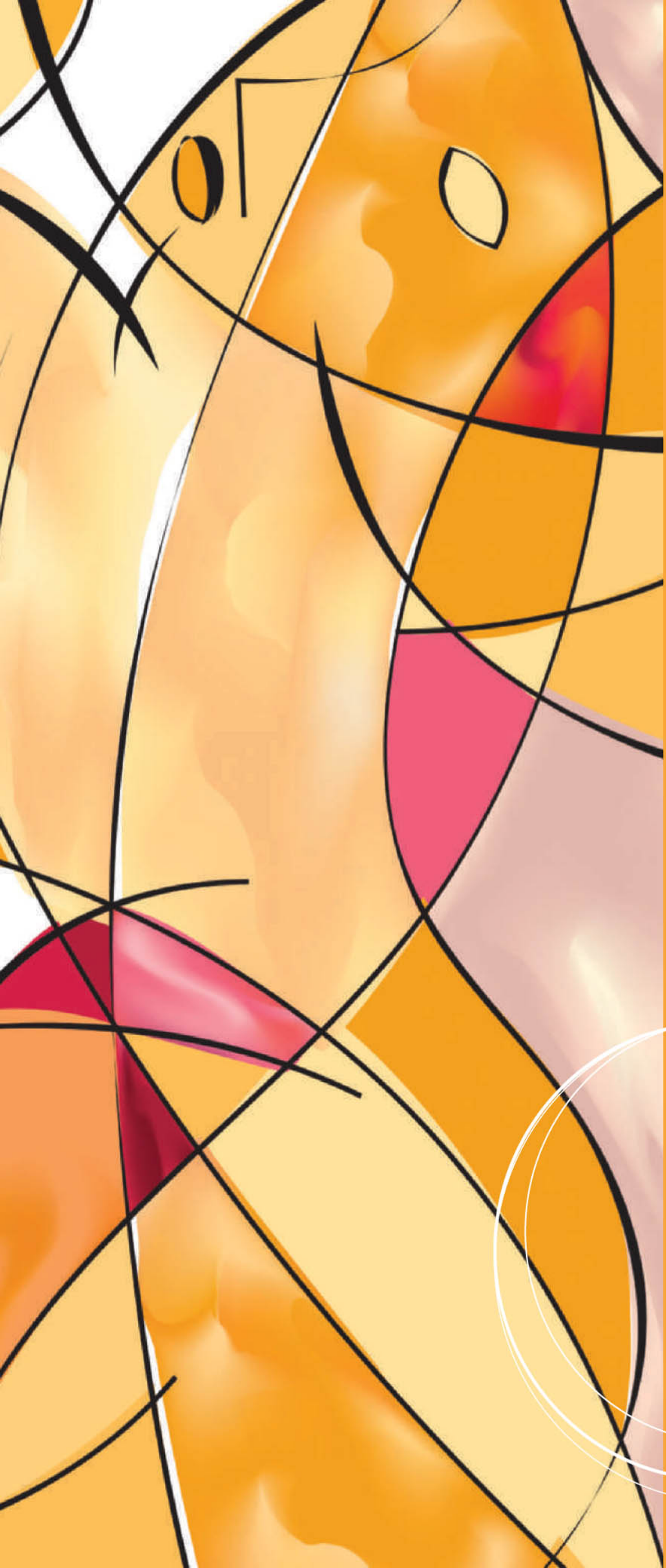
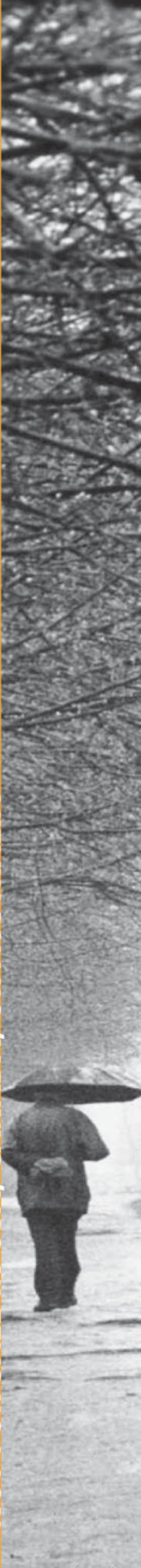


