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Our behaviors are reflections of our personality. Behaviorists such as Skinner and Rotter have formulated their respective theorists of personality.

Personality and Skinner

B.F. Skinner proposed that our differences in our learning experiences are the main reason behind our individual differences in our behavior. And we learn these patterns of behavior either directly (reward as positive reinforcement of good behavior or punishment as a negative reinforcement of bad behavior) or indirectly (through observational learning or modeling).

Skinner believed that it is simply human nature that we behave in such a way that we would receive rewards or favorable things. If we want to experience reinforcement, then we should develop personality traits that are positive, such as those attributes included in the "agreeableness" category of the Big Five (e.g. being understanding, compassionate, empathetic, and a positive thinker). In this sense, Skinner argued that we respond to every kind of reinforcement, and that our behavior and personality traits can be shaped and controlled by the society. In addition to this, Skinner implied that if we want our negative traits to be changed into positive ones, we must changed our environment first. This strict behaviorist point of view tries to refute other psychologists belief that we must alter our inner self first (that is, our own personality traits) before we can fully experience the change that we want.

Personality and Rotter

When Julian Rotter started developing his social learning theory, he refused to embrace the ideologies of Freudian Psychoanalysis, which was the dominating viewpoint of the circle of psychologists during his time.

Instead, he utilized the law of effect, wherein people are being driven to pursue positive reinforcement and to avert negative reinforcement. According to his theory, personality and behaviorism are not connected by our physiological instincts and drives.

The main viewpoint in the social learning theory of Rotter is that personality is a representation of the contact between the person and his environment. Therefore, his theory posits that we must consider both the individual and his environment before having a full understanding of his behavior. In line with this, Rotter believed that personality is a set of potentials that man uses to respond in certain circumstances.

For Rotter, personality and behavior can always be altered. According to him, changing the environment the individual is in and changing his way of thinking would lead to a change in his behavior, and therefore in his personality traits also change according to that specific situation. In contrast with psychoanalytical theories and strict behavioral theories, Rotter argues that humans do not just behave to avoid punishment; rather, we are motivated to act by our life goals and our vision to maximize the rewards we would receive. Now that's a more optimistic way to view personality and behavior, isn't it?

Personality and behavior are no doubt connected with each other. Our behavior provides us hints on who we truly are, and our personality traits are given meaning by the way we behave.