself and your immediate experience of yourself (i.e. between the ideal and the real self), you are in a **threatening situation**. For example, if you have been taught to feel unworthy if you do not get A's on all your tests, and yet you aren't really all that great a student, then situations such as tests are going to bring that incongruity to light – tests will be very threatening.



When you are expecting a threatening situation, you will feel **anxiety**. Anxiety is a signal indicating that there is trouble ahead, that you should avoid the situation! One way to avoid the situation, of course, is to pick yourself up and run for the hills. Since that is not usually an option in life, instead of running physically, we run psychologically, by using **defenses**.

Rogers' idea of defenses is very similar to Freud's, except that Rogers considers everything from a perceptual point-of-view, so that even memories and impulses are thought of as perceptions. Fortunately for us, he has only two defenses: denial and perceptual distortion.

Denial means very much what it does in Freud's system: You block out the threatening situation altogether. An example might be the person who never picks up his test or asks about test results, so he doesn't have to face poor grades (at least for now!). Denial for Rogers does also include what Freud called repression: If keeping a memory or an impulse out of your awareness – refuse to perceive it – you may be able to avoid (again, for now!) a threatening situation.

Perceptual distortion is a matter of reinterpreting the situation so that it appears less threatening. It is very similar to Freud's rationalization. A student that is threatened by tests and grades may, for example, blame the professor for poor teaching, trick questions, bad attitude, or whatever. The fact that sometimes professors are poor teachers, write trick questions, and have bad attitudes only makes the distortion work better: If it could be true, then maybe it really was true! It can also be much more obviously perceptual, such as when the person misreads his grade as better than it is.

Unfortunately for the poor neurotic (and, in fact, most of us), every time he or she uses a defense, they put a greater distance between the real and the ideal. They become ever more incongruous, and find themselves in more and more threatening situations, develop greater and greater levels of anxiety, and use more and more defenses.... It becomes a vicious cycle that the person eventually is unable to get out of, at least on their own.

Rogers also has a partial explanation for **psychosis**: Psychosis occurs when a person's defense are overwhelmed, and their sense of self becomes "shattered" into little disconnected pieces. His behavior

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likewise has little consistency to it. We see him as having "psychotic breaks" – episodes of bizarre behavior. His words may make little sense. His emotions may be inappropriate. He may lose the ability to differentiate self and non-self, and become disoriented and passive.

The fully-functioning person

Rogers, like Maslow, is just as interested in describing the healthy person. His term is "**fully-functioning,**" and involves the following qualities:

1. **Openness to experience**. This is the opposite of defensiveness. It is the accurate perception of one's experiences in the world, including one's feelings. It also means being able to accept reality, again including one's feelings. Feelings are such an important part of openness because they convey organismic valuing. If you cannot be open to your feelings, you cannot be open to acualization. The hard part, of course, is distinguishing real feelings from the anxieties brought on by conditions of worth.

2. **Existential living**. This is living in the here-and-now. Rogers, as a part of getting in touch with reality, insists that we not live in the past or the future – the one is gone, and the other isn't anything at all, yet! The present is the only reality we have. Mind you, that doesn't mean we shouldn't remember and learn from our past. Neither does it mean we shouldn't plan or even day-dream about the future. Just recognize these things for what they are: memories and dreams, which we are experiencing here in the present.

3. **Organismic trusting**. We should allow ourselves to be guided by the organismic valuing process. We should trust ourselves, do what feels right, what comes natural. This, as I'm sure you realize, has become a major sticking point in Rogers' theory. People say, sure, do what comes natural – if you are a sadist, hurt people; if you are a masochist, hurt yourself; if the drugs or alcohol make you happy, go for it; if you are depressed, kill yourself.... This certainly doesn't sound like great advice. In fact, many of the excesses of the sixties and seventies were blamed on this attitude. But keep in mind that Rogers meant trust your real self, and you can only know what your real self has to say if you are open to experience and living existentially! In other words, organismic trusting assumes you are in contact with the acutalizing tendency.

4. **Experiential freedom**. Rogers felt that it was irrelevant whether or not people really had free will. We feel very much as if we do. This is not to say, of course, that we are free to do anything at all: We are surrounded by a deterministic universe, so that, flap my arms as much as I like, I will not fly like Superman. It means that we feel free when choices are available to us. Rogers says that the fully-functioning person acknowledges that feeling of freedom, and takes responsibility for his choices.

5. **Creativity**. If you feel free and responsible, you will act accordingly, and participate in the world. A fully-functioning person, in touch with acualization, will feel obliged by their nature to contribute to the actualization of others, even life itself. This can be through creativity in the arts or sciences, through social concern and parental love, or simply by doing one's best at one's job. Creativity as Rogers uses it is very close to Erikson's generativity.

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Therapy

Carl Rogers is best known for his contributions to therapy. His therapy has gone through a couple of name changes along the way: He originally called it **non-directive**, because he felt that the therapist should not lead the client, but rather be there for the client while the client directs the progress of the therapy. As he became more experienced, he realized that, as "non-directive" as he was, he still influenced his client by his very "non-directiveness!" In other words, clients look to therapists for guidance, and will find it even when the therapist is trying not to guide.

So he changed the name to **client-centered**. He still felt that the client was the one who should say what is wrong, find ways of improving, and determine the conclusion of therapy – his therapy was still very "client-centered" even while he acknowledged the impact of the therapist. Unfortunately, other therapists felt that this name for his therapy was a bit of a slap in the face for them: Aren't most therapies "client-centered?"

Nowadays, though the terms non-directive and client-centered are still used, most people just call it **Rogerian therapy**. One of the phrases that Rogers used to describe his therapy is "supportive, not reconstructive," and he uses the analogy of learning to ride a bicycle to explain: When you help a child to learn to ride a bike, you can't just tell them how. They have to try it for themselves. And you can't hold them up the whole time either. There comes a point when you have to let them go. If they fall, they fall, but if you hang on, they never learn.

It's the same in therapy. If independence (autonomy, freedom with responsibility) is what you are helping a client to achieve, then they will not achieve it if they remain dependent on you, the therapist. They need to try their insights on their own, in real life beyond the therapist's office! An authoritarian approach to therapy may seem to work marvelously at first, but ultimately it only creates a dependent person.

There is only one technique that Rogerians are known for: **reflection**. Reflection is the mirroring of emotional communication: If the client says "I feel like shit!" the therapist may reflect this back to the client by saying something like "So, life's getting you down, hey?" By doing this, the therapist is communicating to the client that he is indeed listening and cares enough to understand.

The therapist is also letting the client know what it is the client is communicating. Often, people in distress say things that they don't mean because it feels good to say them. For example, a woman once came to me and said "I hate men!" I reflected by saying "You hate all men?" Well, she said, maybe not all – she didn't hate her father or her brother or, for that matter, me. Even with those men she "hated," she discovered that the great majority of them she didn't feel as strongly as the word hate implies. In fact, ultimately, she realized that she didn't *trust* many men, and that she was *afraid of being hurt* by them the way she had been by one particular man.

Reflection must be used carefully, however. Many beginning therapists use it without thinking (or feeling), and just repeat every other phrase that comes out of the client's mouth. They sound like parrots with psychology degrees! Then they think that the client doesn't notice, when in fact it has become a stereotype of Rogerian therapy the same way as sex and mom have become stereotypes of Freudian therapy. Reflection must come from the heart – it must be genuine, congruent.

Which brings us to Rogers' famous requirements of the therapist. Rogers felt that a therapist, in order to be effective, must have three very special qualities:

1. **Congruence** – genuineness, honesty with the client.
2. **Empathy** – the ability to feel what the client feels.
3. **Respect** – acceptance, unconditional positive regard towards the client.

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He says these qualities are "**necessary and sufficient**:" If the therapist shows these three qualities, the client will improve, even if no other special "techniques" are used. If the therapist does not show these three qualities, the client's improvement will be minimal, no matter how many "techniques" are used. Now this is a lot to ask of a therapist! They're just human, and often enough a bit more "human" (let's say unusual) than most. Rogers does give in a little, and he adds that the therapist must show these things in the therapy relationship. In other words, when the therapist leaves the office, he can be as "human" as anybody.

I happen to agree with Rogers, even though these qualities are quite demanding. Some of the research does suggest that techniques don't matter nearly as much as the therapist's personality, and that, to some extent at least, therapists are "born" not "made."

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References

Rogers was a great writer, a real pleasure to read. The most complete statement of his theory is in **Client-centered Therapy** (1951).

Two collections of essays are very interesting: **On Becoming a Person** (1961) and **A Way of Being** (1980).

Finally, there's a nice collection of his work in **The Carl Rogers Reader**, edited by Kirschenbaum and Henderson (1989).

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LUDWIG BINSWANGER

[1881 – 1966]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

Woe's me, woe's me!
The earth bears grain,
But I Am unfruitful,
Am discarded shell,
Cracked, unusable, Worthless husk.
Creator, Creator,
Take me back!
Create me a second time
And create me better!

Ellen West had always been a little odd. She was a picky eater, and would put up a great resistance if anyone tried to force her to eat something she didn't care for. It was, in fact, her stubbornness that made her stand out. She always had to be first in favorite subjects, and couldn't bear to be home sick. By the time she was a teenager, her motto was "either Caesar or nothing!" But nothing could prepare her or her family for what was to come.

At seventeen, her poetry begins to take a curious turn. One poem, called "Kiss Me Dead," asks the Sea-King to take her into his cold arms and kiss her to death. She throws herself into work, and praises work in her writings as "the blessing of our life." She is fascinated and appalled at the shortness and futility of life.

When she is twenty, she takes a trip to Sicily. She eats heartily and puts on some weight, which her girl-friends tease her about. She responds by fasting and taking vigorous hikes. She becomes obsessed with the idea of being fat, hates herself for it, and starts to view death as a release from her misery.

For a short while, she again buries herself in work and comes out of her depression. But always she carries with her a feeling of dread. She is actively involved in social change, but secretly believes it is all for nothing.

When her parents interfere with her engagement to a student, she goes into a tailspin, and comes home from a resort emaciated and sick. Yet she feels that this obsession with thinness is actually the key to her well-being! When her physician prescribes bed-rest and she gains the weight back, she is despondent, and works hard to get back to her emaciated state.

At twenty-eight, she marries her cousin in the hopes that marriage will help her get rid of her "fixed idea." After a miscarriage, she struggles with the dilemma of wanting a child yet not wanting to eat nourishing food.

She begins to use massive quantities of laxatives. By the time she is thirty-three, she is using 60 or 70 tablets of vegetable laxative a day, vomiting at night and having diarrhea in the daytime. She goes down to 92 pounds and looks like a skeleton.

At this point, she goes to first one, then another, psychiatrist. She makes two unsuccessful attempts at suicide. She is finally sent to the Kreuzlingen Sanatorium, where she stays comfortably, with her husband, and comes under Ludwig Binswanger's care. On a maintenance diet and sedatives, she becomes physically healthier, but continues to feel the oppressive sense of dread.

Because she continues to try to kill herself, she and her husband are given a serious choice: She can be committed to a "closed ward," where she could be expected to deteriorate, or she can be released. They choose release.

At this point, she feels much better, because she knows what she needs to do. She eats happily, even eating some chocolates, and is full for the first time in thirteen years. She talks with her husband, writes some letters to friends – and takes a lethal dose of poison.

The reason this sad story is one of the more famous case-studies is not so much the problem – anorexia is,

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unfortunately, not too uncommon – or the particular course of events, but the ability that Ellen West had to express her perspective on her own problem, and the fact that her psychiatrist, Ludwig Binswanger, chose to truly listen to her.

Listen to another one of her poems:

I'd like to die just as the birdling does
That splits his throat in highest jubilation;
And not to live as the worm on earth lives on,
Becoming old and ugly, dull and dumb!
No, feel for once how forces in me kindle,
And wildly be consumed in my own fire.

Ellen, somewhere in her childhood, has split her life into two opposing camps: On the one hand there is the "tomb world," which includes her physical and social existence. Her body, with its low needs, distracts her from her purposes. It gets older every day. Her society is bourgeois and corrupt. The people around her seem oblivious to all the evil and all the suffering. In the tomb world, everything is degenerate and degenerating, everything is being pulled down, into the grave, into a hole.

On the other hand there is the "ethereal world," the world of the soul, pure and clean, a world where what needs to be done is done, where acts are effortless because unencumbered by the weight of matter. In the ethereal world, we can be free and fly.

There are some people who try to ignore the "ethereal world." They don't like the anxieties and responsibilities that come with freedom. Some would rather be told what to do, and so join a cult or a gang or a multinational corporation. But they are still frightened, because they know this isn't right. They are not living their life, and so they can never be happy.

Others look to their bodies for direction. They begin by seeking simple pleasures. But they find that the pleasures grow stale. So they try a new drug or a different perversion or a novel thrill. After a while, these don't satisfy, either. They fail, not because the pleasures aren't pleasurable, but because only half of who they are is there.

Ellen West tried to ignore the "tomb world." She wanted to fly above the material and the mundane into the ethereal, into the good and the right and the pure. And, in one small domain, she came close to succeeding: She managed to reduce her body to a skeleton. But it's never enough.

We cannot ignore one part of what we are for the sake of another part. You cannot ignore your body or your soul, or any other aspect of who you are. Like it or not, we are both bird and worm. Anything less is not just not "human;" it's nothing at all!

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Biography

Ludwig Binswanger was born April 13, 1881, in Kreuzlingen, Switzerland, into a family already well established in a medical and psychiatric tradition: His grandfather, also named Ludwig, founded Bellevue Sanatoriaum in Kreuzlingen in 1857. His father, Robert, was the director during the time Anna O. was hospitalized there. And his uncle, Otto, discovered an Alzheimer-like disease still called Binswanger's Disease – and was one of Frederic Nietzsche's doctors!

The Ludwig Binswanger of this chapter received his M.D. degree from the University of Zurich in 1907. He studied under Carl Jung and assisted Jung with Freudian Society work. Like Jung, he interned under Eugen Bleuler, who coined the term schizophrenia.

Jung introduced Binswanger to Sigmund Freud in 1907. In 1911, Binswanger became the chief medical director at Bellevue Sanatorium. The following year, he became ill and received a visit from Freud, who rarely left Vienna. Their friendship lasted until Freud's death in 1939, despite their fundamental disagreements over theory! In the early 1920's, Binswanger cultivated an interest in Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Martin Buber, and turned increasingly towards an existential rather than Freudian perspective.

By the early 1930's, we can honestly say that he was the first truly existential therapist. In 1943, he published his major work ***Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins,*** which remains untranslated into English.

In 1956, Binswanger stepped down from his position at Bellevue after 45 years as its chief medical director. He continued to study and write until his death in 1966.

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Theory

Existential psychology, like Freudian psychoanalysis, is a "school of thought," a tradition of theory, research, and practice which includes the work of many men and women. Unlike psychoanalysis, however, existential psychology doesn't have a single founder. Instead, it has its roots in the work of a rather diverse group of philosophers of the second half of the nineteenth century, especially Soren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.

Kierkegaard and Nietzsche were as different as night and day, so it's a bit hard to imagine a single school of thought deriving from both. Kierkegaard was interested in restoring a depth of faith to the dry religion of Copenhagen of his day; Nietzsche, on the other hand, is famous for his exclamation "God is dead!" Yet they were more different from the philosophers that preceded them than they were from each other. Both approached philosophy from the standpoint of real people, passionately involved in the difficulties of real life. Both believed that human existence couldn't be captured in complex rational systems, religious or philosophical. Both were closer to being poets than logicians.

Since Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, quite a few philosophers and, more recently, psychologists have tried to clarify, extend, and promote the ideas of existentialism. Many, unfortunately, weren't very good poets, so reading them can be quite painful. But keep in mind that they were swimming against a stream of centuries of highly systematic, rational, logical philosophy, and a psychology reduced to physiology and behavior. What they have to say often seems strange, even strained, exactly because we have learned so well to trust traditional logic and science.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the careful and complete study of **phenomena**, and is basically the invention of the philosopher Edmund Husserl. Phenomena are the contents of consciousness, the things, qualities, relationships, events, thoughts, images, memories, fantasies, feelings, acts, and so on, which we experience. Phenomenology is an attempt to allow these experiences to speak to us, to reveal themselves to us, so we might describe them in as unbiased a fashion as possible.

If you've been studying experimental psychology, this might seem like another way of talking about objectivity. In experimental psychology, as in science generally, we try to get rid of our nasty subjectivity and see things as they truly are. But the phenomenologist would suggest that you can't get rid of subjectivity, no matter how hard you try. The very attempt to be scientific means approaching things from a certain viewpoint – the scientific viewpoint. You can't get rid of subjectivity because it isn't something separate from objectivity at all.

Most of modern philosophy, including the philosophy of science, is dualistic. This means that it separates the world into two parts, the objective part, usually conceived of as material, and the subjective part, consciousness. Our experiences are then the interaction of this objective and subjective part. Modern science has added to this by emphasizing the objective, material part, and de-emphasizing the subjective part. Some call consciousness an "epiphenomenon," meaning an unimportant by-product of brain chemistry and other material processes, something that is, at best, a nuisance. Others, such as B. F. Skinner, see consciousness as nothing at all.

Phenomenologists suggest that this is a mistake. Everything the scientist deals with comes "through" consciousness. Everything we experience is colored by "the subjective." But a better way to put it is that there is no experience that does not involve both something which is experienced, and something which is experiencing. This idea is called **intentionality**.

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So phenomenology asks us to let whatever we are studying – whether it be a thing out there, or a feeling or thought inside us, or another person, or human existence itself – to reveal itself to us. We can do this by being open to the experience, by not denying what is there because it doesn't fit our philosophy or psychological theory or religious beliefs. It especially asks us to **bracket** or put aside the question of the objective reality of an experience – what it "really" is. Although what we study is always likely to be more than what we experience, it is not something other than what we experience.

Phenomenology is also an interpersonal undertaking. While experimental psychology may use a group of subjects so that the subjectivity can be removed from their experiences statistically, phenomenology may use a group of co-researchers so that their perspectives can be added together to form a fuller, richer understanding of the phenomenon. This is called **intersubjectivity**.

This method, and adaptations of this method, have been used to study different emotions, psychopathologies, things like separation, loneliness, and solidarity, the artistic experience, the religious experience, silence and speech, perception and behavior, and so on. It has also been used to study human existence itself, most notably by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. And that is the basis for existentialism proper.

For more detail on the phenomenological method, see The Qualitative Methods Workbook (especially Part One)!

Existence

Kierkegaard once compared us with God and, of course, found us lacking. God is traditionally understood as being omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal. We, on the other hand, are abysmally ignorant, pitifully powerless, and all too mortal. Our limitations are clear.

We often wish we could be more like God, or at least like angels. Angels, supposedly, are not as ignorant or powerless as we are, and they are immortal! But, as Mark Twain pointed out, if we were angels, we wouldn't recognize ourselves. Angels do nothing but God's bidding. They can't help it. They simply live out God's plan for them, and for eternity no less!

Tables are more like angels than we are. Tables have a nature, a purpose, an essence, that we have given them. They are there to serve us in a certain way, like angels are there to serve God.

Woodchucks are like this, too. They also have a plan, a blueprint, if you like, in their genetics. They do what their instincts instruct them to do. They seldom require career counseling.

It may be dull to be an angel, or a table, or a woodchuck, but it sure is easy! You could say that their essences come before their existences: What they are comes before what they do.

But, say existentialists, this is not true for us. "**Our existences precede our essences**," as Sartre put it. I don't know what I'm here for until I've lived my life. My life, who I am, is not determined by God, by the laws of Nature, by my genetics, by my society, not even by my family. They each may provide the raw material for who I am, but it is how I choose to live that makes me what I am. I create myself.

If the scientist is the model of humanity for George Kelly and cognitive psychologists, the artist is the model for existentialists.

You could say that the essence of humanity – the thing that we all share, and makes us distinct from anything else in the world – is our lack of essence, our "no-thing-ness," our **freedom**. We cannot be captured by a philosophical system or a psychological theory; we cannot be reduced to physical and chemical processes; our futures cannot be predicted with social statistics. Some of us are men, some are women; some are black, some are white; some come from one culture, some from another; some have one imperfection, some another. The "raw materials" differ dramatically, but we all share the task of making ourselves.

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Dasein

Binswanger has adopted the terms and concepts introduced by the philosopher Martin Heidegger. The first and foremost term is **Dasein**, which many existentialists use to refer to human existence. Literally, it means "being there," but it carries quite a few more subtle connotations: The ordinary German use of the word suggests continuing existence, persistence, survival. Also, the emphasis is on the "da" or "there," and so has the sense of being in the middle of it all, in the thick of things. The "da" also carries the sense of being there as opposed to being here, as if we were not quite where we belonged, and were straining towards somewhere else.