9th edition

Personality Theories

Barbara Engler

International Edition



PERSONALITY THEORIES

PERSONALITY THEORIES

An Introduction

NINTH EDITION

Barbara Engler
Union County College

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Barbara Engler

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To my sons, Ted and Bill

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PREFACE

Like its predecessors, the Ninth Edition of *Personality Theories: An Introduction* provides accurate and thorough coverage of personality theories in an easily accessible text enhanced by pedagogical features intended to stimulate critical thinking. In this edition, as in earlier ones, I have worked to achieve these four objectives:

1. *To present a clear and concise picture of the major features of each theory.* I have strived to present the material in an approachable style and, wherever possible, to illustrate theoretical points with concrete examples. I have presented each theory succinctly, to allow for adequate coverage of all the theories. Each chapter focuses on one theory or group of related theories. Brief biographies of the major theorists shed light on how they formed their theories.

2. *To focus on significant ideas and themes that structure the content of the theories.* I regularly compare theories to outline the distinctive characteristics and contributions of each theory and to emphasize significant ideas around which the theories are structured. Because many theories have elaborated on, modified, or refuted psychoanalysis, I have devoted substantial space to Freudian theory, providing the reader with a focal point from which comparisons and contrasts may be made.

3. *To provide criteria to guide the evaluation of each theory.* Many of the theories that influence contemporary thought did not develop from strict scientific methods but instead reflect philosophical assumptions. In addition, the application of a theory to a real-life situation such as psychotherapy is a creative act, demonstrating that a personality theory may function as an art. Therefore, the evaluation of a personality theory is best accomplished when the theory is examined from the viewpoints of philosophy, science, and art and judged according to criteria appropriate to each one. Within each chapter, two features—"Philosophy, Science, and Art" sections and "Philosophical Assumptions" boxes—refer students back to the basic philosophical assumptions introduced in Chapter 1, relating parts back to whole and drawing attention to significant ideas that have generated the structure and content of personality theories. The "Conclusion" at the end of the text wraps up the evaluation discussion.

4. *To present activities, informed by the tenets of each theory, that will stimulate critical thinking.* Effective learning is not a passive process; it requires active participation. The fourth objective is accomplished through "Thinking Critically" boxes, which provide activities that foster critical thinking. This feature, introduced in the Third Edition, has proven to be very popular. Activities have been carefully reviewed and revised to provide students with a clearer context for the activity. The "Personal Experiences" feature, created by Thomas Finn of Bentley College, at the end of each chapter introduced in the Eighth Edition, it consists of questions and activities designed to engage students more directly with the theories and to bridge the gap between the theories and students' lives.

Features of the Book

To help students read with a sense of purpose and review important points quickly, each chapter opens with a list called "Your Goals for This Chapter" and ends with a "Summary," whose items are keyed to each goal. Thus the goals listed at the beginning of the chapter pose questions answered in the numerated summary. Key terms and concepts are boldfaced within the text, and a glossary at the back of the book, and on the student website, provides definitions. The illustration program has been revised to include more figures and tables that help students understand technical concepts and summarize the concepts being presented.

"Thinking Critically" activities appear in each chapter. These boxes ask students to revisit material in the chapter and reconsider it or apply it critically. The "Personal Experiences" feature offers still another opportunity for students to thoughtfully consider the material.

The "Philosophical Assumptions" boxes (with accompanying scale on the inside back cover) give students an opportunity to compare and contrast their own philosophical views with those of the theorist at hand. Actual ratings on the scale are not provided for each theorist, because to do so might foreclose students' thinking and debate about where each theorist stands on the issues. It would invite focus on the "correct" rating of each theorist and undermine the critical thinking, discussion, and support of students' own answers, which are the goals of the activity. A timeline on the inside front cover places the theorists in the context of important historical events that occurred during their lifetimes. A table at the back of the text summarizes the theorists' primary research methods, theoretical orientations, and strengths.

New to the Ninth Edition

My revisions to the book reflect recent developments in the field of personality psychology and feedback that I received from instructors and students who used the previous edition. All content has been updated to reflect the status of current research on each theorist. Throughout, I pay considerable attention to the neurobiological basis of personality a major emerging interest in personality theorizing, as well as the impact of the computer and social media. The text continues to emphasize multicultural, feminist, and postmodern concerns.

Highlights of the changes in the book, by chapter, include the following:

Chapter 1

- Shedler's metaanalyses of the effectiveness of psychodynamic therapy and ensuing comments.

