



Ninth Edition

**An Introduction to  
Theories of Personality**  
**Matthew H. Olson**  
**Domenica Favero**  
**B. R. Hergenhahn**



# An Introduction to Theories of Personality

**Ninth Edition**

**Matthew H. Olson**

*Hamline University*

**Domenica Favero**

*University of Lynchburg*

**B. R. Hergenhahn**

*Hamline University*



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**Full-Service Vendor:** *Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.*  
**Full-Service Project Managers:** *Denise Forlow and Gowthaman Sadhanandham*  
**Printer/Binder:** *LSC Communications, Inc.*  
**Cover Printer:** *LSC Communications, Inc.*  
**Cover Design:** *Lumina Datamatics, Inc.*  
**Cover Art:** *dane\_mark/DigitalVision Vectors/Getty Images*

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#### **Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Names: Olson, Matthew H., author. | Favero, D., author. | Hergenhahn, B. R., 1934-2007. An introduction to theories of personality.

Title: An introduction to theories of personality / Matthew H. Olson, Hamline University, D. Favero, University of Lynchburg.

Description: Ninth Edition. | Hoboken : Pearson, [2019] | Revised edition of An introduction to theories of personality, c2011.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019015160 | ISBN 9780135705094 | ISBN 0135705096

Subjects: LCSH: Psychology—Personality.

Classification: LCC BF698 .H45 2019 | DDC 150.19—dc23 LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019015160>

ScoutAutomatedPrintCode



#### **Rental Edition**

ISBN-10: 0-13-570509-6

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-570509-4

#### **Instructor's Review Copy**

ISBN-10: 0-13-479297-1

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-479297-2

*Dedicated to London, Owen, and Steve Puckett  
for their support and patience and to the Favero clan,  
who was the original inspiration for my interest  
in personality.*

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# Preface

## New to This Edition

In addition to numerous minor changes, several substantial changes were made in the ninth edition of this text and they are summarized below:

- All chapters were student tested, revised, and reorganized with attention to student comments and recommendations.
- As in the eighth edition, all chapters now include brief introductions that relate them to other chapters or that set them in historical context.
- As in the eighth edition, only three Questions for Discussion are included for each chapter in the text. Additional Questions for Discussion appear in the Instructor's Manual.
- Biographical information was updated and revised throughout.
- Chapter 2: The discussion of repression is corrected in accordance with Freud's revision of his theory and his recantation of the seduction hypothesis.
- Chapter 3: A cautionary note is added concerning the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a test used to determine where individuals are placed in Jung's typology.
- Chapter 4: Along with other birth order phenomena, the fraternal birth order effect (FBO) is presented.
- Chapter 12: The attraction cue called fluctuating asymmetry (FA) and its relationship to fitness is included.
- Updated references throughout

The ninth edition of this text continues to reflect our contention that it is in an Introduction to Theories of Personality course through which the student experiences the full richness of psychology. In such a course, the student experiences everything from psychology's most rigorous scientists to its most mystical nonscientific thinkers. It is in such a course that the student reviews answers to questions such as: What, if anything, do all human beings have in common? What accounts for individual differences among people? How are the mind and body related? How much of what we call personality is inherited and how much of it results from experience? and How much of human behavior is determined and how much of it is a function of free will? In such a course, the major theories of human motivation are reviewed and the major schools, paradigms, or "isms" within psychology are sampled: for example, psychoanalysis, behaviorism, humanism, and existentialism. It is in such a course that the student is exposed to the history of psychology, from Freud

to the modern theorists, including Erikson, Allport, Cattell, Eysenck, Skinner, Bandura, Mischel, Buss, Kelly, Rogers, Maslow, and May. It is also in such a course that students encounter information that helps them make sense out of their own lives and their relationships with other people. Finally, in such a course, the nature of psychopathology and its treatment are explored. What other psychology course covers as much territory? Our answer is none, and therefore it is our belief that if a student were to take only one psychology course beyond the introductory course, it should be an Introduction to Personality course.

Although this text covers topics already mentioned, its main purpose is to summarize the major theories of personality. The text is built around the belief that it is misleading to search for the correct theory of personality. Rather, it is assumed that the best understanding of personality is derived from a variety of viewpoints. Thus, theories representing the psychoanalytic, sociocultural, trait, learning, sociobiological, and existential-humanistic paradigms are offered as different—yet equally valid—ways of approaching the study of personality.