Although no precise translation exists, many people use the word **existence**, or **human existence**. Existence derives from the Latin ex-sistare, meaning to come, step, or stand out or forth. As you can see, that carries some of the same subtle meanings as Dasein: being different, moving beyond oneself, becoming.

There are still other names for Dasein. Heidegger referred to Dasein as an **openness** (**Lichtung**), such as a meadow, an openness in the forest, since it is Dasein that permits the world to reveal itself. Sartre also acknowledges this sense of openness, by referring to human existence as **nothingness**. Like a hole can only exist in contrast to something solid, Dasein stands out in sharp contrast to the "thickness" of everything else.

The main quality of Dasein, according to Heidegger, is **care** (**Sorge**). "Being there" is never a matter of indifference. We are involved in the world, in others, and in ourselves. We are committed to or engaged in life. We can do many things, but not to care is not one of them.

Thrownness

Thrownness refers to the fact that we are "thrown" into a universe that is not of our choosing. When we begin choosing our lives, we begin with many choices made for us – genetics, environment, society, family..., all those "raw materials." A better way of understanding this is that "I," conscious and free, am not really separate from "that," physical and determined.

Think about your body. On the one hand, you are your body, and your body is you. When you want to, you walk, or talk, or look, or listen. You perceive and think and feel and act "with" it, "through" it. It is difficult to conceive of life without it. But in other ways it is like any other "thing." It can resist you. It can fail you. You may lose a limb. You may become ill and loose some function or another. Yet you remain you. Sometimes the world comes into you, such as with an artificial heart or a hip replacement. Sometimes you extend yourself into the world, with a cane, or a telescope, or a telephone. We are caught up in the world and the world in us, and there is no telling where one ends and the other begins.

Thrownness also refers to the fact that we are born into an already-established social world. Our society precedes us, our culture precedes us, our language precedes us, our mothers and fathers precede us. In our helplessness, as infants and children, we must depend on them.

Even as adults, we depend on others. Sometimes, we "fall victim" to "**the Other**," that faceless generalization we often refer to as "people" (as in "people are watching") or "we" (as in "we don't do those things") or "they" (as in "they wouldn't like that"). We forfeit our freedom and allow ourselves to be enslaved by our society. This is called **Fallenness**.

Binswanger, following the philosopher Martin Buber, adds a more positive note to the idea of fallenness: It also allows for "we-ness," for "**I-thou**," and for love. If Dasein is an "opening," we can be open to each other. We are not as "locked away" in ourselves as some existentialists seem to suggest. Binswanger sees this potential as an intrinsic part of Dasein, and even gives it a special place by referring to it as **being-beyond-the-world**.

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Anxiety

Existentialists are famous for pointing out that life is hard. The physical world can give us pain as well as pleasure; the social world can lead to heartbreak and loneliness as well as love and affection; and the personal world, most especially, contains anxiety and guilt and the awareness of our own mortality. And these hard things are not merely possibilities in life: They are inevitable.

Being free means making choices. In fact, we are "condemned to choose," as Sartre put it, and the only thing we can't choose is not to choose. We have to choose even though, as Kierkegaard pointed out, we are in fact ignorant, powerless, and mortal, that is, you never have enough information to make a good decision, you often can't make it happen when you do, and you may die before you get it done anyway!

Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and other existentialists use the word **Angst**, **anxiety**, to refer to the apprehension we feel as we move into the uncertainty of our future. It is sometimes translated as **dread** to emphasize the anguish and despair that may come with the need to choose, but anxiety better conveys the generality of it. Anxiety, unlike fear or dread, doesn't have as well-defined an object. It is more a state of being than anything more specific.

Existentialists often talk about **nothingness** in association with anxiety: Because we are not, like tables, angels, and woodchucks, nicely determined, it sometimes feels as if we are about to slip off into nothingness. We would like to be rocks – solid, simple, eternal – but we find we are whirlwinds. Anxiety is not some temporary inconvenience to be removed by your friendly therapist; it is a part of being human.

Guilt

So, existentialism is not an "easy" philosophy. It provides a lot fewer ways of avoiding responsibility for one's acts. You can't blame it all on your environment, or your genetics, or your parents, or some psychiatric disease, or booze or drugs, or peer-pressure, or the devil.

Heidegger used the German word **Schuld** to refer to our responsibility to ourselves. Schuld means both **guilt** and **debt**. If we do not do what we know we should, we feel guilt. We have incurred a debt to Dasein. And since Dasein is always in the process of development, never quite finished, we are always dealing with incompleteness, in the same sense that we are always confronted by uncertainty.

Another word that fits in well here is **regret**. Guilt is certainly a matter of regret over the things we have done – or left undone – that have harmed others. But we also feel regret over past decisions that don't harm anyone but ourselves. When we have chosen the easy way out, or chosen not to commit ourselves or not to get involved, or have chosen to do less rather than more, when we have lost our nerve, we feel regret.

Death

Existentialists are sometimes criticized for being preoccupied with death. They do, in fact, discuss it in greater depth than do most theorists, but it is hardly a morbid interest. It is in facing death that we are most likely to come to an understanding of life. Sartre says, in his play **The Flies**, "life begins on the far side of despair."

Heidegger called us **being-towards-death**. We are, it appears, the only creature that is aware of its own end.

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When we become aware of our mortality, we may at first shrink from it and try to forget its reality by getting "busy" in the day-to-day activities of the social world. But this will not do. Avoiding death is avoiding life.

I once found myself holding one of my infant daughters while at the same time thinking about death – a strange thing perhaps, but thinking about these things is my life's work! When I glanced down at her sleeping face, I thought about how soon she and I would die. At that moment, I was overwhelmed by my love for her. It is the very fact that she and I have only a very short time together that makes love more than just a familial arrangement. When you fully realize that you are going to die, every moment you waste is wasted forever.

Here's what Mozart said about death in a letter to his father:

> "I need not tell you with what anxiety I await better news from you. Since death (take my words literally) is the true goal of our lives, I have made myself so well acquainted with this true and best friend of man that the idea of it no longer has terrors for me, but rather much that is tranquil and comforting. And I thank God that he has granted me the good fortune to obtain the opportunity of regarding death as the key to our true happiness. I never lie down in bed without considering that, young as I am, perhaps on the morrow I may be no more. Yet not one of those who know me could say that I am morose or melancholy, and for this I thank my Creator daily and wish heartily that the same happiness may be given to my fellowmen."

Authenticity

Unlike most other personality theorists, the existentialists make no effort to avoid value judgments. Phenomenologically, good and bad are as "real" as solid waste and burnt toast. So they are quite clear that there are better and worse ways of living life. The better ways they call **authentic**.

To live authentically means to be aware of yourself, of your circumstances (thrownness), of your social world (fallenness), of your duty to create yourself (understanding), of the inevitability of anxiety, of guilt, and of death. It means further to accept these things in an act of self-affirmation. It means involvement, compassion, and commitment.

Notice that the ideal of mental health is not pleasure or even happiness, although existentialists have nothing particularly against those things. The goal is to do your best.

Inauthenticity

Someone who is living inauthentically is no longer "becoming" but only "being." They have traded openness for closedness, the dynamic for the static, possibilities for actualities. If authenticity is movement, they have stopped.

Existentialists avoid classifications. Each person is unique. First, we begin with different "raw materials" – genetics, cultures, families, and so on. Then we take those beginnings and create ourselves through the choices we make. And so there are as many ways to be authentic as there are people, and just as many ways to be inauthentic.

Conventionality is the most common style of inauthenticity. It involves ignoring one's freedom and living a life of conformity and shallow materialism. If you can manage to be like everyone else, you need not make choices. You can turn to authority, or to your peers, or to the media for "guidance." You can become too "busy" to notice the moral decisions you need to make. You are fallen and living in what Sartre called **bad faith**.

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Another style of inauthenticity is **existential neurosis**. In some ways, the neurotic is a little more aware than the conventional person: They know they are faced with choices, and it scares the daylights out of them. It scares them so much, in fact, that they are overwhelmed. They freeze or panic, or change their existential anxiety and guilt into neurotic anxiety and guilt: Find something "small" – a phobic object, an obsession or compulsion, a target for anger, a disease or the pretense of a disease – to make life's difficulties more objective. An existential psychologist would say that, although you may get rid of the symptoms with any number of techniques, ultimately you need to face the reality of Dasein.

Binswanger sees inauthenticity as a matter of choosing a single **theme** for one's life, or a small number of themes, and allowing the rest of Dasein to be dominated by that one theme. A person Freudians might call "anal retentive," for example, might be one dominated by a theme of hoarding, or holding in, or tightness, or perfection. Someone who doesn't seem in control of his or her life may be dominated by a theme of luck, or fate, or waiting. A person who anxiously over-eats may be dominated by a theme of emptiness, hollowness, and the need to fill oneself. A "workaholic" may be dominated by a theme involving wasted time or being overtaken.

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Existential analysis

Diagnosis

Binswanger and other existential psychologists make a point of discovering their client's **world view** (or **world design**). This is not a matter of discussing a person's religion or philosophy of life, necessarily. Binswanger wants to know about your Lebenswelt, Husserl's word for "lived world." He is looking for a concrete, everyday world view.

He will, for example, try to understand how you see your **Umwelt** or physical world – things, buildings, trees, furniture, gravity....

He will want to understand your **Mitwelt**, or social world, as well. Here we are talking about your relations to individuals, to community, to culture, and so on.

And he will want to understand your **Eigenwelt** or personal world. This includes both mind and body, whatever you feel is most central to your sense of who you are.

Binswanger is equally interested in your relationship to **time**. He would like to know how you view your past, present, and future. Do you live in the past, forever trying to recapture those golden days? Or do you live in the future, always preparing or hoping for a better life? Do you see your life as a long, complex adventure? Or a brief flash – here today, gone tomorrow?

Also of interest is the way you treat **space**. Is your world open, or is it closed? Is it cozy or is it vast? Is it warm or cold? Do you see life as movement, as a matter of journeys and adventures, or do you see it from an immovable center? None of these things mean anything all by themselves, of course, but combined with everything else, learned in the intimate relationship of therapy, they can mean a great deal.

Binswanger also talks about different **modes**: Some people live in a **singular mode**, alone and self-sufficient. Others live in a **dual mode**, as a "you and me" rather than an "I." Some live in a **plural mode**, thinking of themselves in terms of their membership in something larger than themselves – a nation, a religion, an organization, a culture. Still others live in an **anonymous mode**, quiet, secretive, in the background of life. And most of us live in all these modes from time to time and place to place.

As you can see, the language of existential analysis is **metaphor**. Life is much too big, much too rich, to be captured by anything so crude as prose. My life is certainly too rich to be captured in words that you thought up before you even met me! Existential therapists allow their clients to reveal themselves, disclose themselves, in their own words, in their own time.

Existentialists may be interested in your dreams, for example. But instead of telling you what your dreams mean, they will ask you. They might suggest that you let your dreams inspire you, let them guide you, let them suggest their own meanings. They may mean nothing, and they may mean everything.

Therapy

The essence of existential therapy is the relationship between the therapist and the client, called an **encounter**. An encounter is the genuine presence of one Dasein to another, an "opening up" of one to the other. Unlike more "formal" therapies, such as Freud's, or more "technical" ones, such as the behaviorists', an existential therapist is likely to be involved with you. Transference and countertransference are seen as natural parts of the encounter, not to be abused, of course, but not to be avoided either.

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On the other hand, humanists might find the existential therapist more formal than they, and more directive. The existential therapist is more likely to be "natural" with you – often quietly listening, but sometimes expressing their own thoughts, experiences, even emotions. "Being natural" also means acknowledging the differences between you. The therapist has the training and the experience, after all, and it is the client (presumably) who has the problems! Existential therapy is seen as a dialog, and not a monologue by the therapist, nor a monologue by the client.

But existential analysis has as its goal the **autonomy** of the client. Like teaching children to ride a bicycle, you may have to hold them up for a while, but eventually you have to let them go. They may well fall down, but if you never let them go, they will never learn to ride! If the "essence" of Dasein – being human – is freedom and responsibility for one's own life, then you can't help people become more fully human unless you are prepared to release them.

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Discussion

The most positive thing about existential psychology is its insistence on sticking as closely as possible to "**the lived world**." In phenomenology, we have come a long way towards a rigorous method for describing life as it is lived. Theory, statistics, reductionism, and experiments are put aside, at least for the moment. First, say the existentialists, we need to know what we are talking about!

This makes existential psychology naturally applied: It moved effortlessly into the realms of diagnosis and psychotherapy; it is showing its face in the realm of education; and it may well someday move into industrial and organizational psychology.

It has had much less success gaining respect as a research method. There are two psychology journals that showcase phenomenological research, and a few journals in education and nursing are open to it. But most of psychology rejects it, and rather strongly. It is simply considered unscientific. Since it involves neither hypotheses nor statistics, much less independent or independent variables, or control groups or random sampling, it isn't even acceptable, at most universities, for masters or doctoral theses.

Difficulties

The difficulties existentialism has had gaining respect is not entirely the fault of traditional psychology, however. It sometimes seems that existentialists glory in being unacceptable to, or at least misunderstood by, mainstream English-speaking psychologists.

While it is true that new ideas are hard to express and require new words and new ways of using old ones, many of existential psychology's terms are unnecessarily obscure. Many are drawn from philosophical traditions, familiar, perhaps, to philosophers, but not to many psychologists. Others are in German or French, or are poorly translated. Some seem just plain whimsical, or pretentious.

What is needed is a truly talented English-speaking existentialist writer. After all, the language of the ordinary experiences of ordinary people should be ordinary language! Rollo May and Viktor Frankl have made some significant efforts in that direction, but there is much more to be done.

Existentialists also tend to be rather picky, even fighting among themselves about whether one or the other has the "true" understanding of Husserl or Heidegger or whomever. They can gain a great deal, especially in making their approach acceptable to the mainstream of psychology, by paying attention to Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, Carl Rogers and other theorists, researchers, and practitioners who may not be exactly existentialists, but often express themselves a lot better.

The biggest danger I feel existentialists create for themselves is in their tendency to place themselves in opposition to the mainstream. It is true that psychology has two broad "cultures," the hard-core experimentalists on the one hand, and the more humanistically inclined clinicians and other applied psychologists on the other. By denigrating the experimental culture, they antagonize half of psychology!

If I seem a bit hard on the existential psychologists, it is in part because I am one. It's a little like patriotism: The more you love your country, the more you are likely to worry over its faults. Nevertheless, I feel that existential psychology has a great deal to offer. In particular, it offers a solid philosophical base where Adlerians and Rogerians and neoFreudians and others besides existentialists might gather to further develop and refine their understanding of human life.

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Readings

Binswanger's work was first presented to the English-speaking world as three contributions to **Existence**, a volume of papers edited by May, Angel, and Ellenberger.

Additional papers have been collected in **Being-in-the-World**.

Much of his work remains untranslated, especially ***Grundformen und Erkenntnis menschlichen Daseins*** (**The Foundations and Cognition of Human Existence**).

To see my translation of the table of contents: [http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/binstoc.html]

If you wish to find out more about existential psychology and philosophy in general, you might want to read the textbook **Existential-Phenomenological Alternatives for Psychology**, edited by Valle and King, or the classic introduction, **Irrational Man**, by William Barrett.

If you are brave indeed, you might want to try some of the original greats in phenomenology and existentialism, such as Edmund Husserl or Martin Heidegger. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche are fascinating, as is Jean-Paul Sartre, who offers a somewhat different version of existentialism from Heidegger's.

If you need something a little more accessible, try Keen's **A Primer in Phenomenological Psychology**, Steiner's classic **Martin Heidegger**, McCall's **Phenomenological Psychology** (which has a very helpful section on Heidegger's terminology), and Stewart and Mickunas' **Exploring Phenomenology**.

For a history of existential psychology and psychiatry, read Spiegelberg's classic, **Phenomenology in Psychology and Psychiatry**. This last book will also lead you to other existential and phenomenological psychologists.

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MEDARD BOSS

[1903 – 1990]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

It is hard to imagine better preparation for a career in psychotherapy. Born in St. Gallen, Switzerland, on October 4, 1903, Medard Boss grew up in Zurich during a time when Zurich was a center for psychological activity. He received his medical degree from the University there in 1928, taking time along the way to study in Paris and Vienna and to be analyzed by Sigmund Freud himself.

After four years at the Burgholzli hospital, as an assistant to Eugen Bleuler, he went on to study in Berlin and London, where his teachers included several people in Freud's inner circle as well as Karen Horney and Kurt Goldstein. Beginning in 1938, he became associated with Carl Jung, who revealed to Boss the possibility of a psychoanalysis not bound up in Freudian interpretations.

Over time, Boss read the works of Ludwig Binswanger and Martin Heidegger. But it was his meeting, in 1946, and eventual friendship with Heidegger that turned him forever to existential psychology. His impact on existential therapy has been so great that he is often mentioned together with Ludwig Binswanger as its cofounder.

Theory

While Binswanger and Boss agree on the basics of existential psychology, Boss sticks somewhat closer to Heidegger's original ideas. Boss doesn't like, for example, Binswanger's ideas about "world-design:" He feels that the idea of people coming to the world with preformed expectations distracts from the more basic existential point that the world is not something we interpret, but something that reveals itself to the "light" of Dasein.

The analogy of light plays an important part in Boss's theory. The word phenomenon, for example, literally means "to shine forth," "to come out of the darkness." And so Boss views Dasein as a lumination which brings things "to light."

This idea has a profound effect on how Boss understands things like psychopathology, defenses, therapeutic style, and the interpretation of dreams. Defensiveness, for example, is a matter of not illuminating some aspect of life, and psychopathology is analogous to choosing to live in the darkness. Therapy, on the other hand, involves reversing this constriction of our basic openness, and we could call it "enlightenment!"

One of his most important suggestions for the client is to "let things go" (**Gelassenheit**). Most of us try too hard to keep a tight rein on our lives, to keep control. But life is too much for us. We need to trust it a little, trust to "fate" a bit, jump into life instead of forever testing the waters. Instead of keeping the light of Dasein tightly focused, we should let it shine more freely.

Existentials

While Binswanger likes to use Heidegger's Umwelt, Mitwelt, and Eigenwelt, Boss prefers Heidegger's **existentials**, the things in life that we all have to deal with. He is interested, for example, in how people see space and time – not the physical space and time of measured distances and clocks and calendars, but human space and time, personal space and time. Someone from long ago, who now lives far away, may be closer to you than the person next to you right now.

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He is also interested in how we relate to our bodies. My openness to the world will be expressed by my bodily openness and my extension of my body out into the world, what he calls my "**bodying forth**."

Our relationship with others is as important to Boss as it is to Binswanger. We are not individuals locked up inside our bodies; We live rather in a shared world, and we illuminate each other. Human existence is shared existence.

A particularly "Bossian" concern is **mood** or **attunement**: Boss suggested that, while we are always illuminating the world, we sometimes illuminate one thing more than another, or illuminate with different hues. It's no different from how we try to set a certain mood by lighting a room one way rather than another.

For example, if you are in an angry mood, you are "attuned" to angry things, angry thoughts, angry actions; you "see red." If you are in a cheerful mood, you are "attuned" to cheerful things, and the world seems "sunny." If you are hungry, all you see is food; if you are anxious, all you see are threats.

Dreams

Boss has studied dreams more than any other existentialist, and considers them important in therapy. But instead of interpreting them as Freudians or Jungians do, he allows them to reveal their own meanings. Everything is not hiding behind a symbol, hiding from the always-present censor. Instead, dreams show us how we are illuminating our lives: If we feel trapped, our feet will be bound by cement; if we feel free, we will fly; if we feel guilty, we will dream about sin; if we feel anxious, we will be chased by frightening things.

For example, Boss discusses a man who was having sexual difficulties and feeling quite depressed. During the first months of his therapy, he dreamed only of machinery – not unusual for an engineer, but not terribly exciting, either. As his therapy progressed, his dreams changed. He began to dream of plants. Then he dreamt of insects – dangerous, perhaps, and threatening, but at least alive. Then he dreamt of frogs and snakes, then of mice and rabbits. For some time, pigs were featured.

Two years into therapy, and finally he began to dream of women! This man was sad and lonely because he had retreated to a world made up only of machinery, and it took a long time before he could dream of anything quite so warm-blooded as a woman! The point to notice is that the pigs don't represent anything – not hidden wishes, or archetypes, or inferiorities – in the therapist's pet theory. They belong to the engineer; They are what his evolving illumination brought to light at that time in his life!