Chapter 2

- New "Thinking Critically: Identifying Defense Mechanisms."
- Neuroscientific research and evidence concerning dreams.
- Expanded discussion of the emerging field of neuropsychoanalytic research.

Chapter 3

- Reappraisal of some Jung's concepts in light of neuroscientific research.

Chapter 4

- New research on siblings' birth order and I.Q.
- Sullivan's malevolent transformation of personality.

Chapter 5

- New “Thinking Critically: Neurotic Needs, Modes, and Orientations.”
- Neuroscientific research into the attachment process.
- New research on terrorism and terror management theory.

Chapter 6

- Change in McAdams’ theory from levels to layers which unfold developmentally.

Chapter 7

- Discussion of gender based differences and Hyde’s gender similarities hypothesis.
- Neuroscientific research on the “smart vagus” and brain plasticity.
- Use of social media.
- New “Thinking Critically: Serial Testimony.”

Chapter 8

- Skinner’s early contribution to “theory of mind” (ToM).

Chapter 9

- A biological basis for self-regulation and delay of gratification.

Part V

- Change of title to “Dispositional and Biological Basis of Personality.”

Chapter 11

- New research on the Big Five, emotional intelligence, psychological well-being, and work motivation.
- New Section on Implications of the FFM for the new DSM-5.
- Revision of “Thinking Critically: How Abnormal is Abnormal?”
- Expanded sections on the genetic influence on traits and evolutionary psychology theory.
- Effects of the use of new technologies, i.e. social media, on the brain.

Chapter 12

- Implications of Eysenck’s PEN model for understanding psychopathology.
- Discussion of Eysenck’s personality theory and evolutionary theory.
- Research on levels of motivation that influence religion.
- Research on how the PEN model informs PTSD.

Chapter 13

- New biographical material on Rogers from Kirschenbaum.
- Expanded sections on Positive Psychology and Transpersonal Psychology.
- New “Personal Experience: Turning on Happiness.”

Chapter 14

- New section on social media.

Chapter 16

- Beck's Personality Belief Questionnaire.
- Identification of biological correlates of cognitive theory.

Ancillaries

This text is supported by *CengageBrain.com*, which encompasses the interactive online products and services integrated with Cengage Learning Psychology programs. *CengageBrain .com* is available through text-specific student and instructor websites. Many useful materials have been developed to support *Personality Theories* 9/e, emphasizing its role as an integrated teaching and learning experience for instructors and students alike. For more information, visit **CengageBrain.com**.

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For the Student

The book-specific website at CengageBrain.com offers students a variety of study tools and useful resources such as *glossaries, flashcards, and quizzes.*

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—B.E.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Evaluating Personality Theories

YOUR GOALS FOR THIS CHAPTER

1. Explain why the term **personality** is difficult to define.
2. Define the term **theory.**
3. Discuss the role of personality theory in psychology.
4. Describe three orientations of personality theorists.
5. Identify some of the basic philosophical issues on which personality theorists differ.
6. Explain how to recognize **philosophical assumptions**.
7. Explain how philosophical assumptions are evaluated.
8. Explain how science has its basis in **philosophy.**
9. Explain the characteristics of **scientific statements.**
10. Explain how scientific statements are evaluated, and describe how scientists decide between rival hypotheses.
11. Describe two techniques used to assess personality and three approaches used in research on personality.
12. Identify three goals of **psychotherapy**, and indicate the criteria of evaluation suitable for each goal.
13. Explain why it is important to distinguish among the different orientations of personality theories.

Defining the word *personality* would be a good way to begin a book that considers various theories of personality. However, writing a definition is not that simple. The different answers that people have given to that question have found expression throughout history in various cultural constructs such as philosophy, religion, art, politics, and science. Each one of us begins the search anew; as children seeking identity, and later as adults reflecting upon our identity, we wonder who we are and join fellow travelers on the road in search of the self.

What Is Personality?

In common speech, the term **personality** usually refers to someone's public image. Thus people say, "Becky has a terrific personality!" or "If only Jeff had a more dynamic personality." This common usage reflects the origin of the word *personality* in the Latin *personae,* which referred to the masks that actors wore in ancient Greek plays. In the Greek theater, there were often more roles in a play than there were actors. Thus actors changed *personae* to let the audience know that they were assuming different roles. The concept of social roles, however, does not include the complications that are involved in the long search to understand the self.