## Instructor Resources

We are pleased to offer the following supplement to qualified adopters.

**Instructor's Manual with Tests (0134792939)** This wonderful tool for classroom preparation and management contains Learning Objectives that corresponds to each chapter of the text. The test bank portion contains a set of multiple choice and essay questions, each with a page reference, a difficulty rating, and skill type designation.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation all those who provided reviews of the eighth edition of this text. These were helpful as we wrote the ninth edition.

We would like to express our thanks to the Department of Psychological Science at the University of Lynchburg and their students for providing feedback and time for Favero to complete this book. All comments, complaints, and inquiries should be directed to Favero at [favero@lynchburg.edu](mailto:favero@lynchburg.edu).

*Matthew H. Olson*  
Hamline University

*Domenica Favero*  
University of Lynchburg



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# Chapter 1

## What Is Personality?



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Persona is the Latin word for mask and is the origin of the word *personality*.



### Learning Objectives

- 1.1** Outline the issues in providing a comprehensive explanation of personality.
- 1.2** Describe the factors that influence personality.
- 1.3** Summarize the personality theories on human nature.
- 1.4** Describe the scientific method in studying personality.
- 1.5** Summarize the various paradigms that guide research on personality.

*She has a really strong personality.*

*He has a terrible personality.*

*And that one over there . . . no personality at all.*

*What do we mean when we use that p word?*

The term *personality* comes from the Latin word **persona**, which means mask. Implicit in this definition of personality is the idea that important aspects of individuals remain concealed, and that we only reveal selected parts of ourselves. This means that personality is our public self, the part of us that we display to the world. Psychological theories of personality expand this fundamental definition and refine it. Many different definitions of personality exist. Every theory of personality can be viewed as an attempt to define personality, and these definitions differ markedly from one another, as you will see in the following chapters.



Personality theories examine what people have in common and their individual differences.

## Three Concerns of Personality Theory

### 1.1 Outline the issues in providing a comprehensive explanation of personality.

Kluckhohn and Murray (1953, p. 53) observed that every human being is (1) like every other human being; (2) like some other human beings; and (3) like no other human being. We are like all other human beings insofar as there is a **human nature** that describes “humanness.” One task of the personality theorist is to describe what all human beings have in common—that is, to describe human nature. Next, we are like some other human beings because we share common culture(s). For example, it may be part of human nature to adorn one’s body, to attempt to make sense of the universe and our place in it, to seek a mate and produce offspring, to care for offspring, and to live cooperatively with our fellow humans. It is culture, however, that determines how these needs are satisfied. In our culture, for example, we want our tattoos to be visible, but we usually don’t tattoo our faces. Lastly, each human is unique, with his or her own particular cluster of genes and his or her own particular cluster of personal experiences.

In describing personality, the personality theorist attempts to show how we are the same as other humans and how we are different from them. The former issue concerns human nature, and the latter concerns **individual differences**. It is one achievement to describe the components of human nature and the characteristics on which humans differ. It is another to explain how they originate, how they interact, how they change over time, and how they serve our needs. The goals of personality theory are to describe what humans are like and to explain why we are like that—to describe and explain both human nature and individual differences. This is a large order, and no single theory has been completely successful at doing either. Rather, different theories emphasize different aspects of human nature and individual differences, and offer different descriptions, explanations, and methods for studying them. For this reason, perhaps, the best understanding of personality is provided by combinations of many theories of personality rather than any single theory.

## Proposed Determinants of Personality

### 1.2 Describe the factors that influence personality.

In this section, we review some of the factors stressed by various personality theorists in their attempts to explain personality. We see that some theorists emphasize one or more of the following factors, whereas other theorists minimize them or ignore them altogether.

### Genetics

The most common lay explanation of personality is often based on genetics. When asked, our students tend to believe that personality characteristics are present for the same reasons that eye color, hair color, or physique are present. To ask why a person is shy is basically the same as asking why he or she is tall. Both characteristics, according to this viewpoint, are genetically determined. Common statements such as “He has an Irish temper,” “She takes after her father,” or “He has his aunt’s artistic tendencies,” imply a genetic explanation of personality because they all have an “It’s in the blood” tone to them.