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Readings

You can find Boss's theory spelled out in ***Existential Foundations of Medicine and Psychology***.

Psychoanalysis and Daseinsanalysis contrasts Freudian and existential therapy.

His work on dream analysis can be found in ***The Analysis of Dreams*** and ***I Dreamt Last Night....***

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VIKTOR FRANKL

[1905 – 1997]

Personality Theories

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Introduction

In September of 1942, a young doctor, his new bride, his mother, father, and brother, were arrested in Vienna and taken to a concentration camp in Bohemia. It was events that occurred there and at three other camps that led the young doctor – prisoner 119,104 – to realize the significance of meaningfulness in life.

One of the earliest events to drive home the point was the loss of a manuscript – his life's work – during his transfer to Auschwitz. He had sewn it into the lining of his coat, but was forced to discard it at the last minute. He spent many later nights trying to reconstruct it, first in his mind, then on slips of stolen paper.

Another significant moment came while on a predawn march to work on laying railroad tracks: Another prisoner wondered outloud about the fate of their wives. The young doctor began to think about his own wife, and realized that she was present within him:

> The salvation of man is through love and in love. I understood how a man who has nothing left in this world still may know bliss, be it only for a brief moment, in the contemplation of his beloved. (1963, p. 59)

And throughout his ordeal, he could not help but see that, among those given a chance for survival, it was those who held on to a vision of the future – whether it be a significant task before them, or a return to their loved ones – that were most likely to survive their suffering.

It would be, in fact, the meaningfulness that could be found in suffering itself that would most impress him:

> (T)here is also purpose in that life which is almost barren of both creation and enjoyment and which admits of but one possibility of high moral behavior: namely, in man's attitude to his existence, and existence restricted by external forces.... Without suffering and death human life cannot be complete. (1963, p. 106)

That young doctor was, of course, Viktor Emil Frankl.

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Biography

Viktor Frankl was born in Vienna on March 26, 1905. His father, Gabriel Frankl, was a strong, disciplined man from Moravia who worked his way from government stenographer to become the director of the Ministry of Social Service. His mother, Elsa Frankl (née Lion), was more tenderhearted, a pious woman from Prague.

The middle of three children, young Viktor was precocious and intensely curious. Even at the tender age of four, he already knew that he wanted to be a physician.

In high school, Viktor was actively involved in the local Young Socialist Workers organization. His interest in people turned him towards the study of psychology. He finished his high school years with a psychoanalytic essay on the philosopher Schopenhauer, a publication in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis, and the beginning of a rather intense correspondence with the great Sigmund Freud.

In 1925, a year after graduating and on his way towards his medical degree, he met Freud in person. Alfred Adler's theory was more to Frankl's liking, though, and that year he published an article – "Psychotherapy and Weltanschauung" – in Adler's International Journal of Individual Psychology. The next year, Frankl used the term logotherapy in a public lecture for the first time, and began to refine his particular brand of Viennese psychology.

In 1928 and 1929, Frankl organized cost-free counseling centers for teenagers in Vienna and six other cities, and began working at the Psychiatric University Clinic. In 1930, he earned his doctorate in medicine, and was promoted to assistant. In the next few years, Frankl continued his training in neurology.

In 1933, He was put in charge of the ward for suicidal women at the Psychiatric Hospital, with many thousands of patients each year. In 1937, Frankl opened his own practice in neurology and psychiatry. One year later, Hitler's troops invade Austria. He obtained a visa to the U.S. in 1939, but, concerned for his elderly parents, he let it expire.

In 1940, Frankl was made head of the neurological department of Rothschild Hospital, the only hospital for Jews in Vienna during the Nazi regime. He made many false diagnoses of his patients in order to circumvent the new policies requiring euthanasia of the mentally ill. It was during this period that he began his manuscript, **Ärztliche Seelsorge** – in English, **The Doctor and the Soul**.

Frankl married in 1942, but in September of that year, he, his wife, his father, mother, and brother, were all arrested and brought to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt in Bohemia. His father died there of starvation. His mother and brother were killed at Auschwitz in 1944. His wife died at Bergen-Belsen in 1945. Only his sister Stella would survive, having managed to emigrate to Australia a short while earlier.

When he was moved to Auschwitz, his manuscript for The Doctor and the Soul was discovered and destroyed. His desire to complete his work, and his hopes that he would be reunited with his wife and family someday, kept him from losing hope in what seemed otherwise a hopeless situation.

After two more moves to two more camps, Frankl finally succumbed to typhoid fever. He kept himself awake by reconstructing his manuscript on stolen slips of paper. In April of 1945, Frankl's camp was liberated, and he returned to Vienna, only to discover the deaths of his loved ones. Although nearly broken and very much alone in the world, he was given the position of director of the Vienna Neurological Policlinic – a position he would hold for 25 years.

He finally reconstructed his book and published it, earning him a teaching appointment at the University of Vienna Medical School. In only 9 days, he dictated another book, which would become **Man's Search for Meaning**. Before he died, it sold over nine million copies, five million in the U.S. alone!

During this period, he met a young operating room assistant named Eleonore Schwindt – "Elly" – and fell in love at first sight. Although half his age, he credited her with giving him the courage to reestablish himself in the world. They married in 1947, and had a daughter, Gabriele, in December of that year.

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In 1948, Frankl received his Ph.D. in philosophy. His dissertation – **The Unconscious God** – was an examination of the relation of psychology and religion. That same year, he was made associate professor of neurology and psychiatry at the University of Vienna. In 1950, he founded and became president of the Austrian Medical Society for Psychotherapy.

After being promoted to full professor, he became increasingly well known in circles outside Vienna. His guest professorships, honorary doctorates, and awards are too many to list here but include the Oskar Pfister Prize by the American Society of Psychiatry and a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Frankl continued to teach at the University of Vienna until 1990, when he was 85. It should be noted that he was a vigorous mountain climber and earned his airplane pilot's license when he was 67!

In 1992, friends and family members established the Viktor Frankl Institute in his honor. In 1995, he finished his autobiography, and in 1997, he published his final work, **Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning**, based on his doctoral dissertation. He has 32 books to his name, and they have been translated into 27 languages.

Viktor Emil Frankl died on September 2, 1997, of heart failure. He is survived by his wife Eleonore, his daughter Dr. Gabriele Frankl-Vesely, his grandchildren Katharina and Alexander, and his great-granddaughter Anna Viktoria. His impact on psychology and psychiatry will be felt for centuries to come.

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Theory

Viktor Frankl's theory and therapy grew out of his experiences in Nazi death camps. Watching who did and did not survive (given an opportunity to survive!), he concluded that the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche had it right: "He who has a why to live for can bear with almost any how. " (Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in 1963, p. 121) He saw that people who had hopes of being reunited with loved ones, or who had projects they felt a need to complete, or who had great faith, tended to have better chances than those who had lost all hope.

He called his form of therapy **logotherapy**, from the Greek word **logos**, which can mean study, word, spirit, God, or meaning. It is this last sense Frankl focusses on, although the other meanings are never far off. Comparing himself with those other great Viennese psychiatrists, Freud and Adler, he suggested that Freud essentially postulated a will to pleasure as the root of all human motivation, and Adler a will to power. Logotherapy postulates **a will to meaning**.

Frankl also uses the Greek word **noös**, which means mind or spirit. In traditional psychology, he suggests, we focus on "psychodynamics," which sees people as trying to reduce psychological tension. Instead, or in addition, Frankl says we should pay attention to **noödynamics**, wherein tension is necessary for health, at least when it comes to meaning. People desire the tension involved in striving for some worthy goal!

Perhaps the original issue with which Frankl was concerned, early in his career as a physician, was the danger of reductionism. Then, as now, medical schools emphasized the idea that all things come down to physiology. Psychology, too, promoted reductionism: Mind could be best understood as a "side effect" of brain mechanisms. The spiritual aspect of human life was (and is) hardly considered worth mentioning at all! Frankl believed that entire generations of doctors and scientists were being indoctrinated into what could only lead to a certain cynicism in the study of human existence.

He set it as his goal to balance the physiological view with a spiritual perspective, and saw this as a significant step towards developing more effective treatment. As he said, "...the de-neuroticization of humanity requires a re-humanization of psychotherapy." (1975, p. 104)

Conscience

One of Viktor Frankl's major concepts is **conscience**. He sees conscience as a sort of unconscious spirituality, different from the instinctual unconscious that Freud and others emphasize. The conscience is not just one factor among many; it is the core of our being and the source of our personal integrity.

He puts it in no uncertain terms: "... (B)eing human is being responsible – existentially responsible, responsible for one's own existence." (1975, p. 26) Conscience is intuitive and highly personalized. It refers to a real person in a real situation, and cannot be reduced to simple "universal laws." It must be lived.

He refers to conscience as a "pre-reflective ontological self-understanding" or "the wisdom of the heart," "more sensitive than reason can ever be sensible." (1975, p. 39) It is conscience that "sniffs out" that which gives our lives meaning.

Like Erich Fromm, Frankl notes that animals have instincts to guide them. In traditional societies, we have done well-enough replacing instincts with our social traditions. Today, we hardly even have that. Most attempt to find guidance in conformity and conventionality, but it becomes increasingly difficult to avoid facing the fact that we now have the freedom and the responsibility to make our own choices in life, to find our own meaning.

But "...meaning must be found and cannot be given." (1975, p. 112) Meaning is like laughter, he says: You cannot force someone to laugh, you must tell him a joke! The same applies to faith, hope, and love – they

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cannot be be brought forth by an act of will, our own or someone else's.

"...(M)eaning is something to discover rather than to invent." (1975, p. 113) It has a reality of its own, independent of our minds. Like an embedded figure or a "magic eye" picture, it is there to be seen, not something created by our imagination. We may not always be able to bring the image – or the meaning – forth, but it is there. It is, he says, "...primarily a perceptual phenomenon. " (1975, p. 115)

Tradition and traditional values are quickly disappearing from many people's lives. But, while that is difficult for us, it need not lead us into despair: Meaning is not tied to society's values. Certainly, each society attempts to summarize meaningfulness in its codes of conduct, but ultimately, meanings are unique to each individual.

"...(M)an must be equipped with the capacity to listen to and obey the ten thousand demands and commandments hidden in the ten thousand situations with which life is confronting him." (1975, p. 120) And it is our job as physicians, therapists, and educators to assist people in developing their individual consciences and finding and fulfilling their unique meanings.

The existential vacuum

This striving after meaning can, of course, be frustrated, and this frustration can lead to **noögenic neurosis**, what others might call spiritual or existential neurosis. People today seem more than ever to be experiencing their lives as empty, meaningless, purposeless, aimless, adrift, and so on, and seem to be responding to these experiences with unusual behaviors that hurt themselves, others, society, or all three.

One of his favorite metaphors is the **existential vacuum**. If meaning is what we desire, then meaninglessness is a hole, an emptiness, in our lives. Whenever you have a vacuum, of course, things rush in to fill it. Frankl suggests that one of the most conspicuous signs of existential vacuum in our society is boredom. He points out how often people, when they finally have the time to do what they want, don't seem to want to do anything! People go into a tailspin when they retire; students get drunk every weekend; we submerge ourselves in passive entertainment every evening. The "Sunday neurosis," he calls it.

So we attempt to fill our existential vacuums with "stuff" that, because it provides some satisfaction, we hope will provide ultimate satisfaction as well: We might try to fill our lives with pleasure, eating beyond all necessity, having promiscuous sex, living "the high life;" or we might seek power, especially the power represented by monetary success; or we might fill our lives with "busy-ness," conformity, conventionality; or we might fill the vacuum with anger and hatred and spend our days attempting to destroy what we think is hurting us. We might also fill our lives with certain neurotic "vicious cycles," such as obsession with germs and cleanliness, or fear-driven obsession with a phobic object. The defining quality of these vicious cycles is that, whatever we do, it is never enough.

These neurotic vicious cycles are founded on something Frankl refers to as **anticipatory anxiety**: Someone may be so afraid of getting certain anxiety-related symptoms that getting those symptoms becomes inevitable. The anticipatory anxiety causes the very thing that is feared! Test anxiety is an obvious example: If you are afraid of doing poorly on tests, the anxiety will prevent you from doing well on the test, leading you to be afraid of tests, and so on.

A similar idea is **hyperintention**. This is a matter of trying too hard, which itself prevents you from succeeding at something. One of the most common examples is insomnia: Many people, when they can't sleep, continue to try to fall asleep, using every method in the book. Of course, trying to sleep itself prevents sleep, so the cycle continues. Another example is the way so many of us today feel we must be exceptional lovers: Men feel they must "last" as long as possible, and women feel obliged to not only have orgasms, but to have multiple orgasms, and so on. Too much concern in this regard, of course, leads to an inability to relax

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and enjoy oneself!

A third variation is **hyperreflection**. In this case it is a matter of "thinking too hard." Sometimes we expect something to happen, so it does, simply because its occurrence is strongly tied to one's beliefs or attitudes – the self-fulfilling prophecy. Frankl mentions a woman who had had bad sexual experiences in childhood but who had nevertheless developed a strong and healthy personality. When she became familiar with psychological literature suggesting that such experiences should leave one with an inability to enjoy sexual relations, she began having such problems!

His understanding of the existential vacuum goes back to his experiences in the Nazi death camps. As the day-to-day things that offer people a sense of meaning – work, family, the small pleasures of life – were taken from a prisoner, his future would seem to disappear. Man, says Frankl, "can only live by looking to the future." (1963 , p. 115) "The prisoner who had lost faith in the future – his future – was doomed." (1963, p. 117)

While few people seeking psychological help today are suffering the extremes of the concentration camp, Frankl feels that the problems caused by the existential vacuum are not only common, but rapidly spreading throughout society. He points out the ubiquitous complaint of a "feeling of futility," which he also refers to as the **abyss** experience.

Even the political and economic extremes of today's world can be seen as the reverberations of futility: We seem to be caught between the automaton conformity of western consumer culture and totalitarianism in its communist, fascist, and theocratic flavors. Hiding in mass society, or hiding in authoritarianism – either direction caters to the person who wishes to deny the emptiness of his or her life.

Frankl calls depression, addiction, and aggression the **mass neurotic triad**. He refers to research that shows a strong relationship between meaninglessness (as measured by "purpose in life" tests) and such behaviors as criminality and involvement with drugs. He warns us that violence, drug use, and other negative behaviors, demonstrated daily on television, in movies, even in music, only convinces the meaning-hungry that their lives can improve by imitation of their "heroes." Even sports, he suggests, only encourage aggression.

Psychopathology

Frankl gives us details as to the origin of a variety of psychopathologies. For example, various **anxiety neuroses** are seen as founded on existential anxiety – "the sting of conscience." (1973, p. 179) The individual, not understanding that his anxiety is due to his sense of unfulfilled responsibility and a lack of meaning, takes that anxiety and focuses it upon some problematic detail of life. The hypochondriac, for example, focuses his anxiety on some horrible disease; the phobic focuses on some object that has caused him concern in the past; the agoraphobic sees her anxiety as coming from the world outside her door; the patient with stage fright or speech anxiety focuses on the stage or the podium. The anxiety neurotic thus makes sense of his or her discomfort with life.

He notes, that "Sometimes, but not always, it (the neurosis) serves to tyrannize a member of the family or is used to justify oneself to others or to the self..." (1973, p. 181) but warns that this is, as others have noted as well, secondary to the deeper issues.

Obsessive-compulsive disorder works in a similar fashion. The obsessive-compulsive person is lacking the sense of completion that most people have. Most of us are satisfied with near certainty about, for example, a simple task like locking one's door at night; the obsessive-compulsive requires a perfect certainty that is, ultimately, unattainable. Because perfection in all things is, even for the obsessive-compusive, an impossibility, he or she focusses attention on some domain in life that has caused difficulties in the past.

The therapist should attempt to help the patient to relax and not fight the tendencies to repeat thoughts and

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actions. Further, the patient needs to come to recognize his temperamental inclinations towards perfection as fate and learn to accept at least a small degree of uncertainty. But ultimately, the obsessive-compulsive, and the anxiety neurotic as well, must find meaning. "As soon as life's fullness of meaning is rediscovered, the neurotic anxiety... no longer has anything to fasten on." (1973, p. 182)

Like most existential psychologists, Frankl acknowledges the importance of genetic and physiological factors on psychopathology. He sees **depression**, for example, as founded in a "vital low," i.e. a diminishment of physical energy. On the psychological level, he relates depression to the feelings of inadequacy we feel when we are confronted by tasks that are beyond our capacities, physical or mental.

On the spiritual level, Frankl views depression as "tension between what the person is and what he ought to be." (1973, p. 202) The person's goals seem unreachable to him, and he loses a sense of his own future. Over time, he becomes disgusted at himself and projects that disgust onto others or even humanity in general. The ever-present gap between what is and what should be becomes a "gaping abyss." (1973, p. 202)

Schizophrenia is also understood by Frankl as rooted in a physiological dysfunction, in this case one which leads to the person experiencing himself as an object rather than a subject.

Most of us, when we have thoughts, recognize them as coming from within our own minds. We "own" them, as modern jargon puts it. The schizophrenic, for reasons still not understood, is forced to take a passive perspective on those thoughts, and perceives them as voices. And he may watch himself and distrust himself – which he experiences passively, as being watched and persecuted.

Frankl believes that this passivity is rooted in an exaggerated tendency to self-observation. It is as if there were a separation of the self as viewer and the self as viewed. The viewing self, devoid of content, seems barely real, while the viewed self seems alien.

Although logotherapy was not designed to deal with severe psychoses, Frankl nevertheless feels that it can help: By teaching the schizophrenic to ignore the voices and stop the constant self-observation, while simultaneously leading him or her towards meaningful activity, the therapist may be able to short-circuit the vicious cycle.

Finding meaning

So how do we find meaning? Frankl discusses three broad approaches. The first is through **experiential values**, that is, by experiencing something – or someone – we value. This can include Maslow's peak experiences and esthetic experiences such as viewing great art or natural wonders.

The most important example of experiential values is the love we feel towards another. Through our love, we can enable our beloved to develop meaning, and by doing so, we develop meaning ourselves! Love, he says, "is the ultimate and the highest goal to which man can aspire." (1963, pp. 58-59)

Frankl points out that, in modern society, many confuse sex with love. Without love, he says, sex is nothing more than masturbation, and the other is nothing more than a tool to be used, a means to an end. Sex can only be fully enjoyed as the physical expression of love.

Love is the recognition of the uniqueness of the other as an individual, with an intuitive understanding of their full potential as human beings. Frankl believes this is only possible within monogamous relationships. As long as partners are interchangeable, they remain objects.

A second means of discovering meaning is through **creative values**, by "doing a deed," as he puts it. This is the traditional existential idea of providing oneself with meaning by becoming involved in one's projects, or, better, in the project of one's own life. It includes the creativity involved in art, music, writing, invention, and so on.

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Frankl views creativity (as well as love) as a function of the spiritual unconscious, that is, the conscience. The irrationality of artistic production is the same as the intuition that allows us to recognize the good. He provides us with an interesting example:

> We know a case in which a violinist always tried to play as consciously as possible. From putting his violin in place on his shoulder to the most trifling technical detail, he wanted to do everything consciously, to perform in full self-reflection. This led to a complete artistic breakdown.... Treatment had to give back to the patient his trust in the unconscious, by having him realize how much more musical his unconscious was than his conscious. (1975, p. 38)

The third means of finding meaning is one few people besides Frankl talk about: **attitudinal values**. Attitudinal values include such virtues as compassion, bravery, a good sense of humor, and so on. But Frankl's most famous example is achieving meaning by way of **suffering**.

He gives an example concerning one of his clients: A doctor whose wife had died mourned her terribly. Frankl asked him, "if you had died first, what would it have been like for her?" The doctor answered that it would have been incredibly difficult for her. Frankl then pointed out that, by her dying first, she had been spared that suffering, but that now he had to pay the price by surviving and mourning her. In other words, grief is the price we pay for love. For the doctor, this thought gave his wife's death and his own pain meaning, which in turn allowed him to deal with it. His suffering becomes something more: With meaning, suffering can be endured with dignity.

Frankl also notes that seriously ill people are not often given an opportunity to suffer bravely, and thereby retain some dignity. Cheer up! we say. Be optimistic! Often, they are made to feel ashamed of their pain and unhappiness.