There is little common agreement among personality theorists on the appropriate use of the term *personality* (see Figure 1.1). Gordon Allport described and classified over fifty different definitions. For Allport, personality is something *real* within an individual that leads to characteristic behavior and thought. For Carl Rogers, the personality or "self" is an organized, consistent pattern of perception of the "I" or "me" that lies at the heart of an individual's experiences. For B. F. Skinner, an influential behaviorist, the word *personality* was unnecessary. Skinner did not believe that it is necessary or desirable to use a concept such as self or personality to understand human behavior. For Sigmund Freud, the father of contemporary psychoanalysis, personality is largely unconscious, hidden, and unknown.

Each theorist presents us with his or her own understanding of the term *personality.* In part, this helps to explain why there are so many different personality theories. Although such a variety of definitions and theories may be confusing and even disturbing, it does not mean that the theories are not useful. Each offers insight into the question of the self, and each can be helpful to us as we develop our own answers.

What Is a Theory?

Since we are referring to theories of personality, the next question is "What is a theory?" Here you may be pleased to see that there is a more definitive answer. The term *theory* comes from the Greek word *theōria,* which refers to the act of viewing, contemplating, or thinking about something. A **theory** is a set of abstract concepts developed about a group of facts or events in order to explain them. A theory of personality, therefore, is an organized system of beliefs that helps us to understand human nature.

Describing a theory as a system of beliefs underscores the fact that a theory is something that we create in the process of viewing and thinking about our world. Theories are not given or necessitated by nature; rather, they are constructed by people in their efforts to understand the world. The same data or experiences can be accounted for in many different ways, and people of all cultures are interested in and have engaged in the scholarly effort to understand themselves, constructing a wide variety of explanations. As we shall see, there are many theories of personality. Historically, a Western focus has dominated the formal discussion of theories of personality, but efforts are being made to attend to other perspectives, such as Asian and Afrocentric.