You should not be left with the impression that only nonprofessionals view personality characteristics as being influenced by heredity. Heredity may play a far greater role in determining personality than was previously suspected. For example, Thomas J. Bouchard, Jr. has studied identical twins separated at birth and raised apart. He consistently found great similarity in the personalities of identical twins even when they had no contact with each other and grew up in distinctly different families. Bouchard (1984) concluded, "Both the twin studies and adoption studies...converge on the surprising finding that common family environmental influences play only a minor role in the determination of personality" (pp. 174–175). In other words, if children reared in the same family have similar personality characteristics, that fact seems to be explained more by their common genes than by their shared family experiences. Recent research has shown this as well, with the heritability of personality estimated at .4 (Vukasović & Bratko, 2015). This means that at least 40% of personality is due to our genetic makeup. Bratko, Butkovic, and Hlupic (2017) reviewed numerous behavioral genetic studies examining twins raised together, twins raised apart, siblings raised together and apart, and biological and foster parents. After their meta-analysis they conclude, "Review and the meta-analysis of the behavioral genetic studies of personality presented here support the genetic hypothesis without any doubt. Individual differences in personality traits are heritable. On the other hand, how important is that?" (Bratko et al., 2017, p. 17). There are studies that suggest that environment plays more of a role in personality as one ages.

The field of evolutionary psychology (Chapter 12) also stresses the role of heredity and evolved adaptations in its explanation of personality. In fact, all theories of personality emphasize some innate qualities, whether they are physiological needs, described, for example, by Freud (Chapter 2), Skinner (Chapter 9), Dollard and Miller (Chapter 10), and Maslow (Chapter 15); the tendency toward self-actualization, described, for example, by Jung (Chapter 3), Horney (Chapter 5), Rogers (Chapter 14), and Maslow (Chapter 15); or social interest, as discussed by Adler (Chapter 4). Thus the question is not whether heredity influences personality, but rather to what degree and in what manner.

The question of how much personality is influenced by inheritance is as old as psychology itself. The **nativism–empiricism controversy** (also called the nature–nurture controversy) exists in every major area in psychology, including personality theory. In general, the nativist claims that an important attribute, such as intelligence, is largely genetically determined. The nativist would say, for example, that the maximum level of intelligence that people can attain is determined at conception, and life's circumstances, at best, can help people to realize this genetically determined intellectual potential. On the other hand, the empiricist believes that people's major attributes are largely created by experience. Intelligence, to the empiricist, is determined more by people's environments than by their genetic endowments. To the empiricist, the upper limit of a person's intelligence is found in experience, not in the genes.

The nativism–empiricism controversy manifests itself in many ways in personality theory, and we encounter it several times in this text.

## Traits

Several personality theorists believe that what distinguishes people from one another are the traits they possess. Some traits, it is assumed, are learned (e.g., food preferences), and others are genetically determined (e.g., one's emotional stability). Some exert a powerful influence in one's life (e.g., intelligence), and others have only a minor influence (e.g., fashion preferences). Trait theorists believe the traits one possesses remain relatively constant throughout life, and, therefore, they believe one's behavior will tend to remain relatively consistent across time and similar situations. The theories of Allport (Chapter 7) and Cattell and Eysenck (Chapter 8) emphasize the importance of traits in their explanations of personality.

## Sociocultural Determinants

To a large extent, one's culture determines what is considered proper practices in courtship, marriage, childrearing, politics, religion, education, and justice. These, and other cultural variables, explain many important individual differences among humans.

More specifically, some theorists say that one's personality can be viewed as a combination of the many roles one plays. If you were asked to start a blank sheet of paper with the words "I am" and then to list all of your qualities, you would have a rather extensive list. For example, you may be female, 19 years old, a college student, a Lutheran, from the Midwest, 5 feet 8 inches tall, a Republican, attractive, a Cancer, a psychology major, a departmental assistant, and so on. Each entry on your list has a prescribed role associated with it, and for each role, society has defined what is an acceptable range of behavior (norms). If you deviate from that range, you will confront social pressure of some type. Indeed, what is considered normal behavior and what is considered abnormal is, to a large extent, determined by how you behave relative to societal expectations.