In **Man's Search for Meaning**, he says this: "...everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way." (1963, p. 104)

Transcendence

Ultimately, however, experiential, creative, and attitudinal values are merely surface manifestations of something much more fundamental, which he calls **supra-meaning** or **transcendence**. Here we see Frankl's religious bent: Suprameaning is the idea that there is, in fact, ultimate meaning in life, meaning that is not dependent on others, on our projects, or even on our dignity. It is a reference to God and spiritual meaning.

This sets Frankl's existentialism apart from the existentialism of someone like Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre and other atheistic existentialists suggest that life is ultimately meaningless, and we must find the courage to face that meaninglessness. Sartre says we must learn to endure ultimate meaninglessness; Frankl instead says that we need to learn to endure our inability to fully comprehend ultimate meaningfulness, for "Logos is deeper than logic."

Again, it was his experiences in the death camps that led him to these conclusions: "In spite of all the enforced physical and mental primitiveness of the life in a concentration camp, it was possible for spiritual life to deepen.... They were able to retreat from their terrible surroundings to a life of inner riches and spiritual freedom." (1963, p. 56) This certainly does contrast with Sigmund Freud's perspective, as expressed in **The Future of an Illusion**: "Religion is the universal compulsive neurosis of mankind...." (quoted in 1975, p. 69)

It should be understood that Frankl's ideas about religion and spirituality are considerably broader than most. His God is not the God of the narrow mind, not the God of one denomination or another. It is not even the

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God of institutional religion. God is very much a God of the inner human being, a God of the heart. Even the atheist or the agnostic, he points out, may accept the idea of transcendence without making use of the word "God." Allow me to let Frankl speak for himself:

> This unconscious religiousness, revealed by our phenomenological analysis, is to be understood as a latent relation to transcendence inherent in man. If one prefers, he might conceive of this relation in terms of a relationship between the immanent self and a transcendent thou. However one wishes to formulate it, we are confronted with what I should like to term "the transcendent unconscious. This concept means no more or less than that man has always stood in an intentional relation to transcendence, even if only on an unconscious level. If one calls the intentional referent of such an unconscious relation "God," it is apt to speak of an "unconscious God." (1975, pp. 61-62)

It must also be understood that this "unconscious God" is not anything like the archetypes Jung talks about. This God is clearly transcendent, and yet profoundly personal. He is there, according to Frankl, within each of us, and it is merely a matter of our acknowledging that presence that will bring us to suprameaning. On the other hand, turning away from God is the ultimate source of all the ills we have already discussed.: "...(O)nce the angel in us is repressed, he turns into a demon." (1975, p. 70)

Therapy

Viktor Frankl is nearly as well known for certain clinical details of his approach as for his overall theory. The first of these details is a technique known as **paradoxical intention**, which is useful in breaking down the neurotic vicious cycles brought on by anticipatory anxiety and hyperintention.

Paradoxical intention is a matter of wishing the very thing you are afraid of. A young man who sweated profusely whenever he was in social situations was told by Frankl to wish to sweat. "I only sweated out a quart before, but now I'm going to pour at least ten quarts!" (1973, p. 223) was among his instructions. Of course, when it came down to it, the young man couldn't do it. The absurdity of the task broke the vicious cycle.

The capacity human beings have of taking an objective stance towards their own life, or stepping outside themselves, is the basis, Frankl tells us, for humor. And, as he noted in the camps, "Humor was another of the soul's weapons in the fight for self-preservation." (1963, p. 68)

Another example concerns sleep problems: If you suffer from insomnia, according to Frankl, don't spend the night tossing and turning and trying to sleep. Get up! Try to stay up as long as you can! Over time, you'll find yourself gratefully crawling back into bed.

A second technique is called **dereflection**. Frankl believes that many problems stem from an overemphasis on oneself. By shifting attention away from oneself and onto others, problems often disappear. If, for example, you have difficulties with sex, try to satisfy your partner without seeking your own gratification. Concerns over erections and orgasms disappear – and satisfaction reappears! Or don't try to satisfy anyone at all. Many sex therapists suggest that a couple do nothing but "pet," avoiding orgasms "at all costs." These couples often find they can barely last the evening before what they had previously had difficulties with simply happens!

Frankl insists that, in today's world, there is far too much emphasis on self reflection. Since Freud, we have been encouraged to look into ourselves, to dig out our deepest motivations. Frankl even refers to this tendency as our "collective obsessive neurosis." (1975, p. 95) Focusing on ourselves this way actually serves to turn us away from meaning!

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For all the interest these techniques have aroused, Frankl insists that, ultimately, the problems these people face are a matter of their need for meaning. So, although these and other techniques are a fine beginning to therapy, they are not by any means the goal.

Perhaps the most significant task for the therapist is to assist the client in rediscovering the latent religiousness that Frankl believes exists in each of us. This cannot be pushed, however: "Genuine religiousness must unfold in its own time. Never can anyone be forced to it." (1975, p. 72) The therapist must allow the patient to discover his or her own meanings.

"(H)uman existence – at least as long as it has not been neurotically distorted – is always directed to something, or someone, other than itself – be it a meaning to fulfill or another human being to encounter lovingly." (1975, p. 78) Frankl calls this **self-transcendence**, and contrasts it with self-actualization as Maslow uses the term. Self-actualization, even pleasure and happiness, are side-effects of self-transcendence and the discovery of meaning. He quotes Albert Schweitzer: "The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve." (Quoted in 1975, p. 85)

In conclusion

Even if you (like me) are not of a religious inclination, it is difficult to ignore Frankl's message: There exists, beyond instincts and "selfish genes," beyond classical and operant conditioning, beyond the imperatives of biology and culture, a special something, uniquely human, uniquely personal. For much of psychology's history, we have, in the name of science, tried to eliminate the "soul" from our professional vocabularies. But perhaps it is time to follow Frankl's lead and reverse the years of reductionism.

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Discussion

For all my admiration of Frankl and his theory, I also have some strong reservations. Frankl attempts to re-insert religion into psychology, and does so in a particularly subtle and seductive manner. It is difficult to argue with someone who has been through what Frankl has been through, and seen what he has seen. And yet, suffering is no automatic guarantee of truth! By couching religion in the most tolerant and lliberal language, he nevertheless is asking us to base our understanding of human existence on faith, on a blind acceptance of the existence of ultimate truth, without evidence other than the "feelings" and intuitions and anecdotes of those who already believe. This is, in fact, a dangerous precedent, and there is much "pop psychology" based on these ideas. The same tendency applies to the quasi-religious theories of Carl Jung and Abraham Maslow.

Frankl, like May and others, refers to himself as an existentialist. Many others with religious tendencies do likewise. They have even elevated Kierkegaard to the honorary position of founder of existentialism – a word Kierkegaard had never heard. And yet faith, which asks one to surrender one's skepticism to a God or other universal principle, is intrinsically at odds with the most basic concepts of existentialism. Religion – even liberal religion – always posits essences at the root of human existence. Existentialism does not.

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ROLLO MAY

[1909 – 1994]

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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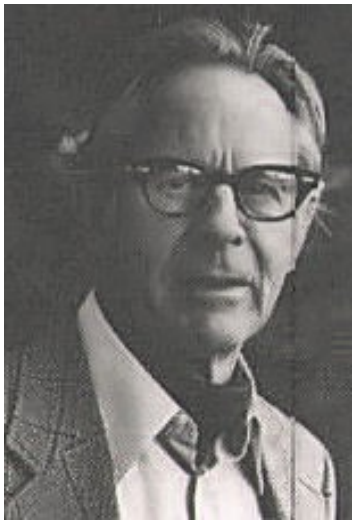
Biography

Rollo May was born April 21, 1909, in Ada, Ohio. His childhood was not particularly pleasant: His parents didn't get along and eventually divorced, and his sister had a psychotic breakdown.

After a brief stint at Michigan State (he was asked to leave because of his involvement with a radical student magazine), he attended Oberlin College in Ohio, where he received his bachelors degree.

After graduation, he went to Greece, where he taught English at Anatolia College for three years. During this period, he also spent time as an itinerant artist and even studied briefly with Alfred Adler.



When he returned to the US, he entered Union Theological Seminary and became friends with one of his teachers, Paul Tillich, the existentialist theologian, who would have a profound effect on his thinking. May received his BD in 1938.

May suffered from tuberculosis, and had to spend three years in a sanatorium. This was probably the turning point of his life. While he faced the possibility of death, he also filled his empty hours with reading. Among the literature he read were the writings of Soren Kierkegaard, the Danish religious writer who inspired much of the existential movement, and provided the inspiration for May's theory.

He went on to study psychoanalysis at White Institute, where he met people such as Harry Stack Sullivan and Erich Fromm. And finally, he went to Columbia University in New York, where in 1949 he received the first PhD in clinical psychology that institution ever awarded.

After receiving his PhD, he went on to teach at a variety of top schools. In 1958, he edited, with Ernest Angel and Henri Ellenberger, the book Existence, which introduced existential psychology to the US. He spent the last years of his life in Tiburon, California, until he died in October of 1994.

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Theory

Rollo May is the best known American existential psychologist. Much of his thinking can be understood by reading about existentialism in general, and the overlap between his ideas and the ideas of Ludwig Binswanger is great. Nevertheless, he is a little off of the mainstream in that he was more influenced by American humanism than the Europeans, and more interested in reconciling existential psychology with other approaches, especially Freud's.

May uses some traditional existential terms slightly differently than others, and invents new words for some of existentialism's old ideas. **Destiny**, for example, is roughly the same as thrownness combined with fallenness. It is that part of our lives that is determined for us, our raw materials, if you like, for the project of creating our lives. Another example is the word **courage**, which he uses more often than the traditional term "authenticity" to mean facing one's anxiety and rising above it.

He is also the only existential psychologist I'm aware of who discusses certain "stages" (not in the strict Freudian sense, of course) of development:

Innocence – the pre-egoic, pre-self-conscious stage of the infant. The innocent is premoral, i.e. is neither bad nor good. Like a wild animal who kills to eat, the innocent is only doing what he or she must do. But an innocent does have a degree of will in the sense of a drive to fulfil their needs!

Rebellion – the childhood and adolescent stage of developing one's ego or self-consciousness by means of contrast with adults, from the "no" of the two year old to the "no way" of the teenager. The rebellious person wants freedom, but has as yet no full understanding of the responsibility that goes with it. The teenager may want to spend their allowance in any way they choose – yet they still expect the parent to provide the money, and will complain about unfairness if they don't get it!

Ordinary – the normal adult ego, conventional and a little boring, perhaps. They have learned responsibility, but find it too demanding, and so seek refuge in conformity and traditional values.

Creative – the authentic adult, the existential stage, beyond ego and self-actualizing. This is the person who, accepting destiny, faces anxiety with courage!

These are not stages in the traditional sense. A child may certainly be innocent, ordinary or creative at times; An adult may be rebellious. The only attachments to certain ages is in terms of salience: Rebelliousness stands out in the two year old and the teenager!

On the other hand, he is every bit as interested in **anxiety** as any existentialist. His first book, ***The Meaning of Anxiety***, was based on his doctoral dissertation, which in turn was based on his reading of Kierkegaard. His definition of anxiety is "the apprehension cued off by a threat to some value which the individual holds essential to his existence as a self" (1967, p. 72). While not "pure" existentialism, it does obviously include fear of death or "nothingness." Later, he quotes Kierkegaard: "Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom."

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Love and Will

Many of May's unique ideas can be found in the book I consider his best, ***Love and Will***. In his efforts at reconciling Freud and the existentialists, he turns his attention to motivation. His basic motivational construct is **the daimonic**. The daimonic is the entire system of motives, different for each individual. It is composed of a collection of specific motives called **daimons**.

The word daimon is from the Greek, and means little god. It comes to us as demon, with a very negative connotation. But originally, a daimon could be bad or good. Daimons include lower needs, such as food and sex, as well as higher needs, such as love. Basically, he says, a daimon is anything that can take over the person, a situation he refers to as **daimonic possession**. It is then, when the balance among daimons is disrupted, that they should be considered "evil" – as the phrase implies! This idea is similar to Binswanger's idea of themes, or Horney's idea of coping strategies.

For May, one of the most important daimons is **eros**. Eros is love (not sex), and in Greek mythology was a minor god pictured as a young man.

(See the story of Eros and Psyche: http://www.ship.edu/%7Epsych/psyche.html)

Later, Eros would be transformed into that annoying little pest, Cupid. May understood love as the need we have to "become one" with another person, and refers to an ancient Greek story by Aristophanes: People were originally four-legged, four-armed, two-headed creatures. When we became a little too prideful, the gods split us in two, male and female, and cursed us with the never-ending desire to recover our missing half!

Anyway, like any daimon, eros is a good thing until it takes over the personality, until we become obsessed with it.

Another important concept for May is **will**: The ability to organize oneself in order to achieve one's goals. This makes will roughly synonymous with ego and reality-testing, but with its own store of energy, as in ego psychology. I suspect he got the notion from Otto Rank, who uses will in the same way. May hints that will, too, is a daimon that can potentially take over the person.

Another definition of will is "the ability to make **wishes** come true." Wishes are "playful imaginings of possibilities," and are manifestations of our daimons. Many wishes, of course, come from eros. But they require will to make them happen! Hence, we can see three "personality types" coming out of our relative supply, you might say, of our wishes for love and the will to realize them. Note that he doesn't actually come out and name them – that would be too categorical for an existentialist – and they are not either-or pigeon holes by any means. But he does use various terms to refer to them, and I have picked representative ones.

There is the type he refers to as "**neo-Puritan**," who is all will, but no love. They have amazing self-discipline, and can "make things happen"... but they have no wishes to act upon. So they become "anal" and perfectionistic, but empty and "dried-up." The archetypal example is Ebenezer Scrooge.

The second type he refers to as "**infantile**." They are all wishes but no will. Filled with dreams and desires, they don't have the self-discipline to make anything of their dreams and desires, and so become dependent and conformist. They love, but their love means little. Perhaps Homer Simpson is the clearest example!

The last type is the "**creative**" type. May recommends, wisely, that we should cultivate a balance of these two aspects of our personalities. He said "Man's task is to unite love and will." This idea is, in fact, an old one that we find among quite a few theorists. Otto Rank, for example, makes the same contrast with death (which includes both our need for others and our fear of life) and life (which includes both our need for autonomy and our fear of loneliness). Other theorists have talked about communion and agency, homonymy and autonomy, nurturance and assertiveness, affiliation and achievement, and so on.

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Myths

May's last book was ***The Cry for Myth***. He pointed out that a big problem in the twentieth century was our loss of values. All the different values around us lead us to doubt all values. As Nietzsche pointed out, if God is dead (i.e. absolutes are gone), then anything is permitted!

May says we have to create our own values, each of us individually. This, of course, is difficult to say the least. So we need help, not forced on us, but "offered up" for us to use as we will.

Enter **myths**, stories that help us to "make sense" out of out lives, "guiding narratives." They resemble to some extent Jung's archetypes, but they can be conscious and unconscious, collective and personal. A good example is how many people live their lives based on stories from the Bible.

Other examples you may be familiar with include Horatio Alger, Oedipus Rex, Sisyphus, Romeo and Juliet, Casablanca, Leave it to Beaver, Star Wars, Little House on the Prairie, The Simpsons, South Park, and the fables of Aesop. As I intentionally suggest with this list, a lot of stories make lousy myths. Many stories emphasize the magical granting of one's wishes (infantile). Others promise success in exchange for hard work and self-sacrifice (neo-Puritan). Many of our stories today say that valuelessness is itself the best value! Instead, says May, we should be actively working to create new myths that support people's efforts at making the best of life, instead of undermining them!

The idea sounds good – but it isn't terribly existential! Most existentialists feel that it is necessary to face reality much more directly than "myths" imply. In fact, they sound a little too much like what the great mass of people succumb to as a part of fallenness, conventionality, and inauthenticity! A controversy for the future....

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Readings

May writes very well and all his books are quite readable.

His first was ***The Meaning of Anxiety*** (1950).

General overviews include ***Man's Search for Himself*** (1953), ***Psychology and the Human Dilemma*** (1967), and ***The Discovery of Being*** (1983).

Strongly recommended are ***Love and Will*** (1969) and ***The Cry for Myth*** (1991).

There are quite a few others!

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JEAN PIAGET

[1896 – 1980]

Personality Theories

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Biography

Jean Piaget was born in Neuchâtel, Switzerland, on August 9, 1896. His father, Arthur Piaget, was a professor of medieval literature with an interest in local history. His mother, Rebecca Jackson, was intelligent and energetic, but Jean found her a bit neurotic – an impression that he said led to his interest in psychology, but away from pathology! The oldest child, he was quite independent and took an early interest in nature, especially the collecting of shells. He published his first "paper" when he was ten – a one page account of his sighting of an albino sparrow.

He began publishing in earnest in high school on his favorite subject, mollusks. He was particularly pleased to get a part time job with the director of Nuechâtel's Museum of Natural History, Mr. Godel. His work became well known among European students of mollusks, who assumed he was an adult! All this early experience with science kept him away, he says, from "the demon of philosophy."

Later in adolescence, he faced a bit a crisis of faith: Encouraged by his mother to attend religious instruction, he found religious argument childish. Studying various philosophers and the application of logic, he dedicated himself to finding a "biological explanation of knowledge." Ultimately, philosophy failed to assist him in his search, so he turned to psychology.

After high school, he went on to the University of Neuchâtel. Constantly studying and writing, he became sickly, and had to retire to the mountains for a year to recuperate. When he returned to Neuchâtel, he decided he would write down his philosophy. A fundamental point became a centerpiece for his entire life's work: "In all fields of life (organic, mental, social) there exist 'totalities' qualitatively distinct from their parts and imposing on them an organization." This principle forms the basis of his structuralist philosophy, as it would for the Gestaltists, Systems Theorists, and many others.

In 1918, Piaget received his Doctorate in Science from the University of Neuchâtel. He worked for a year at psychology labs in Zurich and at Bleuler's famous psychiatric clinic. During this period, he was introduced to the works of Freud, Jung, and others. In 1919, he taught psychology and philosophy at the Sorbonne in Paris. Here he met Simon (of Simon-Binet fame) and did research on intelligence testing. He didn't care for the "right-or-wrong" style of the intelligent tests and started interviewing his subjects at a boys school instead, using the psychiatric interviewing techniques he had learned the year before. In other words, he began asking how children reasoned.

In 1921, his first article on the psychology of intelligence was published in the Journal de Psychologie. In the same year, he accepted a position at the Institut J. J. Rousseau in Geneva. Here he began with his students to research the reasoning of elementary school children. This research became his first five books on child psychology. Although he considered this work highly preliminary, he was surprised by the strong positive public reaction to his work.

In 1923, he married one of his student coworkers, Valentine Châtenay. In 1925, their first daughter was born; in 1927, their second daughter was born; and in 1931, their only son was born. They immediately became the focus of intense observation by Piaget and his wife. This research became three more books!

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In 1929, Piaget began work as the director of the Bureau International Office de l'Education, in collaboration with UNESCO. He also began large scale research with A. Szeminska, E. Meyer, and especially Bärbel Inhelder, who would become his major collaborator. Piaget, it should be noted, was particularly influential in bringing women into experimental psychology. Some of this work, however, wouldn't reach the world outside of Switzerland until World War II was over.

In 1940, He became chair of Experimental Psychology, the Director of the psychology laboratory, and the president of the Swiss Society of Psychology. In 1942, he gave a series of lectures at the Collège de France, during the Nazi occupation of France. These lectures became The Psychology of Intelligence. At the end of the war, he was named President of the Swiss Commission of UNESCO.

Also during this period, he received a number of honorary degrees. He received one from the Sorbonne in 1946, the University of Brussels and the University of Brazil in 1949, on top of an earlier one from Harvard in 1936. And, in 1949 and 1950, he published his synthesis, **Introduction to Genetic Epistemology**.

In 1952, he became a professor at the Sorbonne. In 1955, he created the International Center for Genetic Epistemology, of which he served as director the rest of his life. And, in 1956, he created the School of Sciences at the University of Geneva.

He continued working on a general theory of structures and tying his psychological work to biology for many more years. Likewise, he continued his public service through UNESCO as a Swiss delegate. By the end of his career, he had written over 60 books and many hundreds of articles. He died in Geneva, September 16, 1980, one of the most significant psychologists of the twentieth century.

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Theory

Jean Piaget began his career as a biologist – specifically, a malacologist! But his interest in science and the history of science soon overtook his interest in snails and clams. As he delved deeper into the thought-processes of doing science, he became interested in the nature of thought itself, especially in the development of thinking. Finding relatively little work done in the area, he had the opportunity to give it a label. He called it **genetic epistemology**, meaning the study of the development of knowledge.