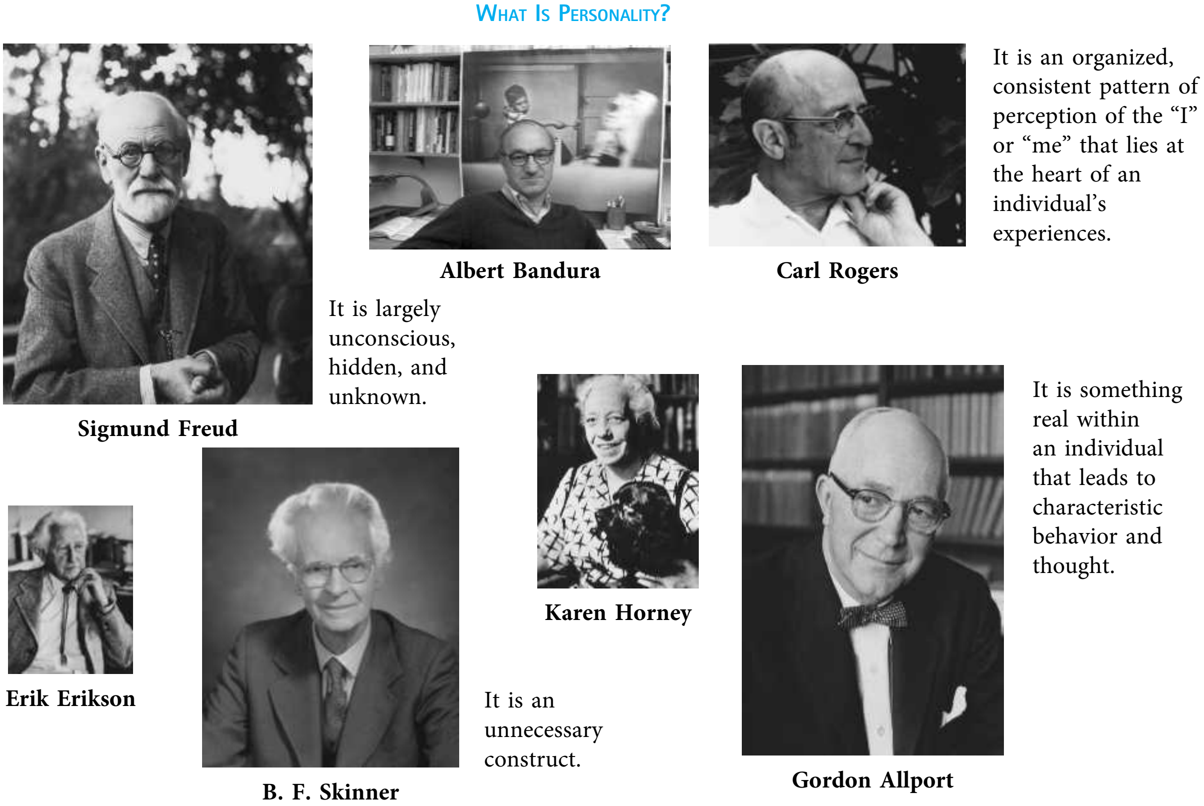


Figure 1.1 The Many Views of Personality

"Personality" is not a readily defined concept. Shown here are just some of the views of personality held by different personality theorists. As you proceed through this text and examine the work of individual personality theorists, you will discover many more different views of personality.

SOURCE: Sigmund Freud, Hans Casparius/Hulton/Getty Images; Albert Bandura, Jon Brenneis/Time & LIFE Images/Getty Images; Carl Rogers, © Bettmann/Corbis; Gordon Allport, © Bettmann/Corbis; B. F. Skinner, Bachrach/Archive Photos/Getty Image; Erik Erikson, Ted Streshinsky/Time Life Pictures/Getty Images; Karen Horney, © Bettmann/Corbis

The Role of Personality Theory in Psychology

Because personality addresses that important question "Who am I?," you might imagine that personality is the primary emphasis of psychology. In fact, personality is not the dominant concern in contemporary psychology; it is simply one area of specialization.

The question "What is personality?" takes us back to early human history. As psychology found expression in the early philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, it sought to clarify the essence of a human being and explore what it means to be a person.

By the late nineteenth century the scientific revolution had made great strides in comprehending the physical world, and people were eager to apply scientific methods to the study of human beings. Modern-day psychology emerged from a combination of various movements in philosophy and science. In 1879, Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) established the first psychological laboratory at the University of Leipzig in Germany to explore the experience of consciousness. By combining careful measurement with *introspective observation,* or self-examination, Wundt sought to reveal the basic elements and structure of the conscious mind.

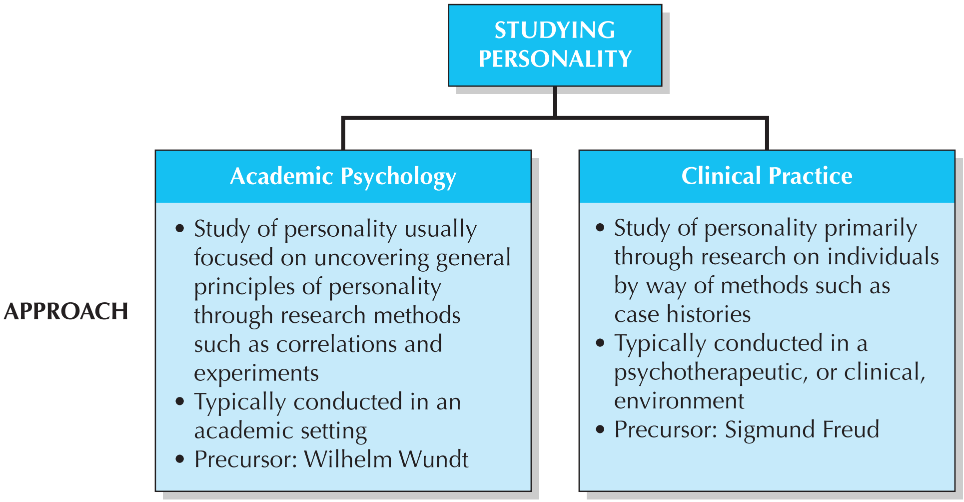
Wundt was successful in establishing a meticulous, systematic method of study based on the experimental method. However, his emphasis on conscious experience was criticized in the 1920s by John Watson (1878–1958), who came to be known as the father of American behaviorism. Watson pointed out that it is almost impossible to observe mental processes directly. Therefore, he suggested that the psychologist should act as if mental processes do not exist and should concentrate on overt behavior. Although few psychologists today agree with Watson's extreme view, and brain scanning equipment depict the brain in action, the behaviorist position that Watson generated became the dominant movement in American psychology throughout most of the twentieth century. Watson was succeeded as leader of the movement by B. F. Skinner, who took the behaviorist position to its logical extreme. Because of Skinner's influence, students of psychology rapidly discovered that, for the most part, they were engaged not in the study of the person but in the study of behavior (usually of rats and pigeons). They were encouraged to adopt a rigorous scientific methodology that emphasized *extrospective observation,* or looking outward. B. F. Skinner's theory is discussed in greater detail in the chapter on experimental analysis of behavior.