Other sociocultural determinants of personality include the socioeconomic level of one's family, one's family size, birth order, ethnic identification, religion, the region of the country in which one was raised, the educational level attained by one's parents, and so on. One simply does not have the same experiences in a financially secure home as one would have in an impoverished home. The fortuitous circumstances into which a person is born (e.g., culture, society, and family) certainly have a major impact on personality. Again, this point is one that all personality theorists accept; it is just a matter of how much each one emphasizes it. The theories of Adler (Chapter 4), Horney (Chapter 5), and Erikson (Chapter 6) stress the importance of sociocultural determinants of personality (see Activity 1.1).

## Learning

Those emphasizing a genetic explanation of personality represent the nativistic side of the nativism–empiricism controversy. Those emphasizing the learning process in their explanations of personality represent the empiricist side. An example is the learning theorist's contention that we are what we have been rewarded or punished for being. Therefore, if our history of reward and punishment had been different, our personalities would be different. The difference between a successful person and an unsuccessful one, according to some learning theorists, is found in patterns of reward and punishment, not in the genes.

A powerful implication of this theoretical position is that one can control personality development by controlling the circumstances under which rewards and punishments are dispensed or withheld. Theoretically, according to this perspective, it is possible to create any type of personality by systematically manipulating reward and punishment. The theories of Skinner (Chapter 9), and Dollard and Miller (Chapter 10) emphasize the importance of reward in the learning process. Bandura and Mischel (Chapter 11) also stress the learning process but deny the importance of reward in that process.

### Activity 1.1

Place the words "I am" at the top of a blank sheet of paper and proceed to list the characteristics that are true about you at the moment. For example, I am a woman, a Christian, a psychology major, a mother, a waitress. Briefly describe

the culturally prescribed role associated with each item on your list. Do you believe a person who either refuses to play a socially prescribed role, or is incapable of doing so, will experience social pressure of some type? Explain.

Considerable compatibility exists between those theorists stressing sociocultural determinants in their explanations of personality and those stressing the learning process. Both accept **environmentalism**. One's personality is shaped by cultural expectations, but it is through patterns of reward and punishment in a particular culture that those expectations are conveyed to children.

## Existential–Humanistic Considerations

Theories emphasizing existential–humanistic principles ask such questions as the following: What does it mean to be aware of the fact that ultimately you must die? What are the sources of meaning in human existence or in an individual's existence? According to what values is it best to live one's life, and how are those values determined? How do the human needs for predictability and security relate to the human needs for adventure and freedom?

All existential–humanistic theories stress the importance of free will. Humans may be thrown by circumstances beyond their control into certain conditions of life, but how they value, interpret, and respond to those conditions is a matter of personal choice. For example, you may be born a male or a female, rich or poor, during peace, war, famine, or bountiful times. You may have been abused as a child, or you may have been raised under loving conditions. No matter what conditions you find yourself in or what experiences you have had, it is you who gives those conditions or experiences whatever meaning they have for you. It is you who is in charge of your life; you alone choose to be the type of person you become. The theories of Kelly (Chapter 13), Rogers (Chapter 14), Maslow (Chapter 15), and May (Chapter 16) emphasize existential–humanistic considerations.

## Unconscious Mechanisms

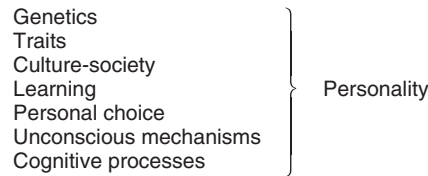
In many important respects, theories that emphasize unconscious mechanisms are the opposite of existential–humanistic theories. Sometimes referred to as *depth theories*, the theories stress the unconscious attempt to discover the underlying causes of behavior. According to this viewpoint, because the ultimate causes of behavior are unconscious and typically have their origins in childhood, the search for them is extremely complicated. Complex tools such as dream and symbol analysis, free association, hypnosis, and the analysis of lapses of memory are required. Because what characterizes the unconscious mind can manifest itself in consciousness in any number of ways, one cannot really understand much about a person by studying his or her conscious experience. A personality theorist embracing this perspective does not ask why a person acts in a particular way because the real causes of the behavior are not known to that person. To understand personality, one must somehow get beneath the arbitrary manifestations of the conscious mind to the unconscious mind itself. In other words, one must get beneath a person's mask. The theories of Freud (Chapter 2), Jung (Chapter 3), and Horney (Chapter 5) emphasize unconscious mechanisms in their analysis of personality.