He noticed, for example, that even infants have certain skills in regard to objects in their environment. These skills were certainly simple ones, sensori-motor skills, but they directed the way in which the infant explored his or her environment and so how they gained more knowledge of the world and more sophisticated exploratory skills. These skills he called **schemas**.

For example, an infant knows how to grab his favorite rattle and thrust it into his mouth. He's got that schema down pat. When he comes across some other object – say daddy's expensive watch, he easily learns to transfer his "grab and thrust" schema to the new object. This Piaget called **assimilation**, specifically assimilating a new object into an old schema.

When our infant comes across another object again – say a beach ball – he will try his old schema of grab and thrust. This of course works poorly with the new object. So the schema will adapt to the new object: Perhaps, in this example, "squeeze and drool" would be an appropriate title for the new schema. This is called **accommodation**, specifically accomodating an old schema to a new object.

Assimilation and accommodation are the two sides of **adaptation**, Piaget's term for what most of us would call learning. Piaget saw adaptation, however, as a good deal broader than the kind of learning that Behaviorists in the US were talking about. He saw it as a fundamentally biological process. Even one's grip has to accommodate to a stone, while clay is assimilated into our grip. All living things adapt, even without a nervous system or brain.

Assimilation and accommodation work like pendulum swings at advancing our understanding of the world and our competency in it. According to Piaget, they are directed at a balance between the structure of the mind and the environment, at a certain congruency between the two, that would indicate that you have a good (or at least good-enough) model of the universe. This ideal state he calls **equilibrium**.

As he continued his investigation of children, he noted that there were periods where assimilation dominated, periods where accommodation dominated, and periods of relative equilibrium, and that these periods were similar among all the children he looked at in their nature and their timing. And so he developed the idea of **stages** of cognitive development. These constitute a lasting contribution to psychology.

The sensorimotor stage

The first stage, to which we have already referred, is the sensorimotor stage. It lasts from birth to about two years old. As the name implies, the infant uses senses and motor abilities to understand the world, beginning with reflexes and ending with complex combinations of sensorimotor skills.

Between one and four months, the child works on **primary circular reactions** – just an action of his own which serves as a stimulus to which it responds with the same action, and around and around we go. For example, the baby may suck her thumb. That feels good, so she sucks some more... Or she may blow a bubble. That's interesting so I'll do it again....

Between four and 12 months, the infant turns to **secondary circular reactions**, which involve an act that extends out to the environment: She may squeeze a rubber duckie. It goes "quack." That's great, so do it

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again, and again, and again. She is learning "procedures that make interesting things last."

At this point, other things begin to show up as well. For example, babies become ticklish, although they must be aware that someone else is tickling them or it won't work. And they begin to develop object permanence. This is the ability to recognize that, just because you can't see something doesn't mean it's gone! Younger infants seem to function by an "out of sight, out of mind" schema. Older infants remember, and may even try to find things they can no longer see.

Between 12 months and 24 months, the child works on **tertiary circular reactions**. They consist of the same "making interesting things last" cycle, except with constant variation. I hit the drum with the stick – rat-tat-tat-tat. I hit the block with the stick – thump-thump. I hit the table with the stick – clunk-clunk. I hit daddy with the stick – ouch-ouch. This kind of active experimentation is best seen during feeding time, when discovering new and interesting ways of throwing your spoon, dish, and food.

Around one and a half, the child is clearly developing **mental representation**, that is, the ability to hold an image in their mind for a period beyond the immediate experience. For example, they can engage in **deferred imitation**, such as throwing a tantrum after seeing one an hour ago. They can use **mental combinations** to solve simple problems, such as putting down a toy in order to open a door. And they get good at pretending. Instead of using dollies essentially as something to sit at, suck on, or throw, now the child will sing to it, tuck it into bed, and so on.

Preoperational stage

The preoperational stage lasts from about two to about seven years old. Now that the child has mental representations and is able to pretend, it is a short step to the use of **symbols**.

A symbol is a thing that represents something else. A drawing, a written word, or a spoken word comes to be understood as representing a real dog. The use of language is, of course, the prime example, but another good example of symbol use is **creative play**, wherein checkers are cookies, papers are dishes, a box is the table, and so on. By manipulating symbols, we are essentially thinking, in a way the infant could not: in the absence of the actual objects involved!

Along with symbolization, there is a clear understanding of past and future. for example, if a child is crying for its mother, and you say "Mommy will be home soon," it will now tend to stop crying. Or if you ask him, "Remember when you fell down?" he will respond by making a sad face.

On the other hand, the child is quite **egocentric** during this stage, that is, he sees things pretty much from one point of view: his own! She may hold up a picture so only she can see it and expect you to see it too. Or she may explain that grass grows so she won't get hurt when she falls.

Piaget did a study to investigate this phenomenon called the mountains study. He would put children in front of a simple plaster mountain range and seat himself to the side, then ask them to pick from four pictures the view that he, Piaget, would see. Younger children would pick the picture of the view they themselves saw; older kids picked correctly.

Similarly, younger children **center** on one aspect of any problem or communication at a time. for example, they may not understand you when you tell them "Your father is my husband." Or they may say things like "I don't live in the USA; I live in Pennsylvania!" Or, if you show them five black and three white marbles and ask them "Are there more marbles or more black marbles?" they will respond "More black ones!"

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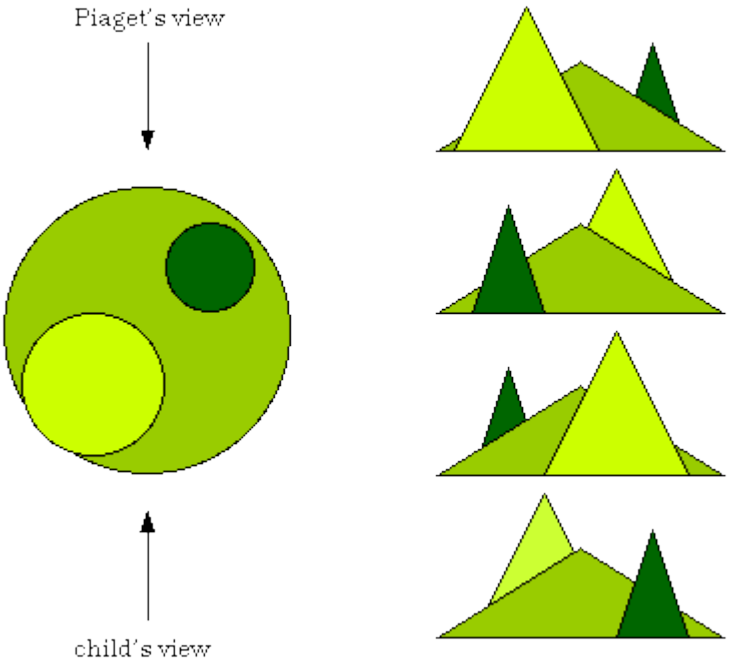
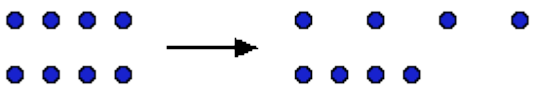


Perhaps the most famous example of the preoperational child's centrism is what Piaget refers to as their inability to conserve liquid volume. If I give a three year old some chocolate milk in a tall skinny glass, and I give myself a whole lot more in a short fat glass, she will tend to focus on only one of the dimensions of the glass. Since the milk in the tall skinny glass goes up much higher, she is likely to assume that there is more milk in that one than in the short fat glass, even though there is far more in the latter. It is the development of the child's ability to **decenter** that marks him as havingmoved to the next stage.

Concrete operations stage

The concrete operations stage lasts from about seven to about 11. The word **operations** refers to logical operations or principles we use when solving problems. In this stage, the child not only uses symbols representationally, but can manipulate those symbols logically. Quite an accomplishment! But, at this point, they must still perform these operations within the context of concrete situations.

The stage begins with progressive decentering. By six or seven, most children develop the ability to **conserve** number, length, and liquid volume. **Conservation** refers to the idea that a quantity remains the same despite changes in appearance. If you show a child four marbles in a row, then spread them out, the preoperational child will focus on the spread, and tend to believe that there are now more marbles than before.



Or if you have two five inch sticks laid parallel to each other, then move one of them a little, she may believe that the moved stick is now longer than the other.

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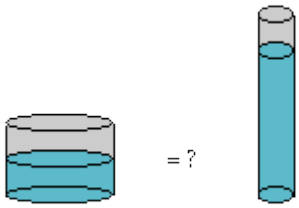
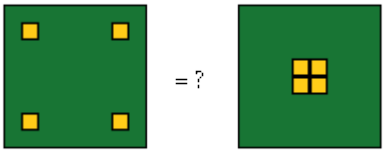
The concrete operations child, on the other hand, will know that there are still four marbles, and that the stick doesn't change length even though it now extends beyond the other.



And he will know that you have to look at more than just the height of the milk in the glass: If you pour the mild from the short, fat glass into the tall, skinny glass, he will tell you that there is the same amount of milk as before, despite the dramatic increase in mild-level!

By seven or eight years old, children develop conservation of substance: If I take a ball of clay and roll it into a long thin rod, or even split it into ten little pieces, the child knows that there is still the same amount of clay. And he will know that, if you rolled it all back into a single ball, it would look quite the same as it did – a feature known as **reversibility**.



By nine or ten, the last of the conservation tests is mastered: conservation of area. If you take four one-inch square pieces of felt, and lay them on a six-by-six cloth together in the center, the child who conserves will know that they take up just as much room as the same squares spread out in the corners, or, for that matter, anywhere at all.

If all this sounds too easy to be such a big deal, test your friends on conservation of mass: Which is heavier: a million tons of lead, or a million tons of feathers?

In addition, a child learns **classification** and **seriation** during this stage. Classification refers back to the question of whether there are more marbles or more black marbles? Now the child begins to get the idea that one set can include another. Seriation is putting things in order. The younger child may start putting things in order by, say size, but will quickly lose track. Now the child has no problem with such a task. Since arithmetic is essentially nothing more than classification and seriation, the child is now ready for some formal education!

Formal operations stage

But the concrete operations child has a hard time applying his new-found logical abilities to non-concrete – i.e. abstract – events. If mom says to junior "You shouldn't make fun of that boy's nose. How would you feel if someone did that to you?" he is likely to respond "I don't have a big nose!" Even this simple lesson may well be too abstract, too hypothetical, for his kind of thinking.

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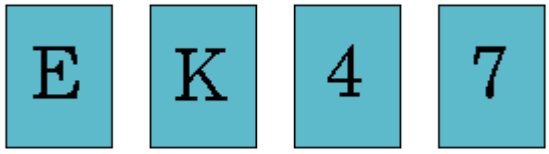
Don't judge the concrete operations child too harshly, though. Even adults are often taken-aback when we present them with something hypothetical: "If Edith has a lighter complexion than Susan, and Edith is darker than Lily, who is the darkest?" Most people need a moment or two.

From around 12 on, we enter the formal operations stage. Here we become increasingly competent at adult-style thinking. This involves using logical operations, and using them in the abstract, rather than the concrete. We often call this **hypothetical thinking**.



Here's a simple example of a task that a concrete operations child couldn't do, but which a formal operations teenager or adult could – with a little time and effort. Consider this rule about a set of cards that have letters on one side and numbers on the other: "If a card has a vowel on one side, then it has an even number on the other side." Take a look at the cards below and tell me, which cards do I need to turn over to tell if this rule is actually true? You'll find the answer at the end of this chapter.

It is the formal operations stage that allows one to investigate a problem in a careful and systematic fashion. Ask a 16 year old to tell you the rules for making pendulums swing quickly or slowly, and he may proceed like this:

> A long string with a light weight – let's see how fast that swings.
> A long string with a heavy weight – let's try that.
> Now, a short string with a light weight.
> And finally, a short string with a heavy weight.

His experiment – and it is an experiment – would tell him that a short string leads to a fast swing, and a long string to a slow swing, and that the weight of the pendulum means nothing at all!

The teenager has learned to group possibilities in four different ways:

> By **conjunction**: "Both A and B make a difference" (e.g. both the string's length and the pendulum's weight).
>
> By **disjunction**: "It's either this or that" (e.g. it's either the length or the weight).
>
> By **implication**: "If it's this, then that will happen" (the formation of a hypothesis).
>
> By **incompatibility**: "When this happens, that doesn't" (the elimination of a hypothesis).

On top of that, he can operate on the operations – a higher level of grouping. If you have a proposition, such as "it could be the string or the weight," you can do four things with it:

> **Identity**: Leave it alone. "It could be the string or the weight."
>
> **Negation**: Negate the components and replace or's with and's (and vice versa). "It might not be the string and not the weight, either."

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Reciprocity: Negate the components but keep the and's and or's as they are. "Either it is not the weight or it is not the string."

Correlativity: Keep the components as they are, but replace or's with and's, etc. "It's the weight and the string."

Someone who has developed his or her formal operations will understand that the correlate of a reciprocal is a negation, that a reciprocal of a negation is a correlate, that the negation of a correlate is a reciprocal, and that the negation of a reciprocal of a correlate is an identity (phew!!!).

Maybe it has already occured to you: It doesn't seem that the formal operations stage is something everyone actually gets to. Even those of us who do don't operate in it at all times. Even some cultures, it seems, don't develop it or value it like ours does. Abstract reasoning is simply not universal.

[Answer to the card question: The E and the 7. The E must have an even number on the back – that much is obvious. the 7 is odd, so it cannot have a vowel on the other side – that would be against the rule! But the rule says nothing about what has to be on the back of a consonant such as the K, nor does it say that the 4 *must*have a vowel on the other side!]

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References

It is hard to say, of Piaget's many works, which are most significant or interesting, but here goes:

The Moral Judgement of the Child (1932 – one of the first five books),

The Psychology of Intelligence (1947, in English 1950),

The Construction of Reality in the Child (1937, in English 1954, based on observation of his own children),

The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence (with Inhelder, 1958),

The Psychology of the Child (with Inhelder, 1966, in English 1969),

Insights and Illusions of Philosophy (1965, 1971 in English)

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SOCIOBIOLOGY

Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

Ever since Darwin came out with his theory of evolution, people – including Darwin himself – have been speculating on how our social behaviors (and feelings, attitudes, and so on) might also be affected by evolution. After all, if the way our bodies look and work as biological creatures can be better understood through evolution, why not the things we do with those bodies?

The entemologist E. O Wilson was the first to formalize the idea that social behavior could be explained evolutionarily, and he called his theory sociobiology. At first, it gained attention only in biological circles – even there it had strong critics. When sociologists and psychologists caught wind of it, the controversy really got started. At that time, sociology was predominantly structural-functionalist, with a smattering of Marxists and feminists. Psychology was still dominated by behaviorist learning theory, with humanism starting to make some headway. Not one of these theories has much room for the idea that we, as human beings, could be so strongly determined by evolutionary biology!

Over time, Wilson's sociobiology found more and more supporters among biologists, psychologists, and even anthropologists. Only sociology has remained relatively unaffected.

Instinct

Let's begin with an example of instinctual behavior in animals: The **three-spined stickleback** is a one-inch long fish that one can find in the rivers and lakes of Europe. Springtime is, as you might expect, the mating season for the mighty stickleback and the perfect time to see instincts in action.

Certain changes occur in their appearances: The male, normally dull, becomes red above the midline. He stakes out a territory for himself, from which he will chase any similarly colored male, and builds a nest by depositing weeds in a small hollow and running through them repeatedly to make a tunnel. This is all quite built-in. Males raised all alone will do the same. We find, in fact, that the male stickleback will, in the mating season, attempt to chase anything red from his territory (including the reflection of a red truck on the aquarium's glass).

But that's not the instinct of the moment. The female undergoes a transformation as well: She, normally dull like the male, becomes bloated by her many eggs and takes on a certain silvery glow that apparently no male stickleback can resist. When he sees a female, he will swim towards her in a zigzag pattern. She will respond by swimming towards him with her head held high. He responds by dashing towards his nest and indicating it's entrance. She enters the nest, her head sticking out one end, her tail the other. He prods at the base of her tail with rhythmic thrusts. She releases her eggs and leaves the nest. He enters and fertilizes the eggs, and then, a thorough chauvinist, chases her away and waits for a new partner.

What you see working here is a series of **sign stimuli** and **fixed actions**: His zigzag dance is a response to her appearance and becomes a stimulus for her to follow, and so on. Perhaps I'm being perverse, but doesn't the stickleback's instinctive courtship remind you of some of our human courtship rituals? I'm not trying to say we are quite as mindless about it as the stickleback seems to be – just that some similar patterns may form a part of or basis for our more complex, learned behaviors.

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Ethologists – people who study animal behavior in natural settings – have been studying behaviors such as the sticklebacks' for over a century. One, Konrad Lorenz, has developed an hydraulic model of how an instinct works. We have a certain amount of energy available for any specific instinctual system, as illustrated by a reservoir of water. There is a presumably neurological mechanism that allows the release of some or all of that energy in the presence of the appropriate sign stimulus: a faucet. There are further mechanisms – neurological, motor, hormonal – that translate the energy into specific fixed actions. Today, we might suggest that hydraulic energy is a poor metaphor and translate the whole system into an information processing one – each era has it's favorite metaphors. But the description still seems sound.

Does any of this apply to human courtship and sexual behavior? I leave it up to you. But what about other examples? Two possibilities stand out:

1. There are certain patterns of behavior found in most, if not all, animals, involving the promotion of oneself, the search for status or raw power, epitomized in aggression. Let's call this **the assertive instinct**.

2. There are other patterns of behavior found in, it seems, somewhat fewer species, involving care for someone other than oneself, epitomized in a mother's care for her babies. Let's call this the **nurturant instinct**.

Evolution

The basics of evolution are quite simple. First, all animals tend to over-reproduce, some having literally thousands of offspring in a lifetime. Yet populations of animals tend to remain quite stable over the generations. Obviously, some of these offspring aren't making it!

Second, There is quite a bit of variation within any species. Much of the variety is genetically based and passed on from one generation to another. Included in that variety are traits that help some individuals to survive and reproduce, and other traits that hinder them.

Put the two ideas together, and you have **natural selection**: Nature encourages the propagation of the positive traits and discourages the negative ones. As long as variety continues to be created by sexual recombination and mutation, and the resources for life remain limited, evolution will continue.

One sociobiologist, David Barash, suggests a guiding question for understanding possible evolutionary roots of any behavior: "Why is sugar sweet", that is, why do we find it attractive? One hypothesis is that our ancestors ate fruit to meet their nutritional needs. Fruit is most nutritious when it is ripe. When fruit is ripe, it is loaded with sugars. Any ancestor who had a taste for sugar would be a little more likely to eat ripe fruit. His or her resulting good health would make him or her stronger and more attractive to potential mates. He or she might leave more offspring who, inheriting this taste for ripe fruit, would be more likely to survive to reproductive age, etc. A more general form of the guiding question is to ask of any motivated behavior "How might that behavior have aided ancestral survival and/or reproduction?"

A curious point to make about the example used is that today we have refined sugar – something which was not available to our ancestors, but which we discovered and passed on to our descendants through learned culture. It is clear that today a great attraction to sugar no longer serves our survival and reproduction. But culture moves much more quickly than evolution: It took millions of years to evolve our healthy taste for sugar; it took only thousands of years to undermine it.

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Attraction

Let's start by looking at mate selection. It is obvious that we are attracted some people more than others. Sociobiologists have the same explanation for this as for everything else, based on the archetypal question "why is sugar sweet?" We should be sexually attracted to others whose characteristics would maximize our genetic success, that is, would give us many healthy, long-lived, fertile children.

We should find healthiness attractive and, conversely, illness unattractive. We should find "perfect" features attractive, and deformities unattractive. We should find vitality, strength, vigor attractive. We should find "averageness" attractive – not too short, not too tall, not too fat, not too thin.... Quasimodo, for all his decency, had a hard time getting dates.

We are also attracted to certain people for less "logical" reasons, such as the degree to which they have strong masculine or feminine physical – and behavioral – characteristics. Women prefer men who are taller, with broad shoulders, a square jaw.... Men prefer women who are shorter than themselves, softer, rounder....

These differences between the sexes is known as **sexual dimorphism**, and the process that leads to these differences is called **sexual selection.** Small functional differences between the sexes can become large nonfunctional ones over many generations. If female birds are instinctively inclined to prefer colorful males – perhaps because colorful males have served to distract predators from ancestral females and their chicks – then a male that is more colorful will have a better chance, and the female with a more intense attraction to color a better chance, and their offspring will inherit their colors and intense attraction to colors and so on and so on... until you reach a point where the colors and the attraction are no longer a plus, but become a minus, such as in the birds of paradise. Some males cannot even fly under the weight of all their plumage.