Today, psychologists are very interested in the brain and mental processes shunned by Watson and Skinner. Cognitive psychology emphasizes how people receive, process, and react to information from their environment. On the other hand, psychology has retained from the behaviorists an emphasis on rigorous methodology emphasizing extrospective observation.

Not all of the personality theorists that we will consider agree that a rigorous scientific method is the best way to understand personality. In fact, the first theories of personality developed outside the mainstream of academic experimental psychology. While Wundt was at work in his laboratory at Leipzig, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who was *not* a psychologist–rather a neurologist and physician in private practice in Vienna, was employing introspection somewhat differently in his treatment of patients who were suffering from emotional problems. Instead of using introspection only to examine present phenomena, Freud also taught his patients to employ it retrospectively to examine past experiences. Thus Freud was able to examine phenomena that could not be elicited in a laboratory. Freud found introspection to be a valuable tool for discovering and exploring unconscious processes. On the basis of his clinical observations, Freud developed a theory of personality discussed in the chapter on psychoanalysis. Freud's method was far different from the experimental laboratory research that characterizes much of psychology today.

Some of Freud's followers became dissatisfied with orthodox psychoanalysis and founded their own schools of thought. Although these theorists were all deeply indebted to Freud, they reacted in varying ways against his theory and developed their own positions. The study of personality became a formal and systematic area of scientific specialization in American psychology in the mid-1930s, and it is most often considered to fit somewhere between social and clinical psychology. Some psychologists have recommended that all research in personality be conducted and evaluated along strict scientific guidelines as defined by mainstream academic psychology. The study of personality is the heir of two different approaches: *academic psychology* and *clinical practice* (see Figure 1.2) which have never really merged. Examples of each are found in the theories discussed in this book.

It is also helpful to distinguish between **macro theories** of personality, which seek to be global and which emphasize comprehension of the whole person, and **micro theories**, which have resulted from specific research focused on limited aspects of human behavior. Some of the micro studies can be very narrowly focused; for


STUDYING PERSONALITY

APPROACH

Academic Psychology

- Study of personality usually focused on uncovering general principles of personality through research methods such as correlations and experiments
- Typically conducted in an academic setting
- Precursor: Wilhelm Wundt

Clinical Practice

- Study of personality primarily through research on individuals by way of methods such as case histories
- Typically conducted in a psychotherapeutic, or clinical, environment
- Precursor: Sigmund Freud

FIGURE 1.2 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF PERSONALITY

example, one study explores how a specific model of personality might clarify impulsiveness (Whiteside & Lynam, 2001). Courses in personality theories tend to emphasize macro theories, and courses in personality research favor a topical (i.e., micro) approach. In general, but by no means entirely, macro theories are more likely to stem from the tradition of clinical observation, whereas micro theories reflect academic psychology.

A review of the Brief Contents at the beginning of the book will give you a good overview of the theories we will consider, most of which would be considered macro theories. We will begin with the theory of Sigmund Freud and then cover some of his early followers, as well as contemporary theorists who continue the tradition of psychoanalytic thought that Freud initiated. Next we will turn to a group of theorists who emphasize the role of learning in the development of human behavior. B. F. Skinner is the most recognized among these behavior and learning theorists. We also will look at a number of other approaches to the study of personality. Gordon Allport, for example, is one of several dispositional theorists who emphasize the importance of long-term characteristics in personality. Research in that area today encompasses biology and genetics. We will discuss humanist and existential theories, which stress the tendency of the human personality toward growth, and cognitive theories, which focus on how people process information about themselves and their world. Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow are two representatives of the humanist approach, and George Kelly and Albert Ellis reflect the cognitive approach. We will round out our presentation of personality theories with recognition of the growing importance of non-Western approaches and an in-depth look at Zen Buddhism. A table at the very back of the book summarizes the theorists discussed here.

