What Is Personality Psychology?
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A mature discipline that cannot define its subject matter is like a sovereign country that has not defined its borders—although it has a sense of identity, the ambiguity at the edges invites hostile maneuvering. Mayer believes that personality psychology has an identity framework problem. Mayer is a serious scholar who has done a prodigious amount of reading; he proposes a well-thought-out model of the content of personality psychology, and he challenges others to provide a better one. In addition to registering general and enthusiastic approval of his project, I would make five further points.

First, his article points up the significance of this journal. Mayer raises a very important issue, but his article probably would not be published in a so-called mainstream journal like *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. We should all be grateful for the existence of *Psychological Inquiry* and the good judgment of the editor.

 Second, personality psychology is not the only branch of psychology whose subject matter is poorly defined. What, for example, is the subject matter of social psychology? It seems to be an evaluation of how "situations" influence social behavior. But Hogan and Roberts (in press) noted that after 90 years, social psychology has yet to provide a taxonomy of situations; this suggests that (a) there is nothing in the world that actually corresponds to a situation, and (b) social psychology is defined operationally as that which social psychologists do.

Third, Mayer's complex and apparently exhaustive framework for the field is tied to the content of existing personality theories; it is an organization of the status quo. This means that should an original theory be proposed, it would lie outside the framework and be defined out of existence. But as a wise man once remarked, "To put limits to speculation is treason to the future."

Fourth, my sense is that Mayer is not entirely successful in his effort to maintain a distinction between framework and theory. His relational system of personality constructs (cf. Table 2) looks very much like a prescription for a theory. He suggests that a competent theory must include a discussion of enablers (working memory), establishments (self-concept), types (extraversion), and agencies

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(superego). I have no problem with these requirements; my point is that the distinction between a formal, content-free framework, and the substantive requirements of a theory become blurred here.

Finally, I too have spent a good bit of time thinking about the definition and content of personality psychology. My views are rather different from Mayer's, but I can summarize them quickly, and this might be an appropriate occasion to do so (for more detail, see Hogan, 1976).

Personality psychology concerns analyzing the nature of human nature. The topic is of huge practical, moral, and political significance—virtually all public policy is predicated on assumptions about human nature—and personality psychology is the only empirical discipline that takes human nature as its explicit subject matter—which is why it is so important. Studying human nature is not an ambiguous, formless or open-ended pursuit. Rather, evolutionary theory defines the parameters of the discussion. It is a relatively straightforward task to analyze the design requirements of the species by asking what it is that we evolved to do. For some very interesting examples of this kind of analysis, I recommend Eibl-Eibesfeldt (1989), Lykken (1995), and Simpson and Kenrick (1997). I adopted a "history of ideas" approach to defining the content of personality psychology. In brief, the approach involves a content analysis in which one tries to identify the essential themes underlying the subject. Although some judgment is required, the reliability of the classification scheme can be readily established by asking other scholars to complete the same task. Having done this, I proposed (Hogan, 1976) that five key or root ideas form the substance of personality psychology. These are as follows.

1. *Motivation.* Every theory of personality includes some assumptions about human motivation; this includes Kelly's (1955) theory, which argues that the concept is irrelevant. Motivational terms are the distinctive explanatory concepts in personality psychology; we use traits to predict peoples' actions and we use motivational concepts to explain them.

2. *The Unconscious.* Every competent theory of personality contains an account of how ideas, emotions, and impulses of which we are consciously unaware influence our behavior, and how they become unconscious in the first place.

3. *The Self.* Virtually every theory of personality contains a definition of the self, and an account of how it develops and influences our behavior. Self-concepts

may have either motivational or regulatory properties, and they may be conscious of unconscious.

4. *Development.* Every theory of personality should contain an account of how personality develops and changes over time. Although most discussions concern intrapsychic development, it seems to me that an adequate model must also describe how young people become integrated into larger society, a process known as socialization or as socialization or moral development.

5. *Maturity.* Finally, every theory of personality contains a vision, model, or definition of maturity—an account of psychological health—and some description of how it can break down. Not every theory of personality will cover all of these elements—Freud, for example, largely ignored the self- concept. Nonetheless, these seem to be the root ideas of personality psychology, and they allow us to make three important determinations when considering any single theory.

First, they allow us to decide what is, and what is not personality psychology. Those theories that are based on learning principles and locate the causes of human action in "situations" are, by definition, not personality theories; they are usually versions of behaviorist social psychology. Second, we can evaluate the adequacy of a theory by noting the degree to which it covers these five topics. Allport's (1963) theory is admirable in the sense that it deals explicitly and at length with each of the root ideas—Allport had a keen sense of what the big issues were. Third, we can evaluate the originality and creativity of a theory by determining the degree to which it says something new about each of the root ideas. Thus Adler, Homey, and Fromm blur together because they are all talking about the same thing—how peoples' interpersonal problems reflect efforts to deal with their perceived inadequacies.

Summary

In contrast with Mayer's structuralist framework for personality, I propose a functionalist framework. Personality psychology can be defined as the empirical analysis of the nature of human nature, and specifically, the study of what it is that we evolved to do and how our adaptation to the Pleistocene landscape plays out in the latter 20th century. This will require saying something about the nature of human motivation including our conscious and unconscious tendencies, the nature and function of the self, how we develop and adapt to the larger social environment, and what high-level effectiveness and its psychological observe look like.

Note

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