Human beings are only modestly dimorphic. But boy are we aware of the dimorphisms!

The dimorphism is also found in our behaviors. David Barash puts it so: "Males tend to be selected for salesmanship; females for sales resistance." Females have a great deal invested in any act of copulation: the limited number of offspring she can carry, the dangers of pregnancy and childbirth, the increased nutritional requirements, the danger from predators...all serve to make the choice of a mate an important consideration. Males, on the other hand, can and do walk away from the consequences of copulation. Note, for example, the tendency of male frogs to try to mate with wading boots: As long as some sperm gets to where it should, the male is doing alright.

So females tend to more fussy about who they have relations with. They are more sensitive to indications that a particular male will contribute to their genetic survival. One of the most obvious examples is the attention many female animals pay to the size and strength of males, and the development of specialized contests, such as those of antlered and horned animals, to demonstrate that strength.

There are less obvious things as well. In some animals, males have to show, not just strength, but the ability to provide. This is especially true in any species which has the male providing for the female during her pregnancy and lactation – like humans! Sociobiologists suggest that, while men find youth and physical form most attractive, women tend to look for indications of success, solvency, savoir-faire. It might not just be a cultural fluke that men bring flowers and candies, pay for dinner, and so forth.

Further, they suggest, women may find themselves more interested in the "mature" man, as he is more likely to have proven himself, and less interested in the "immature" man, who presents a certain risk. And women should be more likely to put up with polygyny (i.e. other wives) than men with polyandry (other husbands): Sharing a clearly successful man is better in come cases than having a failure all to yourself. And, lo and behold, polygyny is even more common than monogamy, while polyandry is found in perhaps two cultures (one in Tibet and the other in Africa), and in both it involves brothers "sharing" a wife in order not to break-up tiny inherited properties.

Taking it from the other direction, males will tolerate less infidelity than females: Females "know" their children are theirs; males never know for sure. Genetically, it matters less if males "sow wild oats" or have

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many mates or are unfaithful. And, sure enough, most cultures are harder on women than men when it comes to adultery. In most cultures, in fact, it is the woman who moves into the husband's family (virilocality) – as if to keep track of her comings and goings.

From our culture's romantic view of love and marriage, it is interesting to note that in most cultures a failure to consummate a marriage is grounds for divorce or annulment. In our own culture, infertility and impotence are frequent causes of divorce. It seems reproduction is more important than we like to admit.

Of course, there is a limit to the extent to which we generalize from animals to humans (or from any species to any other), and this is especially true regarding sex. We are very sexy animals: Most animals restrict their sexual activity to narrowly defined periods of time, while we have sex all month and all year round. We can only guess how we got to be this way. Perhaps it has to do with the long-term helplessness of our infants. What better way to keep a family together than to make it so very reinforcing!

Children

That brings us to children, our attraction to them, and their attraction to us. Adults of many species, including ours, seem to find small representatives of their species, with short arms and legs, large heads, flat faces, and big, round eyes... "cute" somehow – "sweet," the sociobiologist might point out. It does make considerable evolutionary sense that, in animals with relatively helpless young, the adults should be attracted to their infants.

The infants, in turn, seem to be attracted to certain things as well. Goslings, as everyone knows, become attached to the first large moving object they come across in the first two days of life – usually mother goose (occasionally Konrad Lorenz or other ethologists). This is called **imprinting**. Human infants respond to pairs of eyes, female voices, and touch.

The goslings respond to their sign-stimulus with **the following response**, literally following that large moving object. Human infants, of course, are incapable of following, so they resort to subterfuge: the broad, full bodied, toothless smile which parents find overwhelmingly attractive.

Sociobiologists go on to predict that mothers will care for their children more than fathers (they have more invested in them, and are more certain of their maternity); that older mothers will care more than younger mothers (they have fewer chances of further procreation); that we will be more solicitous of our children when we have few (or only one!) than when we have many; that we will increase our concern for our children as they get older (they have demonstrated their survival potential); and that we will tend to push our children into marriage and children of their own.

Helping

Care – helping behavior – is likely when it involves our children, parents, spouses, or other close relations. It is less and less likely when it involves cousins or unrelated neighbors. It is so unusual when it involves strangers or distant people of other cultures and races that we recall one story – the good Samaritan – nearly 2000 years after the fact.

Sociobiologists predict that helping decreases with kinship distance. In fact, it should occur only when the sacrifice you make is outweighed by the advantage that sacrifice provides the genes you share with those relations. The geneticist J. B. S. Haldane supposedly once put it this way: "I'd gladly give my life for three of

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my brothers, five of my nephews, nine of my cousins...." This is called **kin selection**. Altruism based on genetic selfishness!

One kind of "altruistic" behavior is **herd behavior**. Some animals just seem to want to be close, and in dangerous times closer still. It makes sense: By collecting in a herd, you are less likely to be attacked by a predator. Mind you, sometimes you may find yourself on the outside of the herd – but the odds are good that the next time you'll be snugly inside.

Another kind is called **reciprocal altruism**. A prairy dog who sees a predator will begin to yelp loudly, for example. This warns the rest of his community, although it draws the predators attention to the one doing the yelping!

Herd behavior and reciprocal altruism work for the same reason that kin selection works: It caters to **inclusive fitness**: A slight reduction of my own survival probabiliities is more than balanced by the survival of relatively close relations. Some animals even help any member of their on species, with the instinctual "understanding" that they may be the beneficiaries the next time they need help themselves.

Robert Trivers has suggested that people engage in a more sophisticated form of reciprocal altruism, shared only with a few of the more advanced creatures of the world. Here you would be willing to sacrifice for someone else if it is understood that that specific other will do the same for you, or reciprocate in some other way, "tit for tat." Clearly, this requires the ability to recognize individuals and to recall debts!

Other geneticists have pointed out that, if there is a genetic basis for reciprocal altruism, their will also be some individuals that **cheat** by allowing others to do for them without ever meeting their own obligations. In fact, depending on the advantages that reciprocal altruism provides and the tendency of altruists to get back at cheaters, cheaters will be found in any population. Other studies have shown that "sociopathy," guiltless ignoring of social norms, is found in a sizable portion of the human population.

There is, of course, no need for a human being to be 100% altruist or 100% cheat. Most of us (or is it all of us?), although we get angry at cheats, are quite capable of cheating when the occasion arises. We feel guilt, of course, be we can cheat. A large portion of the human psyche seems to be devoted to calculating our chances of success or failure at such shady maneuvers. More on this later.

Aggression

Like many concepts in social psychology, aggression has many definitions, even many evaluations. Some think of aggression as a great virtue (e.g. "the aggressive businessperson"), while others see aggression as symptomatic of mental illness.

The fact they we do keep the same word anyway suggests that there is a commonality: Both positive and negative aggression serve to enhance the self. The positive version, which we could call assertiveness, is acting in a way that enhances the self, without the implication that we are hurting someone else. The negative version, which we might call violence, focuses more on the "disenhancement" of others as a means to the same end.

Although the life of animals often seems rather bloody, we must take care not to confuse **predation** – the hunting and killing of other animals for food – with aggression. Predation in carnivorous species has more in common with grazing in vegetarian species than with aggression between members of the same species. Take a good look at your neighborhood cat hunting a mouse: He is cool, composed, not hot and crazed. In human terms, there is not the usual emotional correlate of aggression: anger. He is simply taking care of business.

That taken care of, there remains remarkably little aggression in the animal world. But it does remain. We

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find it most often in circumstances of **competition** over a resource. This resource must be important for "fitness," that is, relevant to one's individual or reproductive success. Further, it must be restricted in abundance: Animals do not, for example, compete for air, but may for water, food, nesting areas, and mates.

It is the last item – mates – that accounts for most aggression in mammals. And it is males that are most noted for this aggression. As we mentioned earlier, females have so much at stake in any act of copulation – so many months gestation, the increased energy requirement, susceptibility to attack, the dangers of birth, the responsibility of lactation – that it serves their fitness to be "picky" when looking for a partner. If females are picky, males must be show-offs: The male must demonstrate that he has the qualities that serve the female's fitness, in order to serve his own fitness. Deer are a good example. Mind you, this need not be conscious or learned; in all likelihood, it is all quite instinctual in most mammals. It may possibly have some instinctual bases in us as well.

Some of his aggressiveness may in fact be mediated by **testosterone**, the "male" hormone. Inject testosterone into female mice and their threshold for aggressive behavior goes down. Remove testosterone from male mice (by castrating the poor things) and their thresholds go up. But I must add that testosterone does not cause aggression, it just lowers the threshold for it.

But females in many species can be quite aggressive (such as female guinea pigs), and females in any species can be extremely aggressive in certain circumstances (such as when facing a threat to her infants). In human societies, the sociological statistics are clear: Most violent crime is committed by men. But we have already noticed that, as women assert their rights to full participation in the social and economic world, those statistics are changing. Time will tell the degree to which testosterone is responsible for aggression in people.

Nevertheless, males engage in a great deal of head-butting. But one can't help but notice that these contests "over" females seldom end in death or even serious injury in most species. That is because these contests are just that: contests. They are a matter of **displays** of virtues, and they usually include actions that serve as sign stimuli to the opponent that the contest has ended in his favor: **surrender signals**. Continued aggression is of little advantage to either the loser or the winner. Even male rattlesnakes don't bite each other!

Territoriality and **dominance hierarchies** – once thought to be major focuses of aggressive behavior – seem to be relatively less significant. Animals tend to respect territorial and status claims more than dispute them. It is only when circumstances, whether natural or humanly created, are out of the ordinary that we see much aggression. And low food supplies likely have little to do with aggression. Southwick, studying Rhesus monkeys in the London Zoo, found that reducing the food supplies by 25% had no effect on the amount of aggression found, and reducing the food supplies by 50% actually decreased aggression! We find the same thing among primitive people.

Aggression in Human Beings

So why so much aggression in people? One possibility is our lack of biological restraints. Sociobiologists predict that animals that are poorly equipt for aggression are unlikely to have developed surrender signals. Man, they say, is one of these creatures. But we developed **technology**, including a technology of destruction, and this technology "evolved" much too quickly for our biological evolution to provide us with compensating restraints on aggression. Experience tells us that guns are more dangerous than knives, though both are efficient killing machines, because a gun is faster and provides us with less time to consider our act rationally – the only restraint left us.

Another problem is that we humans live not just in the "real" world, but in a **symbolic** world as well. A lion gets aggressive about something here-and-now. People get aggressive about things that happened long ago, things that they think will happen some day in the future, or things that they've been told is happening. Likewise, a lion gets angry about pretty physical things. Calling him a name won't bother him a bit.

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A lion gets angry about something that happens to him personally. We get angry about things that happen to our cars, our houses, our communities, our nations, our religious establishments, and so on. We have extended our "ego's" way beyond our selves and our loved ones to all sorts of symbolic things. The response to flag burning is only the latest example.

If aggression has an instinctual basis in human beings, we would expect there to be a sign stimulus. It would certainly not be something as simple as bright red males during mating season, as in stickleback fish. If we go back to the idea of competition as a fertile ground for aggression, we notice that **frustration** is a likely candidate. There are two of you who want the same thing; if one grabs it, the other doesn't get it and is unhappy; so he takes it, and now the other is unhappy; and so on. Goal-directed behavior has been blocked, and that is frustration.

Variations on that theme abound: We can be frustrated when an on-going behavior is interrupted (trying tripping someone); we can be frustrated by a delay of goal achievement (cut in front of someone on line at the supermarket); or we can be frustrated by the disruption of ordinary behavior patterns (cause me to forego my morning coffee). We are flexible creatures.

But we must beware here: Other things can lead to aggression besides frustration (or aren't highly paid boxers engaged in aggression?) and frustration can lead to other things besides aggression (or doesn't social impotence lead to depression?). Further, as Fromm points out, frustration (and aggression) is in the eyes of the beholder. He feels that the frustration must be experienced as unjust or as a sign of rejection for it to lead to aggression.

Sociobiology "versus" Culture

Many psychologists, sociologist, anthropologists, and others are wary of the explanations – convincing though they sometimes are – of the sociobiologists: For every sociobiological explanation, we can find a cultural explanation as well. After all, culture operates by the same principles as evolution.

There are many different ways to do any one task, but in the context of a certain physical environment and a certain culture, some ways of doing things work better than others. These are more likely to be "passed on" from one generation to the next, this time by learning.

Now, cultures need to accomplish certain things if they are to survive at all. They must assure effective use of natural resources, for example, which might involve the learning of all sorts of territorial and aggressive behaviors, just like in sociobiological explanations. And they must assure a degree of cooperation, which might involve learning altruistic behaviors, rules for sharing resources and for other social relationships, just like the ones in sociobiological explanations. And they must assure a continuation of the population, which might involve certain courtship and marital arrangements, nurturant behaviors, and so on, just like in sociobiological explanations.

If a society is to survive – and any existing society has at least survived until now – it must take care of the very same issues that genetics must take care of. And, because learning is considerably more flexible than evolutionary adaptation, we would expect culture to tend to replace genetics. That is, after all, only evolutionary good sense!

So do we have instincts? If instincts are defined as automatic reflex-like connections – no, probably not. But define instincts as "strong innate tendencies toward certain behaviors in certain situations" – yes, we probably do. The important point is that we (unlike animals) can always say no to our instinctual behaviors, just like we can say no to our learned ones!

If you are interested in learning more about sociobiology and its impact on psychology, go to the Center for Evolutionary Psychology. See especially their Primer for a more sophisticated overview of the topic!

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BUDDHIST PSYCHOLOGY

This text is made up of edited selections from
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Personality Theories

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Original E-Text-Site:
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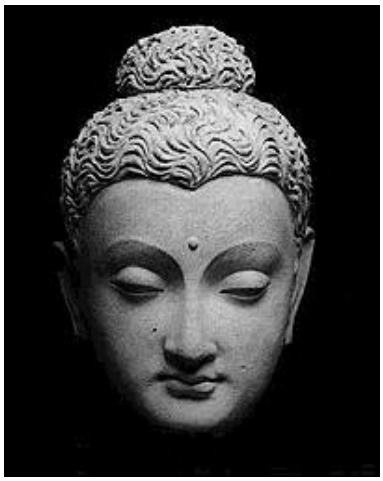
SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA BUDDHA

[566 bc - 486 bc]

Biography

There was a small country in what is now southern Nepal that was ruled by a clan called the Shakyas. The head of this clan, and the king of this country, was named Shuddodana Gautama.

His wife, Mahamaya, was expecting her first born. In the small town of Lumbini, she asked her handmaidens to assist her to a nearby grove of trees for privacy, where she gave birth to a son. She named him Siddhartha, which means "he who has attained his goals." Sadly, Mahamaya died only seven days after the birth. After that Siddhartha was raised by his mother's kind sister, Mahaprajapati.



When it came time for him to marry, he won the hand of Yashodhara, and they married when both were 16 years old.

Siddhartha was kept in one or another of their three palaces, and was prevented from experiencing much of what ordinary folk might consider quite commonplace. He was not permitted to see the elderly, the sickly, the dead, or anyone who had dedicated themselves to spiritual practices. Siddhartha grew increasing restless and curious about the world beyond the palace walls and he finally demanded that he be permitted to see his people and his lands.

The king carefully arranged that Siddhartha should not see the kind of suffering that he feared would lead him to a religious life. But, inevitably, he saw old people, sick people, and even death. He asked his friend and squire Chandaka the meaning of all these things, and Chandaka informed him of the simple truths that Siddhartha should have known all along: That all of us get old, sick, and eventually die.

Siddhartha also saw an ascetic, a monk who had renounced all the pleasures of the flesh. The peaceful look on the monks face would stay with Siddhartha for a long time to come. Later, he would say this about that time:

> *When ignorant people see someone who is old, they are disgusted and horrified, even though they too will be old some day. I thought to myself: I don't want to be like the ignorant people. After that, I couldn't feel the usual intoxication with youth anymore.*
>
> *When ignorant people see someone who is sick, they are disgusted and horrified, even though they too will be sick some day. I thought to myself: I don't want to be like the ignorant people. After that, I couldn't feel the usual intoxication with health anymore.*
>
> *When ignorant people see someone who is dead, they are disgusted and horrified, even though they too will die some day. I thought to myself: I don't want to be like the ignorant people. After that, I couldn't feel the usual intoxication with life anymore.*

At the age of 29, Siddhartha came to realize that he could not be happy living as he had been. He wanted more than anything to discover how one might overcome suffering. After kissing his sleeping wife and newborn son Rahula goodbye, he snuck out of the palace and into the forests of northern India.

He then began to practice the austerities and self-mortifications practiced by a group of five ascetics. For six years, he practiced. The sincerity and intensity of his practice were so astounding that, before long, the five

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ascetics became followers of Siddhartha. But the answers to his questions were not forthcoming. He redoubled his efforts, refusing food and water, until he was in a state of near death.

For six years, he practiced the ascetic life, eating only what he found on the ground, drinking only rain water, wearing nothing but a loin cloth. When the answers he was seeking wouldn't come to him, he tried even harder. But Siddhartha realized that these extreme practices were leading him nowhere, that in fact it might be better to find some middle way between the extremes of the life of luxury and the life of self-mortification.

Outside of the town of Bodh Gaya, Siddhartha decided that he would sit under a certain fig tree as long as it would take for the answers to the problem of suffering to come. He sat there for many days, first in deep concentration to clear his mind of all distractions, then in mindfulness meditation, opening himself up to the truth. On the full moon of May, with the rising of the morning star, Siddhartha finally understood the answer to the question of suffering and became the Buddha, which means "he who is awake."

At the deer park in Sarnath near Benares, about one hundred miles from Bodh Gaya, he preached his first sermon, which is called "setting the wheel of the teaching in motion." In it, he explained to the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. The king of Magadha, having heard Buddha's words, granted him a monastery for use during the rainy season. This and other generous donations permitted the community of converts to continue their practice throughout the years, and gave many more people an opportunity to hear the teachings of the Buddha.

His aunt and wife asked to be permitted into the **Sangha**, or monastic community, which was originally composed only of men. The culture of the time ranked women far below men in importance, and at first it seemed that permitting women to enter the community would weaken it. But the Buddha relented, and his aunt and wife became the first Buddhist nuns.

The Buddha said that it didn't matter what a person's status in the world was, or what their background or wealth or nationality might be. All were capable of enlightenment, and all were welcome into the Sangha. The first ordained Buddhist monk, Upali, had been a barber, yet he was ranked higher than monks who had been kings, only because he had taken his vows earlier than they!

Buddha had achieved his enlightenment at the age of 35. He would teach the **Dharma** (the way) throughout northeast India for another 45 years. When the Buddha was 80 years old, he ate some spoiled food and became very ill. He went into a deep meditation under a grove of sala trees and died. His last words were...

> *Impermanent are all created things;*
> *Strive on with awareness.*

Soon after Buddha's death, five hundred monks met at the first council at Rajagrha, under the leadership of Kashyapa. Upali recited the monastic code (**Vinaya**) as he remembered it. Ananda, Buddha's cousin, friend, and favorite disciple – and a man of prodigious memory! – recited Buddha's lessons (the **Sutras**). The monks debated details and voted on final versions. These were then committed to memory by other monks, to be translated into the many languages of the Indian plains. It should be noted that Buddhism remained an oral tradition for over 200 years.

In the next few centuries, the original unity of Buddhism began to fragment. The most significant split occurred after the second council, held at Vaishali 100 years after the first. After debates between a more liberal group and traditionalists, the liberal group left and labeled themselves the Mahasangha – "the great sangha." They would eventually evolve into the **Mahayana** tradition of northern Asia. The traditionalists would become known as **Theravada** or "way of the elders," and be the tradition of Sri Lanka and most of southeast Asia.