The Evaluation of Personality Theory

Personality theorists work out of three complementary orientations: philosophy, science, and art. Theories of personality are not just armchair speculations but belief systems that find expression in ways that are designed to help us understand and improve ourselves and the world. The *art* of personality theory, or its expression in practical application, is much older than the science or even the philosophy behind it. From earliest times, much has been spoken and written about how to live a good life and to understand one another as people have practiced ways of understanding themselves and living together. Before the study of personality became a specialization of academic scientific psychology, questions of personality and the good life were generally included under the broader umbrella *of philosophy.* Even today, many personality theories resemble philosophical investigations rather than scientific studies. As the *science* of personality theory—investigations governed by appropriate rules—has developed, it has provided us with new knowledge, tools, and methods of self-understanding and improvement. Science further demands that scientific theory be empirically validated, or ultimately based on sensory experience. However, the specific mode of study and investigation characteristic of a modern personality scientist arises out of a prior philosophical encounter with the world. Science is an offspring of philosophy and its methods are the fruit of philosophy's labors. The methods of art, science and philosophy are distinguishable but not unrelated; they complement one another and together provide us with a fuller understanding.

Philosophy, science, and art may be seen as three complementary orientations from which personality theorists work. As *philosophers,* personality theorists seek to explore assumptions about what it means to be a person. As *scientists,* they hope to develop a workable set of hypotheses that will help us understand human behavior. As *artists,* they seek to apply what is known about people and behavior to foster a better life. Each activity is conducted according to certain rules with its own criteria for success. The metaphor of games is useful here because even young schoolchildren know that if we want to play a game properly and fairly, we have to understand its rules and follow them. Each activity that personality theorists engage in as philosophers, scientists, and artists may be seen as a distinct game to be conducted according to certain rules with its own methods of play and criteria for success. Just as potential athletes need to become familiar with the rules, equipment, and scoring of their sport, so students of personality theory need to become familiar with the rules that govern how these three distinct facets of personality theory—philosophy, science, and art—work. You will have difficulty understanding a personality theorist unless you can identify the particular activity or approach that the theorist is engaged in and know how to evaluate it.

Philosophical Assumptions

No psychologist or personality theorist can avoid being a philosopher of sorts. All sciences, but particularly the "hypercomplex" social sciences (Wilson, 1999), are influenced by philosophy. The very act of theorizing, or thinking about what we see, which all people—not only personality theorists—do, entails making certain **philosophical assumptions** about the world and human nature. These basic philosophical assumptions profoundly influence the way in which we perceive the world and theorize about it.

The term **philosophy** comes from the Greek *philein,* "to love," and *sophia,* "wisdom"; it means the love or pursuit of wisdom. Wisdom denotes not merely knowing about something but knowing what ought to be done and how to do it. As philosophers, we make assumptions and judgments about the good life and how to live it.

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Just as potential athletes need to become familiar with the rules, equipment, and scoring of whatever sport they wish to engage in, students of personality theory need to become familiar with the different rules governing personality theories to avoid getting into trouble.

Very few of us have complete and articulate philosophies of life, but our thoughts, statements, and theorizing are informed by our philosophical assumptions. In the same sense, very few, if any, of the personality theorists whom we will consider aim at developing complete philosophical pictures of ourselves and the world. Most consider themselves psychologists rather than philosophers. Nevertheless, in their psychologizing they raise philosophical issues and, in doing so, reflect philosophical assumptions.

Basic Philosophical Assumptions

Many of the differences among personality theories can be attributed to fundamental differences in philosophical assumptions. Some of the common issues about which personality theories disagree are described below. Each issue is presented here as a bipolar dimension. Some theorists agree with one or the other extreme. Others are neutral toward the issue or seek a synthesis.

Freedom versus determinism. Some theorists believe that individuals basically have control over their behaviors and understand the motives behind them. Others believe that human behavior is basically determined by internal or external forces over which individuals have little, if any, control.

Heredity versus environment. Theorists differ over whether inherited and inborn characteristics or factors in the environment have the more important influence on human behavior.

Uniqueness versus universality. Some theorists believe that each individual is unique and cannot be compared with others. Others contend that people are basically very similar.

Proactivity versus reactivity. Proactive theories view human beings as acting on their initiative rather than simply reacting. The sources of behavior are perceived as lying within the individual, who does more than just react to stimuli from the outside world.

Optimism versus pessimism. Do significant changes in personality and behavior occur throughout the course of a lifetime? If an individual is motivated, can genuine changes be effected in personality? Can we help others to change by restructuring their environment? Some personality theories are decidedly more optimistic and hopeful than others concerning these possibilities.

