

# Nature of personality paper

[Psychology](#), [Personality](#)



Human personality is a complex construct that includes a number of influences, which are, however, often opposed in classical psychology: genetic versus environmental factors; free will vs. determinism and conscious versus unconscious behavior. The present paper is intended to analyze this spectrum through the prism of various psychological theories.

Freudian, or psychoanalytic approach, alleges that human behavior depends upon the instincts, manifested in Homo sapiens in more 'socialized' form.

Freud (Carver and Scheier, 1995) divides personality into three parts: the Id, or the subconscious, or the reflection of human instincts and most egoistic and childish desires, the Alter Ego, or human consciousness (the self), which provides mental determination of behavior, and Super Ego, or conscience, which acts as an internal censor and places restrictions on both the Id and the Alter Ego.

The scholar suggests that human behavior is mostly determined by the Id, as it comprises the greatest part of personality, but the Alter Ego and the Super Ego develop throughout developmental course under the influence of social environment. Thus, psychoanalytic approach prioritizes environmental factors over genetic, unconscious behavior over conscious and determinism over free will (Cook, 1984).

Neo-Freudians maintain most psychoanalytic concepts, but develop a unique framework of human Ego as not merely a mediator between the Id and the Super Ego, but rather as a separate force, less dependent upon the other two constituents and therefore more autonomous in personality formation.

For instance, Erik Erikson held that “ the Ego’s main job was to establish and maintain a sense of identity.

A person with a strong sense of identity is one who knows where he is in life, has accepted this position and has workable goals for change and growth. He has a sense of uniqueness while also having a sense of belonging and wholeness” (Cook, 1984, p. 258).

Also Neo-Freudian or psychodynamic approach is viewed as a single doctrine, its proponents vary greatly in their views on the spectrum of human personality: for instance, earlier Neo-Freudians like Carl Jung stated the power of unconscious behavior over conscious and of determinism over free will, whereas the next generation of psychologists, who identified their views as ‘ Neo-Freudian’ (like Erikson and Horney) alleged that human behavior is mostly conscious and not necessarily determined by physiological or instinctual drives. All Neo-Freudians, however, consent to the notion that environmental influences are stronger than genetic (Cook, 1984; Funder, 1996).

Biological perspective focuses on the dominance of genetic and physiological factors and stresses the influence of certain mode of neural activity on human personality (temperament). This approach highlights genetic factors as opposed to environmental, biological and genetic determinism as opposed to free will and unconscious behavior (for instance, the work of muscles, peculiarities of digestive process as they relate to human diurnal activity in both physical and social contexts) as opposed to conscious.

Trait theorists view human personality as a set of traits, which might be interdependent or independent, in addition, certain traits might predominate over others (central traits and cardinal trait, in Allport's interpretation) (Cook, 1984). Trait theorists provide only a brief framework of personality development, as most of them argue that individuals tend to focus on current settings (functional autonomy of motives) and therefore each developmental course is unique. Thus, the scholars view free will and social environment as behavior-shapers and insist that human actions are rather conscious than unconscious (Funder, 1996).

Humanistic approach, which derived from Roger's view on personality, which focuses on " healthy development in terms of how the individual perceived their own being" (Funder, 1996, p. 370). In addition, " a healthy individual will tend to see congruence between their sense of who they are (self) and who they feel they should be (ideal self)" (ibid). Human development is therefore a path to the ideal self, and the person by themselves decides on the mode of their progress, so this approach rejects determinism and genetic influences. Due to the fact that the personality is formed as a result of self-perception and self-analysis, this approach prioritizes conscious behavior (Cook, 1994).

Behaviorists study human personality and development as a progress of behavior and social competence, as they (as phenomenologists) generally suggest that the matrix of human actions is the only true reality (rather than mood or personality traits). The central points of behaviorism are the notions of classical conditioning (stimulus-behavioral reaction), operant conditioning

(action-reinforcement-response) and social learning (behavior depends on human expectancies concerning the possible reward).

Thus, most behaviorists believe in determinism, the dominance of environmental factors over social (Carver and Scheier, 1995) . Certain behaviors (e. g. reflex-based), are, in their opinion, unconscious, whereas other behavioral manifestations are the result of human expectations and perceived roles (Founder, 1996).

Cognitive paradigm ‘ is focused on the individual’s thoughts as the determinate of his or her emotions and behaviors and therefore personality” (Founder, 1996, p. 307). Cognitive theorists view human development as gradual evolution of human ability to process and analyze the informed received through perception after the accumulation of experience.

For instance, Kelly’s Fundamental Postulate can be formulated in the following way: ” a person’s process are psychologically channelized by the way in which he anticipates events” (ibid, p. 308). Hence, this approach doesn’t accept determinism, views human behavior as conscious in practically all aspects and manifestations. Neither genetic nor environmental influences are positioned as prominent personality-shapers, as human perception and thinking (internal psychological factors) are more important. Nevertheless, environment is more likely to have power over personality formation, they believe.

As for me, I don’t think that the spectrum of these dichotomies should be necessarily studied as three pairs of opposing factors. Due to the fact that

scientific progress has allowed partially de-scripting the DNA, it has appeared that genetic factors determine human neural activity and might shape such traits as emotiveness or assertiveness.

Furthermore, conscious behavior should not be contrasted to unconscious, as the line that divides both behaviors is not actually clear; human acts might be influenced by the combination of conscious decisions as well as unconscious and barely controllable drives. In addition, certain degree of determinism is always present in human behavior and personal development (as we all are mortal creatures, so we plan our future keeping in mind this fact), whereas free will allows concentrating on current issues. Thus, all these factors should be viewed as a complex, or holistically.

#### Reference list

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