

~PERSONALITY~

Lecture 1: Introduction to Personality

- Personality
 - From the Latin word Persona (mask)
 - Interesting distinction from what is reality and what is not
 - Focuses on the whole package→ the person as a whole
 - The person beneath the mask and the mask
 - Looks at what makes us similar or different to other people
 - Similar= nomothetic focus, generalities
 - Nomos = law
 - Looking for general laws that apply to all human beings
 - Universality, what is common ground for all of us
 - Different= idiographic focus, distinct and particular
 - Idios = your own
 - Aims to account for one's uniqueness and individuality
 - Your personality apart from general laws, looking at what is particular to you
 - If you focus too much on general laws, you ignore the individual
 - If you focus too much on particularities, you miss similarities
 - BALANCE: try to explain individualism within general laws of humanity
 - First look at what is particular to the individual→ then you look outwards→ helps you to understand the individual in context
 - ex. You play football
 - Look at the individual→ then at how parents raise you
 - Start idiographic then move to nomothetic
 - Knowing the nomothetic will help you understand idiographic
 - To understand not only the individual, but the universal laws which then become tailored to the individual
 - Definition by Gordon Allport (most cited)
 - *...the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment*
 - Dynamic organization of psychophysical systems→ nomothetic
 - How these systems manifest and determine behaviour is dependent on the individual context→ determines his unique adjustments to his environment→ idiographic
- There are many competing theories of personality, BUT what is a theory?
 - Theories consist of a set of descriptive statements
 - We usually don't know if theories are true or not→ why we need research
 - Purpose: to explain a phenomenon and to make predictions
 - Predictions that can be reduced empirically, by making observations
 - First need to describe the phenomenon→ then can you explain
- 4 Fundamental Approaches to Explaining Personality
 - 1. Psychoanalytic/Psychodynamic→ Freud and Jung
 - 2. Cognitive-behavioural
 - 3. Humanistic/Phenomenological/Existential

- 4. Dispositional/Trait approach
- Why not combine the theories to make a super theory?
 - Each theory rests on different assumptions about the nature of science, mind and behaviour
 - Different assumptions, contradictory fundamental assumptions
 - ex. Freud vs. Skinner
 - You can't use it if it is contradictory
- How do we evaluate theories?
 - Empirically
 - By going out and making controlled observations
 - Empirically testing the theory to see if it is right
 - Used more in textbooks
 - BUT empirical evidence and data is not enough → what does the data represent, what does the data really mean?
 - When you collect data, you already need theoretical assumptions
 - ex. Anxiety
 - Before collecting data about anxiety, you need to conceptualise what anxiety is
 - Conceptually
 - About evaluating the assumptions that empirical tests rests on
 - Should come even before empirical testing
 - The basis of empirical evaluation → empirical testing rests on assumptions, but the assumptions themselves could be controversial
 - If a concept is not conceptually sound → you waste resources measuring features, you waste data
 - Criteria for theory evaluation
 - Theory needs to meet these criteria
 - If a theory cannot meet a criteria, it cannot be subsequent criteria
 - Conceptual
 - Clarity—comes with specificity
 - Coherence
 - Errors of logic?
 - Internal consistency? Does it contradict itself?
 - Reformulation
 - Theoretical statements backed up with argument
 - Key categories omitted? (emotion, cognition, motivation...)
 - Empirical
 - Generality/fertility/explanatory power
 - Predictive accuracy/empirical support
 - You need to pass the theoretical and conceptual evaluation before you can check on it empirically