Philosophical Assumptions

Where do you stand on these issues? See the Philosophical Assumptions box "Examining Your Own Philosophical Assumptions" on page 10.

Distinguishing Philosophical Assumptions from Scientific Statements

Philosophical assumptions may be *explicit* or *implicit.* It is often difficult to identify a person's assumptions when they are implicit, or not stated clearly. You will find it easier to recognize philosophical assumptions if you understand that philosophy frequently posits a distinction between *what is* and *what ought to be.* Philosophical statements suggest that things are not necessarily what they appear to be. *What is* is not necessarily *what should be* or *what really is.* For instance, the fact that many people are aggressive does not necessarily mean that aggression is right or that aggression represents what it means to be human.

Philosophical knowledge is ultimately an **epiphany** (from the Greek *epiphaneia,* which means "appearance" or "manifestation"), or a perception of essential meaning. The "seeing" of philosophy is a special act of knowing, an extraordinary intuition that transcends everyday experience. Philosophical assumptions, therefore, differ from *empirical statements,* which are based on ordinary observation. The statement "All people seek what is good," for example, does not refer to something that can be seen in everyday observation. It refers to some kind of ultimate reality that is perceived in a different way. We say that this statement is based on *epiphanic evidence.*

Scientific statements, too, often refer to things that we cannot see in ordinary observation. Many important constructs in science involve imaginary concepts that cannot be seen. However, even these scientific statements are ultimately, even if indirectly, based on empirical observation, and the methods used to test them differ from the methods of philosophy.

How do scientific statements and philosophical assumptions differ? The difference lies in the nature of the observation that gives rise to the construct and in the way in which it is tested. Karl Popper (1902–1994) a philosopher of science, clarified for us that scientific statements must be "open to falsification" (Popper, 1963). Science is required to indicate the conditions under which its statements might be proven incorrect. When an exception is found to a scientific generalization, that generalization must be qualified. In contrast, philosophical assumptions are not tentative hypotheses to be discarded when evidence contradicts them. There is no way to construct an empirical test that would let us falsify a philosophical assumption. If I maintain the philosophy that "all people seek what is good," I will not permit any ordinary observations to disprove the assumption. On the contrary, I can account for all exceptions and seeming contradictions in terms of my assumption itself.

The easiest way to recognize whether specific declarations of a theory function as scientific statements or as philosophical assumptions is to ask what evidence would lead the theorist to change his or her position. If empirical evidence does not lead to a revision of the theory, you can be pretty sure that the declaration functions as a philosophical assumption.

The personality theories described in this book represent philosophical points of view as well as scientific investigations. Some of the theories are explicitly philosophical. In others, the philosophical assumptions are not clearly stated, but they are nevertheless present. Carl Rogers openly acknowledged that his view of the self was philosophical and that his primary differences with other theorists, such as B. F. Skinner, were philosophical ones. Sigmund Freud initially conceived of his work as lacking any philosophy but finally admitted that many of his assumptions functioned philosophically. Because personality theories and our own thoughts involve philosophical assumptions, it is important that we recognize and evaluate them as such.

CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Scientific statements are proven false by the process of perceptual observation. In contrast, philosophical assumptions have criteria that are suitable to the epiphanic vision that underlies them, but we cannot set up a crucial test or experiment that will determine whether or not the vision is justified. Philosophical assumptions have their own criteria or tests.

Here are three criteria for evaluating the philosophical assumptions that underlie personality theories. These three criteria add up to a fourth and final criterion: compellingness.

The first criterion is **coherence.** Are the philosophical assumptions of a personality theory clear, logical, and consistent, or are they riddled with contradictions and inconsistencies? A philosophical system may have apparent inconsistencies, perplexing metaphors, or paradoxes and still be coherent, provided that the contradictions are ironed out within the philosophical stance itself so that the final position represents a clear, coherent whole. A person's philosophical system may also be unfinished—that is, open to further growth—but to be coherent, it must have a clearly recognizable, consistent thrust.

The second criterion is **relevance.** To be meaningful, a philosophical assumption must have some bearing on our view of reality. If we do not share the philosophical view of reality, we will have considerable difficulty judging the assumption. In our postmodern world, the criterion of relevance further implies that the assumption is compatible with empirical reality as best we can ascertain it; thus, philosophies are invariably reshaped by scientific discoveries. For example, people's current assumptions regarding the impact of