## Cognitive Processes

Currently there is considerable interest in cognitive processes in personality. Such processes determine how information from the environment is perceived, retained, transformed, and acted on by a person. Theories stressing cognitive processes are typically interested in self-regulated behavior and focus on the importance of self-reward or self-punishment, which comes from goal attainment or nonattainment, rather than on rewards or punishments that come from external sources like parents or society. Cognitive theories tend to deemphasize the importance of the past and emphasize the importance of present experience and future goals in determining behavior. Bandura and Mischel (Chapter 11) and Kelly (Chapter 13) are examples of cognitive theories.

## Personality as a Composite of Factors

Because almost every theory of personality contains elements of all of the explanations just reviewed, perhaps it is safe to say that personality is a function of all of them. The elements emphasized depend on which theory of personality one considers. Assuming that, the situation can be summarized as follows:



## Questions Confronting the Personality Theorist

### 1.3 Summarize the personality theories on human nature.

Personality theorists are in the unique position in psychology of studying the entire person. Most other psychologists are concerned with only one aspect of humans such as child development, old age, perception, intelligence, learning, motivation, memory, or pathology. It is only the personality theorist who tries to present a complete picture of the human being.

The task is monumental and is related not only to developments in other aspects of psychology but to developments in other disciplines as well (e.g., medicine, neurophysiology, biology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and computer science). Personality theorists attempt to synthesize the best information from diverse areas in psychology and other disciplines into a coherent, holistic configuration. As personality theorists have attempted this synthesis through the years, they have addressed several questions related to human nature and individual differences. These are questions for which diverse answers exist; no matter what the answer, however, each personality theory addresses them directly or indirectly. We have already discussed the nativism–empiricism controversy that reflects one such question. Other important questions addressed by personality theorists follow.

## What Is the Relative Importance of the Past, the Present, and the Future?

Are childhood experiences related to adult personality characteristics? A related question is: Are there critical irreversible stages of personality development? Freud, for example, said that personality was essentially fully developed by the end of the fifth year of life. Other theorists stress the importance of future goals for human behavior. Goal-directed or future-oriented behavior is also called **teleological behavior**, and it plays a prominent role in the theories of Jung (Chapter 3), Allport (Chapter 7), and Bandura and Mischel (Chapter 11). Both learning theorists—for example, Skinner (Chapter 9)—and existential–humanists—for example, May (Chapter 16)—tend to stress the importance of the present in their explanations of personality.

## What Motivates Human Behavior?

Almost all personality theories contain their own theories of motivation. That is, they specify the major driving force behind most human behavior. Freud (Chapter 2), Skinner (Chapter 9), and Dollard and Miller (Chapter 10) postulate **hedonism**, or the tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain. For Jung (Chapter 3), Horney (Chapter 5),



Maslow (Chapter 15), and Rogers (Chapter 14), the master motive is **self-actualization**, or the impulse to realize one's full potential. For Adler (Chapter 4) it is striving for superiority. May (Chapter 16) and Kelly (Chapter 13) propose a search for meaning and the reduction of uncertainty. Buss (Chapter 12) postulates the predisposition to express evolved psychological mechanisms. For Bandura and Mischel (Chapter 11) it is the need to develop cognitive processes that are effective in dealing with the world.

## How Important Is the Concept of Self?

Those theories that view human behavior as consistent and well-organized need somehow to account for these characteristics of behavior. Several theories postulate the **self** as the organizing agent of personality. Also, it is often the self that is postulated as the mechanism providing individual consistency over time and across situations. The theories of Horney (Chapter 5), Allport (Chapter 7), and Rogers (Chapter 14) rely heavily on the concept of self. Others claim that employing the concept of self simply switches all of the questions we have about the person to questions about the self. In other words, the self is viewed as a homunculus (i.e., a little person) inside the person who causes the person's actions. According to the opponents of this position, exactly how the self causes a person's actions remains a mystery. The concept of ego is often used in the same way as the concept of self and is criticized for the same reason. Skinner (Chapter 9) was a theorist who was highly critical of self theories.

## How Important Are Unconscious Mechanisms?

Depth theories, such as those of Freud and Jung, focus on the unconscious mind. Theories that emphasize unconscious mechanisms confront questions such as the following: What is the relationship between the conscious and unconscious minds? How can the unconscious be investigated? Can persons ever become aware of their own unconscious motives and, if so, how?