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Theory

Buddhism is an empirical philosophy. Buddha was very clear that we should judge the truth of any philosophy by its consequences. In the Kalama Sutra, he makes this particularly clear:

> *It is proper for you... to doubt, to be uncertain.... Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing; nor upon tradition; nor upon rumor; nor upon what is in a scripture; nor upon surmise; nor upon an axiom; nor upon specious reasoning; nor upon a bias towards a notion that has been pondered over; nor upon another's seeming ability; nor upon the consideration, 'The monk is our teacher....'*
> *What do you think...? Does **greed** appear in a man for his benefit or harm? Does **hate** appear in a man for his benefit or harm? Does **delusion** appear in a man for his benefit or harm?... being given to greed, hate, and delusion, and being overwhelmed and vanquished mentally by greed, hate, and delusion, this man takes life, steals, commits adultery, and tells lies; he prompts another too, to do likewise. Will that be long for his harm and ill?" ...*
> *...**when you yourselves know**: 'These things are bad; these things are blamable; these things are censured by the wise; undertaken and observed, these things lead to harm and ill,' abandon them.*

Buddhism is also a philosophy that is detached from theological considerations. Buddha, in fact, refused to answer questions concerning eternity and the afterlife. In the Kalama Sutra again, he notes how his philosophy helps whatever your beliefs about the afterlife may be:

> *The disciple... who has a hate-free mind, a malice-free mind, an undefiled mind, and a purified mind, is one by whom **four solaces** are found here and now.*
> *Suppose there is a hereafter and there is a fruit, result, of deeds done well or ill. Then it is possible that at the dissolution of the body after death, I shall arise in the heavenly world, which is possessed of the state of bliss. This is the first solace...*
> *Suppose there is no hereafter and there is no fruit, no result, of deeds done well or ill. Yet in this world, here and now, free from hatred, free from malice, safe and sound, and happy, I keep myself. This is the second solace...*
> *Suppose evil results befall an evil-doer. I, however, think of doing evil to no one. Then, how can ill results affect me who do no evil deed? This is the third solace...*
> *Suppose evil results do not befall an evil-doer. Then I see myself purified in any case. This is the fourth solace...*

The structure of the mind

Buddhists describe the person as composed of five **skandhas** ("aggregates"):

1. **The body (rupa)**, including the sense organs.
2. **Sensations and feelings (vedana)**, coming out of contact between sense organs and objects.
3. **Perceptions and ideas (samjña)**, especially manifest in our ability to recognize things and ideas.
4. **Mental acts (samskara)**, especially will power and attention.
5. **Basic consciousness (vijñana)**.

The last four are called **naman**, name, meaning the psyche. **Namarupa** (name-form) is therefore the Buddhist term for the person, mental and physical, which is nevertheless anatman, without soul or essence.

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Buddhism also differentiates among six "fields" (**ayatana**) for the five skandhas: sight, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, and mind, as well as the objects of these six senses.

Mahayana Buddhism adds **alaya-vijñana**, "storehouse" consciousness, to the skandhas. This is similar to Jung's idea of the collective unconscious. What is stored there are called **bijas** or seeds, which are inborn tendencies to perceive the world in a certain way and result from our karmic history. They combine with **manas** or ego to form the illusion that is ordinary existence. By quieting this ego and becoming less self-centered, your mind realizes the "emptiness" (**sunyata**) of all things. Then you have peace.

The Four Noble Truths

The **Four Noble Truths** sound like the basics of any theory with therapeutic roots:

1. Life is suffering. Life is at very least full of suffering, and it can easily be argued that suffering is an inevitable aspect of life. If I have senses, I can feel pain; if I have feelings, I can feel distress; if I have a capacity for love, I will have the capacity for grief. Such is life.

Duhkha, the Sanskrit word for suffering, is also translated as stress, anguish, and imperfection. Buddha wanted us to understand suffering as a foundation for improvement.

One key to understanding suffering is understanding **anitya**, which means that all things, including living things, our loved ones, and ourselves, are impermanent. Our peculiar position of being mortal and being aware of it is a major source of anxiety, but is also what makes our lives, and the choices we make, meaningful. Time becomes important only when there is only so much of it. Doing the right thing and loving someone only have meaning when you don't have an eternity to work with.

Another key concept is **anatman**, which means that all things – even we – have no "soul" or eternal substance. With no substance, nothing stands alone, and no one has a separate existence. We are all interconnected, not just with our human world, but with the universe.

2. Suffering is due to attachment. We might say that at least much of the suffering we experience comes out of ourselves, out of our desire to make pleasure, happiness, and love last forever and to make pain, distress, and grief disappear from life altogether.

We are not therefore to avoid all pleasure, happiness, and love. Nor are we to believe that all suffering comes only from ourselves. It's just not necessary, being shot once with an arrow, to shoot ourselves again, as the Buddha put it.

Attachment is one translation of the word **trishna**, which can also be translated as thirst, desire, lust, craving, or clinging. When we fail to recognize that all things are imperfect, impermanent, and insubstantial, we cling to them in the delusion that they are indeed perfect, permanent, and substantial, and that by clinging to them, we, too, will be perfect, permanent, and substantial.

Our lack of "essence" or preordained structure, our "nothingness," leads us to crave solidity. We are, you could say, whirlwinds who wish they were rocks. We cling to things in the hopes that they will provide us with a certain "weight." We try to turn our loved ones into things by demanding that they not change, or we try to change them into perfect partners, not realizing that a statue, though it may live forever, has no love to give us. We try to become immortal, whether by anxiety-driven belief in fairy-tales, or by making our children and grand-children into clones of ourselves, or by getting into the history books or onto the talk shows. We even cling to unhappy lives because change is too frightening.

Another aspect of attachment is **dvesha**, which means avoidance or hatred. To Buddha, hatred was every bit

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as much an attachment as clinging. Only by giving those things which cause us pain permanence and substance do we give them the power to hurt us more. We wind up fearing, not that which can harm us, but our fears themselves.

The most frightening things we've seen in this century are the mass movements – the Nazis, the Red Guard, the Ku Klux Klan, terrorist groups, and on and on. The thought seems to be that, if I'm just a little puff of wind, maybe by joining others of my kind, I can be a part of a hurricane! Beyond these are all the petty movements – political ones, revolutionary ones, religious ones, antireligious ones, ones involving nothing more than a style or fashion. And hatred is the glue that holds them together.

A third aspect of attachment is **avidya**, meaning ignorance. At one level, it refers to the ignorance of these Four Noble Truths – not understanding the truth of imperfection and so on. At a deeper level, it also means "not seeing," i.e. not directly experiencing reality, but instead seeing our personal interpretation of it. More than that, we take our interpretation of reality as more real than reality itself!

In some sutras, Buddha adds one more aspect of attachment: **anxiety**. Fear, like hatred, ties us to the very things that hurt us.

3. Suffering can be extinguished. At least that suffering we add to the inevitable suffering of life can be extinguished. Or, if we want to be even more modest in our claims, suffering can at least be diminished.

With decades of practice, some monks are able to transcend even simple, direct, physical pain. I don't think, however, that us ordinary folk in our ordinary lives have the option of devoting those decades to such an extreme of practice. For most of us, therapy is a matter of specifically diminishing **mental** anguish rather than eliminating all pain.

Nirvana is the traditional name for the state of being (or non-being, if you prefer) wherein all clinging, and so all suffering, has been eliminated. It is often translated as "blowing out," with the idea that we eliminate self like we blow out a candle. Another interpretation is that nirvana is the blowing out a fire that threatens to overwhelm us, or even taking away the oxygen that keeps the fires burning. By "blowing out" clinging, hate, and ignorance, we "blow out" unnecessary suffering. Perhaps an even more useful translation for nirvana is freedom!

4. And there is a way to extinguish suffering. This is what all therapists believe – each in his or her own way. Buddha called it the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path is the equivalent of a therapy program, but one so general that it can apply to anyone. The first two segments of the path are refered to as **prajña**, meaning **wisdom**:

Right view – understanding the Four Noble Truths, especially the nature of all things as imperfect, impermanent, and insubstantial and our self-inflicted suffering as founded in clinging, hate, and ignorance.

Right aspiration – having the true desire, the dedication, to free oneself from attachment, hatefulness, and ignorance. The idea that improvement comes only when the sufferer takes the first step of aspiring to improvement is apparently 2500 years old.

Therapy is something neither the therapist nor the client takes lying down – if you will pardon the pun. The therapist must take an assertive role in helping the client become aware of the reality of his or her suffering and its roots. Likewise, the client must take an assertive role in working towards improvement – even though

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it means facing the fears they've been working so hard to avoid, and especially facing the fear that they will "lose" themselves in the process.

The next three segments of the path provide more detailed guidance in the form of **moral precepts**, called **sila**:

Right speech – abstaining from lying, gossiping, and hurtful speech generally. Speech is often our ignorance made manifest, and is the most common way in which we harm others. Modern psychologists emphasize that one should above all stop lying to oneself. But Buddhism adds that by practicing being true to others, and one will find it increasingly difficult to be false to oneself.

Right action – behaving oneself, abstaining from actions that hurt others such as killing, stealing, and irresponsible sex. Traditionally, Buddhists speak of the five moral precepts, which are...

- Avoid harming others;
- Avoid taking what is not yours;
- Avoid harmful speech;
- Avoid irresponsible sex;
- Avoid drugs and alcohol.

A serious Buddhist may add five more:

- One simple meal a day, before noon:
- Avoid frivolous entertainments:
- Avoid self-adornment:
- Use a simple bed and seat:
- Avoid the use of money.

Monks and nuns living in monastic communities add over 100 more rules!

Right livelihood – making one's living in an honest, non-hurtful way. Here's one we don't talk about much in our society today. One can only wonder how much suffering comes out of the greedy, cut-throat, dishonest careers we often participate in. This by no means means we must all be monks: Imagine the good one can do as an honest, compassionate, hard-working business person, lawyer, or politician!

This is a good place to introduce another term associated with Buddhism: **karma**. Basically, karma refers to good and bad deeds and the consequences they bring. In some branches of Buddhism, karma has to do with what kind of reincarnation to expect. But other branches see it more simply as the negative (or positive) effects one's actions have on one's integrity. Beyond the effects of your selfish acts have on others, for example, each selfish act "darkens your soul," and makes happiness that much harder to find. On the other hand, each act of kindness, as the gypsies say, "comes back to you three times over." To put it simply, virtue is its own reward, and vice its own hell.

The last three segments of the path are the ones Buddhism is most famous for, and concern **samadhi** or meditation. For simple instructions, go to my page on meditation:

[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/meditation.html]

Right effort – taking control of your mind and the contents thereof. Simple, direct practice is what it takes, the developing of good mental habits: When bad thoughts and impulses arise, they should be abandoned. This is done by watching the thought without attachment, recognizing it for what it is (no denial or repression!), and letting it dissipate. Good thoughts and impulses, on the other hand, should be nurtured and enacted. Make virtue a habit, as the stoics used to say.

Right mindfulness – mindfulness refers to a kind of meditation involving an acceptance of thoughts and perceptions, a "bare attention" to these events without attachment. This mindfulness is also extended to daily life. It becomes a way of developing a fuller, richer awareness of life, and a deterent to our tendency to sleepwalk our way through life.

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One of the most important moral precepts in Buddhism is the avoidance of consciousness-diminishing or altering substances – i.e. alcohol or drugs. This is because anything that makes you less than fully aware sends you in the opposite direction of improvement into deeper ignorance.

But there are other things besides drugs that diminish consciousness. Some people try to avoid life by disappearing into food or sexuality. Others disappear into work, mindless routine, or rigid, self-created rituals. Others still drown themselves in television and other entertainment.

We can also drown awareness in material things – fast cars, extravagant clothes, and so on. Shopping has itself become a way of avoiding life. Worst of all is the blending of materiality with entertainment. While monks and nuns avoid frivolous diversions and luxurious possessions, we surround ourselves with commercials, infomercials, and entire shopping networks, as if they were effective forms of "pain control!"

Right concentration – meditating in such a way as to empty our natures of attachments, avoidances, and ignorance, so that we may accept the imperfection, impermanence, and insubstantiality of life. This is usually thought of as the highest form of Buddhist meditation, and full practice of it is pretty much restricted to monks and nuns who have progressed considerably along the path.

But just like the earlier paths provide a foundation for later paths, later ones often support earlier ones. For example, a degree of "calm abiding" (**shamatha**), a version of concentration, is essential for developing mindfulness, and is taught to all beginning meditators. This is the counting of breaths or chanting of mantras most people have heard of. This quieting of the mind is, in fact, important to mindfulness, effort, all moral practice, and even the maintaining of view and aspiration. I believe that this simple form of meditation is the best place for those who are suffering to begin – though once again, the rest of the eightfold path is essential for long-term improvement.

Most therapists know: Anxiety is the most common manifestation of psychological suffering. And when it's not anxiety, it's unresolved anger. And when it's not anger, it's pervasive sadness. All three of these can be toned done to a manageable level by simple meditation. Meditation will not eliminate these things – that requires wisdom and morality and the entire program – but it will give the sufferer a chance to acquire the wisdom, morality, etc!

Bodhisattvas

A Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who have chosen not to leave the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, but rather to remain in **samsara** (this existence) until they can bring all of life into nirvana with them. Think of them as the Buddhist version of saints. In northern Buddhism, they believe we all should strive to become Bodhisattvas.

How can you tell a bodhisattva from ordinary beings? They will have four outstanding qualities, called the **Brahma Vihara**:

> Loving kindness to all creatures;
> Compassion for all who suffer;
> Sympathetic joy for all who are happy;
> And equanimity, a pervading calm.

In northern Buddhism, the Bodhisattva has achieved "emptiness," **sunyata**. What this means is that they have gone beyond the usual dualistic mind. You and I think in terms of "this and that," "you versus me," "us and them," "either-or" and so on. The enlightened person sees that all things blend into each other, we are all human, everything is one. We are "empty."

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In one form of Zen Buddhism, there is a tradition that involves asking young monks and nuns unusual questions called **koans**. The monk or nun meditates on the koan in the hopes of achieving a breakthrough into nondualistic mind. These questions are designed to frustrate our usual way of thinking and perceiving the universe. The most famous of them is "what is the sound of one hand clapping?"

The question has no answer in the ordinary sense: Any sound would, of course, be incorrect, but then silence isn't really the answer either, because one hand clapping is not just silent, it is a Silent beyond silence. The dimension from silence to sound doesn't apply to something that cannot have either. It is like asking for the taste of blue or the smell of an E minor chord. If you like, you could say that the answer is emptiness.

The "answer" that the master is looking for from his students is some clear indication that they understand this emptiness. In Zen tradition, there are stories about how monks and nuns responded correctly (or incorrectly) to these questions, which stories then become new koans themselves. Some of these students respond by knocking over their master, by walking away, by putting their shoes on top of their heads, quoting Buddhist sayings, or remaining quiet. For all the apparent nonsense, their responses indicate their understanding.

Another koan is "if you speak, I will hit you; if you don't speak I will hit you." Perhaps you can see that there is no answer to this dilemma, no way out. But that means it is not a dilemma at all! There is no either-or. You will get hit. It is inevitable. And so it is nothing at all. You are totally free to do whatever it is you would do if you had never been confronted by the koan at all. The trick, of course, is to *show* that freedom. That's not so easy!

Buddhists have an expression: "**nirvana is samsara**." It means that the perfected life is this life. While there is much talk about great insights and amazing enlightenments and even paranormal events, what Buddhism is really all about is returning to this life, your very own little life, with a "new attitude." By being more calm, more aware, a nicer person morally, someone who has given up envy and greed and hatred and such, who understands that nothing is forever, that grief is the price we willingly pay for love.... this life becomes at very least bearable. We stop torturing ourselves and allow ourselves to enjoy what there is to enjoy. And there is a good deal to enjoy!

Buddhists often use the term "practice" for what they do. They encourage each other to "keep on practicing." Nobody is too terribly concerned if they aren't perfect – they don't expect that. As long as you pick yourself up and practice a little more. A good basis for therapy.

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The Ultimate Theory of Personality

PERSONALITY THEORIES

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Original E-Text-Site:
[http://www.ship.edu/%7Ecgboeree/perscontents.html]

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Introduction

After a semester of Personality theories – Freud and Jung and Rogers and Frankl and Bandura and Eysenck, etc., etc., etc. – students often ask, once again, isn't there **one** theory we can trust and use with confidence? Can't we narrow it down a bit? Tell us, what is right and what is not!

Well, unfortunately, Personality is not yet a science, at least not in the sense that Biology or Chemistry are sciences. In those fields, although there is disagreement about details and the latest findings, there is a common body of knowledge that few people in the field argue about. Not so, obviously, in Personality.

However, there are slowly emerging ideas that seem to pop up again and again in different theories, often with different names, but there none-the-less. Sometimes they occur in theories that are otherwise quite different, or that come from a different perspective, such as clinical versus experimental versus factor analysis versus phenomenological. Perhaps the field will indeed become a science, perhaps not too far in the future!

I know I'm excited!

So, I have taken the bull by the cojones, so to speak, and have compiled this little list of things I see as being, if not universal, at least more likely features of the future ultimate theory of personality. Here goes...

Consciousness and the unconscious

This, of course, is Freud's greatest contribution. Even if he didn't invent the terms, he certainly was responsible for popularizing them! Many theories postulate some sort of unconscious, not as a place where our worst fears bubble and boil, but as a way of accounting for the many things that influence us without our full awareness.

We can pick out three aspects of the unconscious.

> The first is **biological**. We come into this life with something like Freud's **id** or Jung's **collective unconscious** in place. It is likely composed of whatever **instincts** remain a part of our human nature, plus our **temperament** or inborn personality, and perhaps the preprogramming for **stages** of life. This biological unconscious overlaps in part with the existentialist concept of **thrownness**.
>
> > As for possible instincts, I would nominate four "complexes" of them: A **mating** complex, an **assertive** complex, a **social** complex, and a **nurturant** complex.
>
> Second, there is the **social unconscious** (as Fromm calls it), which actually resembles Freud's **superego** more than Freud's id. It might include our language, social taboos, cultural habits, and so on. It includes all the cultural things we were surrounded with in our childhood and have learned so well that they have become "second nature" to us! The negative aspects of the social unconscious overlaps with the existential idea of **fallenness** and with Rogers' idea of **conditions of worth**.
>
> And third, there is the **personal unconscious** (to borrow Jung's term), perhaps understood as the unconscious aspect of the ego. It is composed of our idiosyncratic **habits**, the more personal things we have learned so well we no longer need to be conscious of them in order to enact them – like knowing how to drive so well that we can comb our hair, talk on a cell phone, light a cigarette, and notice the attractive person in the rear view mirror all at the same time (at least until you run off the road into a tree).

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> Included among those well-learned things might be the **defense mechanisms**. With these we ignore, with habitual efficiency, uncomfortable realities in order to save our sense of self-worth. More a little later....

But let's not get overly enthusiastic about the unconscious! Few psychologists today view it as the location of our true selves, the answer to all our problems, or some deep psychic well that connects us with the universe or God! It is where the more-or-less automatic processes of instinct and the well-learned do their thing.

All this is in contrast to (in fact defined in contrast to) **consciousness** or awareness. Other than instincts and (perhaps) a few associations learned by classical conditioning, it seems that all things going into or out of our psyches pass through awareness.

What consciousness is will be a question for a good while longer. It's not terribly available to traditional research methods! But for now, we can see it as the ability to experience reality (outer and inner) together with its meaning or relevance to ourselves (as biological, social, and even individual organisms). Phew! I would add that it may be consciousness that also provides us with the freedom to choose among the choices available to us – i.e. **free will** or at least **self-determination**.

> Perhaps the most important thing to keep in mind about consciousness is that it is **personal**. It is yours and yours alone. And it is within this personal consciousness that all of your "psychology" takes place. Everything you feel, perceive, think, and do is based on your **subjective** view of reality, which may be significantly different from mine! Therefore, in order to understand people, we need to understand them from the inside. This little fact is what makes psychology so much more difficult than the physical sciences!

Stages

Stages are something most personality theorists shy away from. Freud and Erikson are the obvious exceptions, as is the developmentalist Piaget. And yet there is a very biological basis for the idea. We can, on pure biology, separate out at least three stages: the **fetus**, the **child**, and the **adult**. This is, in fact, completely parallel to the egg, caterpillar, butterfly example we learned in high school biology!

In addition, we can see three **transitional** stages: **infancy**, **adolescence**, and **senescence**.

> **Infancy** is not, actually, found in more primitive animals, and is greatly exaggerated in humans. We are, in a sense, all born prematurely. Perhaps this was the result of an evolutionary dilemma: How can an upright creature give birth to a baby with a large head without killing the mom? That's right: Give birth before it gets too big!
>
> > What that does for us is more than just let us live long enough to give birth again. It lets the infant soak up information much earlier, and in a different way. It would seem that for the first 6 to 12 months, our neural development is as yet incomplete. As we learn, we actually create certain neural paths, rather than just tightening synapses as we do later in life. It's a little like learning instincts!
>
> **Adolescence** also qualifies, I believe, as a stage. The transition from child to adult involves rather massive hormonal changes accompanied by a growth spurt like you hadn't seen since you were two! It is hard for me to conceive of these changes not having some effect on us psychologically.
>
> **Senescence** is, strictly speaking, the last year or so of a full life, during which time the organs begin

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to deteriorate and shut down. We don't usually see this as a stage, and in fact most people never reach it (accidents and diseases usually beat senescence to the punch). But socially speaking, in our culture we certainly prepare ourselves for this inevitability, and that might constitute a social stage, if not a biological one.

