

Eysenck H J. *The biological basis of personality.*

Springfield, IL: Thomas, 1967. 399 p.

[Dept. Psychology, Univ. London; Psychological Labs., Inst. Psychiatry, Univ. London; and Maudsley and Bethlem Hosps., London, England]

This book provided a biologically based theory of personality, relating, in particular, extraversion-introversion to genetically determined physiological bases in the ascending reticular activating system and the arousal systems of the cortex. [The SSCI® indicates that this book has been cited in over 855 publications.]

Hans J. Eysenck
Institute of Psychiatry
University of London
Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AF
England

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When I started work as a recently qualified PhD at the Mill Hill Emergency Hospital during the war, concepts like extraversion-introversion were anathema and a Freudian-type psychology of personality was widely accepted. I set out to develop instead an experimentally based and more realistic picture of personality structure and did so in my first book, entitled *Dimensions of Personality*.¹ This was largely descriptive and established the two major dimensions of personality of extraversion-introversion and neuroticism-stability, together with a number of experimental measures related to these two dimensions.

The success of this venture encouraged me to look at causes of individual differences, and my first attempt, published

under the title *The Dynamics of Anxiety and Hysteria*,² used Pavlovian and Hullian concepts like excitation and inhibition in an effort to do so. This proved only partly successful, although many predictions were tested and verified.

In spite of the almost universal rejection at that time of genetic causes as being relevant to individual differences and personality, I carried out a number of twin studies that convinced me that genetic causes had in fact a very important part to play in this field. And if this was so, then surely it should be reflected in certain physiological structures, biochemical secretions, and other biological features of the organisms that would be lawfully related to my two major dimensions of personality. I therefore tried to develop such a system, relating extraversion-introversion to individual differences in the arousability of the cortex itself, probably determined by activities of the ascending reticular activating system. I paid somewhat less attention to neuroticism-stability, assuming that the Cannon-type hypothesis linking such behaviour with the limbic system, and the sympathetic part of the autonomic nervous system, was widely accepted. The book reports a large number of experimental deductions from my theory, largely supporting it, as well as summarizing relative work on heredity, psychopharmacology, brain damage, and so on.

The book was quite well received and has since been reprinted several times. It started a large body of empirical work in the fields of psychophysiology, psychopharmacology, and experimental psychology; *A Model for Personality*,³ which I edited, and *Personality and Individual Differences—A Natural Science Approach*,⁴ which I wrote with my son, Michael W. Eysenck, bring the story up-to-date.

1. Eysenck H J. *Dimensions of personality.* New York: Methuen, 1947. 308 p. (Cited 135 times since 1966.)

2. ———. *The dynamics of anxiety and hysteria: an experimental application of modern learning theory to psychiatry.* New York: Methuen, 1967. 311 p. (Cited 120 times.)

3. ———, ed. *A model for personality.* New York: Springer-Verlag, 1981. 287 p.

4. Eysenck H J & Eysenck M W. *Personality and individual differences—a natural science approach.* New York: Plenum Press, 1985. 424 p.

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