Unconscious mechanisms are also important to many theorists stressing sociocultural determinants of personality (e.g., Adler, Horney, and Erikson) and to the evolutionary psychologists (e.g., Buss). Conversely, trait theorists (such as Allport, Cattell, and Eysenck), learning theorists (such as Skinner, Dollard and Miller, and Bandura and Mischel), and existential-humanistic theorists (such as Kelly, Rogers, Maslow, and May) either deny or minimize the importance of unconscious determinants of personality.

## Is Human Behavior Freely Chosen or Is It Determined?

If all the influences acting on a person at any given time were known, would it be possible to predict that person's behavior with complete accuracy? If your answer is yes, you are a determinist. If your answer is no, you probably believe in free will. Notice that this question assumes we could know all the factors influencing a person's behavior, and that is impossible. For example, imagine it is your task to determine what caused a person to commit a burglary. The possible causes would be numerous indeed and would include biological, social, and personal factors. More likely the cause of this, or any behavior, would be a combination of these and other factors. For this reason, even strict determinists realize their predictions about behavior can only be probabilistic. Most personality theorists are determinists but, as we have seen, they stress different determinants of behavior.

The only theorists who reject the doctrine of **determinism** are existential-humanists who believe that human behavior is freely chosen. For them, we are masters of our destiny. We are not the victims of our biography, culture, genes, traits, patterns of reward and punishment, or any other factors.



## What Can Be Learned by Asking People about Themselves?

Examining the contents of one's mind is called **introspection**. This question concerns the extent to which introspective reports can be trusted. Answers to this question run the gamut, ranging from existentialists, who claim that introspection is the most valuable tool available for studying personality, to some learning theorists who claim that introspection is not only invalid but also unnecessary. In between the two extremes are the theories of Freud and Jung, according to whom introspective reports are useful only if they are interpreted by a trained analyst.

## Uniqueness versus Commonality

We saw earlier that each person is unique because no cluster of genes or environmental experiences is the same for any two persons. It is also true that all human beings have a great deal in common. The fact that we share similar brains and sensory apparatuses and a culture with other humans means we respond as others do to many situations. To a large extent, what we find aesthetically pleasing, what makes us laugh or cry, and our beliefs concerning the supernatural are culturally determined. Thus it is possible to emphasize either the fact that each human being is unique or the fact that each human has much in common with other humans. Both emphases are found in personality theories. The study of a single individual is called **idiographic** (id-ee-o-graf-ik) **research**, and the study of groups of individuals is called **nomothetic** (no-mo-thet-ik) **research**. Theorists such as Allport (Chapter 7), Skinner (Chapter 9), and Kelly (Chapter 13) use the idiographic approach because they emphasize the uniqueness of each individual. Theorists such as Cattell and Eysenck (Chapter 8) emphasize the nomothetic approach because they stress traits that many individuals have in common.

## Are People Controlled Internally or Externally?

Where is the locus of control for human behavior? Some theorists stress internal mechanisms such as traits and self-regulatory systems, for example, Allport (Chapter 7), Cattell and Eysenck (Chapter 8), Horney (Chapter 5), Rogers (Chapter 14), and Maslow (Chapter 15); others stress external factors such as environmental stimuli and patterns of reward, for example, Skinner (Chapter 9) and Dollard and Miller (Chapter 10). Still others emphasize the importance of both internal and external controls, for example, Bandura and Mischel (Chapter 11). Variables controlling a person's behavior internally are called **person variables**; those controlling externally are called **situation variables**. A person variable would include a person's emotional state, and a situation variable could include environmental circumstances such as temperature or crowding. The determination of the relative importance of person and situation variables for human behavior is one of the primary concerns of personality theorists.

## How Are the Mind and Body Related?

How can something purely mental such as the mind, thoughts, or consciousness influence something purely physical such as the brain or the body, and vice versa? This classic philosophical question is still very much alive. One proposed answer is that no problem really exists because no mind exists; what we call mental states are nothing more than subtle bodily responses. This position is called **physical monism** (materialism). Another answer is that mental events are merely the by-products of bodily responses and, therefore, can be, and should be, ignored in the analysis of human behavior. This position is called **epiphenomenalism**. Another proposed solution claims that an external event causes both bodily and mental events at the same time, but the two types of events are independent of each other. This position is called **parallelism**.