As this last point suggests, there are certainly cultural additions we can make. In our culture, there is a sharp transition from preschool child to school child, and another sharp transition from single adult to married adult. For all the power of biology, these social stages can be every bit as powerful.

To venture a guess as to the psychological side of these biological stages:

The fetus focuses on **biological development**, which is transformed by the presence of others in the infant into **ego development** in the child.
In turn, the ego development of the child is transformed by the advent of sexuality in adolescence into the "trans-ego" or **social development** of the adult.

Another way I look at it is this:

In the fetal and infancy stages, we lay the groundwork and develop our **temperaments** (founded in hormones and neurotransmitters).
In the child stage, we develop a **personality** (founded in habits).
In adolescence, continuing into adulthood, we develop **character** (based on conscious decision-making).

Temperament

Temperament is what we call that part of our personalities or characters that is built–in to us genetically. Consequentially, although there is always a degree of flexibility allowed, to a large extent we "are" our temperaments for our whole lives. Temperament is very "in" right now, and justifiably so. Jung led the way, Eysenck made it more scientifically acceptable, and the Big Five made it official.

Nearly everyone I know of accepts two dimensions of personality as established before birth, probably genetically:

- **emotional stability** (AKA neuroticism...) and
- **extraversion-introversion** (AKA sociability, surgency...).

Three more seem to have popular approval:

- **conscientiousness** (AKA anality, judging-perceiving...),
- **agreeableness** (AKA warmth, feeling-thinking...), and
- **openness** (AKA culture, intuiting-sensing...).

And there are three other contenders harder to place:

- **psychoticism** (Eysenck),
- **activity** (Buss and Plomin), and perhaps
- **impulsivity** (Buss and Plomin).

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Learning

With the exception of Skinner, Bandura, Kelly, and a few others, learning is rather taken for granted by most personality theorists. But I suspect it shouldn't be. We can postulate at least three kinds of learning: **environmental**, **social**, and **verbal**.

Environmental learning includes the behaviorist Pavlovian and Skinnerian **conditioning**, of course – getting feedback from your environment. It also includes the **latent learning** that E. C. Tolman talked about: We learn about our environment just by being in it!

> George Kelly's way of looking at basic learning derives from the work of Snygg and Combs, which in turn derives from the Gestalt psychologists: We learn to **differentiate** one thing from another on the basis of the consequences. Either way, behaviorist or gestalt, this kind of learning requires little in the way of consciousness.

There is also environmental learning that involves other people. When junior does something that mom or dad does not approve of – he may be **punished** in some fashion. Likewise, he may be **rewarded** when he does something right for a change. This is also usually called conditioning, but the fact that it involves others means it is also social learning, and so fraught with extra difficulties.

> For example, if every time your run into a tree your head hurts, you will stop running into the tree. On the other hand, if every time you say "shit!" your dad hits you upside the head, you may stop... or you may avoid dad, say shit under your breath, begin to hate your father and authority in general, start beating up little kids after school, and so on, until prison effectively stops the behavior. These kind of things seldom happen with trees.

Social learning includes **vicarious learning** (noticing and recalling the kinds of environmental feedback and social conditioning other people get) and **imitation** (Bandura's **modeling**). This kind of learning is probably the most significant for the development of personality. It can be either conscious, as when we are watching an artist to learn their technique, or unconscious, as when we grow up to be disconcertingly like our parents.

And there's **verbal learning** – learning not from the environment or the behavior of others, but from words. Culturally, this is, of course, a highly significant form of learning. Most of the learning we do in our many many years of schooling is verbal. And yet we don't know that much about it at all!

Emotions

Emotions or feelings have always been a key point of interest in personality theories. At the lowest level, we have **pain** and **pleasure**, which are really more like sensations than feelings. There is also psychological pain and pleasure – call them **distress** and **delight** – which may be the root of all other emotions. Distress is what we feel when the events of the world are more than we can handle. Delight is what we feel when we discover that we can handle them after all!

Anxiety is a favorite topic in personality theories. Although many definitions have been proposed for anxiety, they tend to revolve around unnecessary or inappropriate fear. Kelly notes that it is actually

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the anticipation of a fearful situation, accurately or not. **Fear**, in turn, is usually understood as involving the perception of imminent harm, physical or psychological. These definitions serve well for most circumstances.

Guilt is another key emotion. Related to **shame**, it is usually understood as the feelings aroused when one contravenes internalized social rules. Kelly provides a useful elaboration: He defines it as the feeling we get when we contravene our own self-definition (which may or may not involve those standard social rules!). Existentialists add another detail by suggesting that guilt is closely related to the sense of **regret**, of opportunities not taken.

Sadness is the experience of the world not being as it should be, with the added notion that we have no power to alter the situation. Instead, there is a need to alter ourselves – something we are innately reluctant to do! **Grief** would be the obvious extreme example, and **depression** could be defined as unrealistic sadness that continues long after the original situation.

Anger is similar to sadness: The world is not as it should be. But now, there's the added notion that we must energize ourselves to change the situation. When we act on our anger, it becomes **aggression**. Anger and aggression are not necessarily bad: It is our anger at social injustices, for example, and aggressive action to correct them, that makes for positive social change! Unrealistic anger, the kind we hang on to despite the suffering it causes us and the people around us, could be labelled **hostility**.

There are, of course, many other emotions and emotional shadings we could try to define, but that's for another time and place. Just one more thing should be noted: It appears that, where there is consciousness, there is emotion – at very least an emotional tone or mood. As the existentialists point out, we just cannot not care.

Motivation

Now here's a more difficult one: Motivation is central to most theories of personality, and the variety seems unending! But perhaps a little organization will help.

First, there are the **biological motivations**, mostly instinctual (although addictions are acquired). There is our need for air, water, food. There is the need for pain-avoidance. There is the need for pleasure: pleasant touch, comforting, sex. We may want to add the **instinct** complexes mentioned earlier: mating, assertiveness, nurturance. All theories accept these, although they differ wildly about their importance relative to each other as well as to other kinds of motivation.

Second, there are the **social motivations**. They may build on the biological motivations, especially the instinct complexes, but they vary enormously depending upon culture and even individual social situations and learning. Because they are so well and early learned, we could borrow Maslow's term and call them **instinctoid**. Social motivation includes the need for acceptance, attention, and approval (Rogers' **positive regard**), as well as those forms of self-esteem that are based on such approval.

Third, there are the more **personal motivations**, ones that are based on the experiences of the individual, especially our habits (good and bad), those nasty defense mechanisms (see below), and our personality "styles."

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Last, but not least, there are **higher motivations**. These are conscious and we perceive them as providing our lives with meaning. There appear to be two broad kinds:

The first, **competence motivation**, includes such motives as desire to learn, attain competence and mastery, even the desire to be creative. Adler would call it **striving for perfection**.

The second, **altruistic motivation**, includes Adler's **social concern**, compassion, love. Erikson in particular talks about these two motives in the adult stages. Whether they are simply derivatives of the lower needs or are indeed something more, will remain a point of discussion for many years into the future!

It seems to me that all of the preceding, and probably a few I've missed, qualify as motivations. Disagreements as to which are most significant are perhaps misguided – perhaps that differs from individual to individual! And the possibility that higher motivations derive from lower ones in no way diminishes their significance. Rollo May's idea of a large number of **daimons**, unique to each individual, may be the best approach.

All these various motivations could be summed up in one word: **actualization**. Actualization is a concept found in most of the great theories. Rogers, of course, uses it. Jung and Horney use it in the form **self-realization**. It means, very literally, turning potentials in to actualities. It means (following Snygg and Combs) "maintaining and enhancing the organism." Survive and thrive! Live long and prosper! The life-force! That's why we eat and drink, make love and raise our infants, build communities and defend them, create new things and love each other. Perhaps the term actualization, being so general, does not add to our scientific understanding of personality. But I think the concept helps to clarify our fundamental nature!

Neurosis

Many people's difficulties begin with childhood experiences of abuse, neglect, poverty, sickness, parent's sicknesses or death, parental psychological problems, divorce, immigration, accidents, deformities, etc. Sometimes, we are strong enough, or have enough support, to weather these storms. More often, we find that these experiences leave us with an on-going apprehension about life. We end up suffering from anxiety, guilt, sadness, anger... not just as a direct result of the specific experience, but because we no longer trust life.

A child with loving parents and compassionate relations, peers, and teachers may well be able to cope with these problems. On the other hand, a lack of support, a lack of what Rogers calls **positive regard,** can leave even a child blessed with a comfortable environment troubled with self-doubt and insecurity.

Many of our theories were developed in order to help those who cannot cope, and looking at Adler, Horney, Rogers, Bandura, and others, we find a great deal of agreement as to the details. As I said a moment ago, in order to cope with life's difficulties, we need positive regard – a little love, approval, respect, attention.... But others often make that love and approval **conditional** upon meeting certain standards, not all of which we can meet. Over time, we learn to judge ourselves by those standards. It is this **incongruence** (Rogers' term) between what we need and what we allow ourselves that leaves us with **low self-esteem**, or what others call a **poor self-concept** or an **inferiority complex**.

There is a real advantage to the idea of inferiority over self-esteem: It is rare to have an overall sense of low self-esteem. Instead, most people have a sense of inferiority in some domains and not in others. Acknowledging the specificity of inferiority allows us to focus in on possible remedies, while just saying someone suffers from low self-esteem leaves us with little sense of where to start!

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Confronted with the difficulties of life, lacking in the support of others, and not even enjoying confidence in ourselves, we find we must defend ourselves however we can. We can list a large number of **defense mechanisms**, as Anna Freud did, or we might be able to simplify a little, like Carl Rogers: We defend our sensitive egos by **denial** and **repression**, and by **distortion** and **rationalization**.

> **Denial and repression** attempt to block the offending experiences directly, from the environment and memory respectively, at the cost of emotional exhaustion. Denial applies to information from outside ourselves, repression to the things we already know (way down inside).
>
> **Distortion and rationalization** are more sophisticated and less exhausting and deal with the offending information by working around it. Distortion is the manipulation of information from the outside, rationalization is the manipulation of information we already own.

Either way, they are lies we tell ourselves and others in order to minimize the impact of that incongruence between our need for love and security and what is afforded to us. We use these lies because they help, actually. But they only help in the short run: Over time, they lead us into a possibly serious misunderstanding of how the world (especially other people) works, and of who, in fact, we are.

For those people who are, perhaps, a bit stronger, we still find suffering in the form of **alienation**. There develops a split between the deeper, "truer" self within, and the **persona** (to borrow Jung's term) that we present to the outside world to attempt to meet with those "conditions of worth" that Rogers talks about. We feel **inauthentic**, false, phony, dishonest on the one hand, and misunderstood or unappreciated on the other. Over the long haul, this is likely to lead to depression and withdrawal from social life. But sometimes, alienation can lead to new perspectives on life and some remarkably creative insights. Perhaps we owe a good portion of our art, music, and literature to these same people.

At the other end of the spectrum are those people whose psychological suffering is founded on physiological problems. Schizophrenia, although it certainly has some sizable social and psychological causes, seems to have a considerable physiological component. Other disorders, such as bipolar, major depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders, improve with the use of medications that enhance the effects of our own neurotransmitters. The borderline between psychology and physiology is becoming increasingly blurry!

Coping strategies

People troubled by neuroses will be also find themselves attracted to certain patterns of living that to one degree or another keep the psychological pain at bay: They may become alcoholics, or work-aholics, or sex addicts, or they may become obsessed with cleanliness or physical health, etc. These patterns can involve unusual behaviors, emotional attachments, obsessive thoughts, etc. Binswanger calls these patterns **themes** and they are similar to Horney's **neurotic needs**, Ellis's **irrational beliefs**, and the behaviorists' **maladaptive habits**.

Many theorists see a certain order among these themes, and classify them into four or five categories, which Horney calls **coping strategies**. Fromm calls them **orientations**, Freud uses **character types**.... They are, perhaps, the result of an interaction between a person's temperament and the specific stressors they must deal with.

There are two coping strategies we can readily agree upon: a **dependent style** and an **aggressive style**.

> The **dependent style** is characterized by a sense of inferiority and weakness, but also involves a strong – perhaps desperate – use of manipulation of others. It is also referred to as **oral passive**,

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getting or **leaning**, **compliant**, and **receptive**.

The **aggressive style** is characterized by aggressive posturing that serves to temporarily diminish a sense of inferiority – i.e. the superiority complex! When you feel bad about yourself, beat or humiliate someone else. This is also known as **oral aggressive**, **ruling** or **dominant**, and **exploitative**.

From there, things get more uncertain.

A third candidate is the **perfectionist** style. This type of person attempts to actually reach the excessively difficult standards they have accepted for themselves – or at least pretend to reach them. They tend to be emotionally detached from others, and to dislike depending on them. It is also known as the **anal retentive** or **hoarding** type.

A fourth candidate is the **schizoid style**, AKA, the **avoiding**, or **withdrawing** type. This kind of person attempts to remove him- or herself from most if not all social interaction. They tend to be somber, psychologically detached, angry at the whole world, and potentially violent.

And a last, fifth candidate is the **infantile style**, AKA, the **phallic**, or **marketing** style. These people avoid responsibility by essentially extending their childhoods into adulthood. They are obsessed with youth, fun, adventure, and even high risk activities. They tend to be shallow and hedonistic.

One could argue that the most common coping strategy of all – most common because it works so well – is **conventionality**, "busy-ness," getting lost in the day-to-day. It will be up to future personality researchers to determine which of these are true styles, if the idea of a few styles holds up, or if we should stick to a more individualistic way of describing people's coping.

Therapy

It is somewhat surprising that, for all the variation in theories, there is considerable agreement regarding therapy.

First, there is an emphasis on **self-awareness** or, as Freud put it, making the unconscious conscious. We encourage our clients to understand their biological, social, and personal unconscious and related motivations, to examine the conflicts between their needs and the standards society and they themselves impose, and to look behind their defensive posturings.

We are also taught to encourage our clients to discover more **conscious**, **higher motivations** – meaning the development of competence, creativity, and compassion, becoming valuable to oneself and to others....

And the means of therapy? We are taught to use genuinely **caring dialog**, and to provide **support** (not management or control) with a goal of eventual **autonomy** for the client.

Now, each theory has its own set of preferred techniques. Some, such as the radical behaviorist approach, insist that techniques are all you need. Others, such as Rogers' approach, suggest that you don't need techniques at all, just an empathic, respectful, and honest personal presence. Probably the majority of therapists, however, follow the middle path and use a few techniques that they have found useful and that fit their clients' and their own personalities.

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In addition, we now have a fairly reliable set of **drugs** that appear to help. Our understanding of the physiological bases for psychological problems has been growing rapidly, and, while that understanding is far from complete, it has allowed us to help people more effectively. Most therapists are still hesitant to rely entirely on medications, and rightly so. But these medications certainly seem to help in emergency situations and for those whose suffering just doesn't respond to our talk therapies.

Balance

Another common theme in Personality theories is the idea of **balance**. Freud, for example, felt that all of life's "crises" were best resolved at some midpoint between two extremes – Potty training was to be accomplished not too early, not too late, not too harshly, not too leniently. The result of a balanced upbringing would be a balanced personality – not too retentive, not too expulsive, for example.

Even when talking about positive experiences, such as learning to act on our imaginations, we need to recognize that those positive experiences need to be tempered with at least a small amount of negative experiences: Without a little shame and self-doubt, Erikson tells us, acting on our imaginations becomes ruthlessness.

[It now appears that a little red wine or a couple of cups of coffee are not only not harmful, but actually beneficial!]

Carl Jung's entire theory revolves around balance, between **anima** and **animus** and between the **ego** and the **unconscious**. The former in particular has received a great deal of attention and empirical support: **Androgenous** people (those who combine qualities of both the "feminine" and the "masculine") appear to be mentally healthier.

The balancing act that seems to have gotten the most attention from personality psychologists is the one that originated with Otto Rank's contrast between our desire for both "**life**" and "**death**," as well as our fears of these same forces. I like the terms **individuality** and **community**. Rollo May uses the words **will** and **love**, others words such as **autonomy** and **homonymy**, **agency** and **communion**, **egoism** and **altruism**, and so on.

Whatever the words, the balance to be achieved is between the impulse to serve oneself and become all one can be and the impulse to serve others and become one with the universe. But serve only yourself, and you end up alone; serve only others, and you lose your identity. Instead, one must serve oneself in order to serve others well, and serve others in order to best serve oneself.

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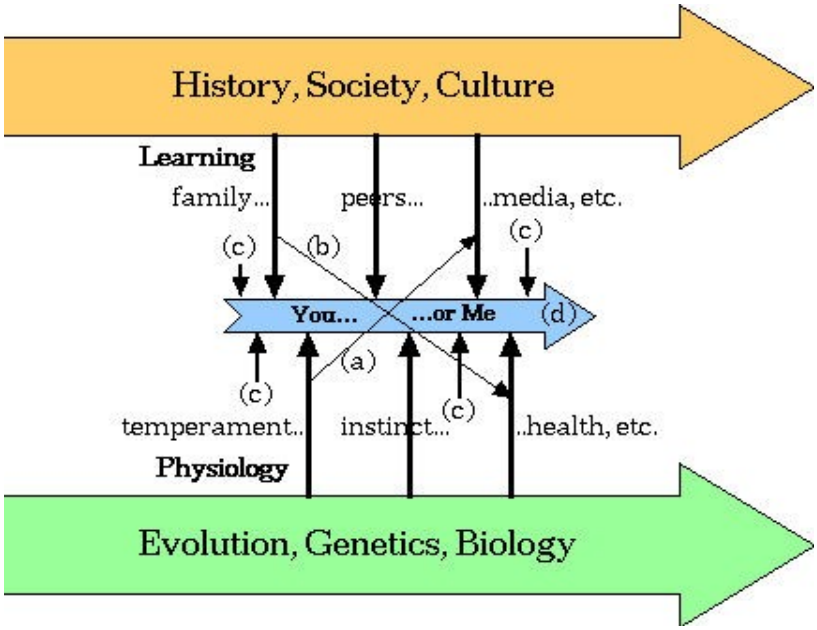
Conclusions

Even among our list of consistencies, we can find some "**metaconsistencies**." Being a visual sort, I like to put things into graphic form. So here goes:



What you see here is "poor me" (or "poor you"), at the center of enormous forces. At top, we have **history, society, and culture**, which influence us primarily through our learning as mediated by our families, peers, the media, and so on. At the bottom, we have **evolution, genetics, and biology**, which influence us by means of our physiology (including neurotransmitters, hormones, etc.) Some of the specifics most relevant to psychology are instincts, temperaments, and health. As the nice, thick arrows indicate, these two mighty forces influence us strongly and continuously, from conception to death, and sometimes threaten to tear us apart.

> There is, of course, nothing simple about these influences. If you will notice the thin arrows (a) and (b). These illustrate some of the more roundabout ways in which biology influences our learning, or society influences our physiology. The arrow labeled (a) might represent an aggressive temperament leading to a violent response to certain media messages that leads to a misunderstanding of those messages. Or (b) might represent being raised with a certain set of nutritional habits that lead to a physiological deficiency in later life. There are endless complexities.
>
> I also put in a number of little arrows, marked (c). These represent **accidental influences**, physiological or experiential. Not everything that happens in our environment is part of some great historical or evolutionary movement! Sometimes, stuff just happens. You can be in the wrong place at the wrong time, or the right place at the right time: Hear some great speaker that changes the direction of your life away from the traditional path, or have a cell hit by stray radiation in just the wrong way.

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Last, but not least, there's (d), which represents **our own choices**. Even if free will ultimately does not stand up to philosophical or psychological analysis, we can at least talk about the idea of self-determination, i.e. the idea that, beyond society and biology and accident, sometimes my behavior and experience is caused by... me!

Perhaps there is more agreement than I originally thought! This bodes well for our field. Perhaps we can get through the next so many years intact, and arrive, somewhere in the twenty-first century, at full scientific status. I do hope so, although I also hope that Personality continues to be a bit of an art as well. I choose to believe that people will always be a bit harder to predict and control than your average green goo in a test tube!

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