

“Personality and Personality Theories:
Lectures by Peter G. Ossorio, Ph.D.”

These lectures, given in the fall of 1974, offer us the opportunity to hear Dr. Ossorio present two of the fundamental conceptual components of the Person Concept — Person and Behavior — and to see how he uses those components in understanding psychological theories. In addition to the lectures, the DVD includes a copy of the text used for the course (“Outline of Descriptive Psychology for Personality Theory and Clinical Applications” (Ossorio, 1970/1981)). The 1974 version is included here to give listeners exactly the same text that students used in the recorded class.

In addition to being an invaluable resource for learning the Person Concept, the lectures represent a unique historical record. The initial formulations of the concepts of Person and Behavior had been achieved during a 6-month period in 1964-1965 (Ossorio, 1983/1985, p. 19). They had “borne ... ten years of criticism and revision in consultation with students and colleagues” (Ossorio, 1971/1978/2005, p. xxiii) prior to their presentation to this class, and were essentially in their final form. Although Dr. Ossorio continued to develop Descriptive Psychology for more than 25 years after these lectures, there were surprisingly few changes to these core formulations.

Dr. Ossorio announced one change that he had in mind to the class. In lecture 2-1, he described his original use of the concept of status as “an unfortunate move, because we have a much better use for the term status.” He directed students to the “Map of Status Concepts” (page 15 of the Outline) and declared, “In the future we will reserve it for that notion of status.”

The Map reflected work that Dr. Ossorio had accomplished in “*What Actually Happens*” (Ossorio, 1971/1978/2005). Although it was not published by the University of South Carolina Press until 1978, “*What Actually Happens*” had been circulating in LRI Report form since 1971. It included a status treatment of self-concept (“Selves without Paradox”) and a degradation ceremony treatment of determinism (“Determinism from a Substantive Behavioral Standpoint”). These formulations demonstrated the elucidatory power of the new concept of status.

In accordance with his announcement, the category of “Comparatives,” which included “state” and “status”, was eliminated. It was replaced by the category “Derivatives,” which included the concepts of State, Capacity, and Embodiment. State was explicated as follows: “When a person is in a particular state, there is a systematic difference in his powers and/or dispositions.” Status was used henceforth as a place in a scheme of things.

Although it is obviously beyond the scope of this short note to outline the subsequent development of Descriptive Psychology, a few additional examples may be of interest. These include the introduction of embodiment as a parameter (Ossorio, 1980/1982), the classification of Person and Behavior as states of affairs (Ossorio, 1980/1982), the expansion of the original nine maxims to more than 100 (Ossorio, 1982/1998), the elaboration of the definition of a Person (“A person is an individual whose history is a history of Deliberate Action in a dramaturgical pattern.” (Ossorio, 1996/1997)), the change in the definition of Knowledge (“Knowledge is the structure of facts or concepts that the person has the ability to act on.” (Ossorio, 2006a)), and the possible expansion of the PC-C Model to include the concept of status (Ossorio, 2006b). With the foundation provided by these lectures, listeners will be able to appreciate these kinds of

developments. All of them are included in *The Behavior of Persons* (Ossorio, 2006b), Ossorio's final book and definitive presentation of the Person Concept.

The lectures were given to first-year clinical psychology graduate students at the University of Colorado, Boulder, with a number of more advanced students auditing. With Dr. Ossorio's permission, CJ Peek, at that time a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology, recorded the lectures on reel-to-reel tape. Realizing that the old tapes were in danger of degrading, CJ Peek had the tapes converted to digital format in 2007. The new CDs languished in the storage locker of the Society for Descriptive Psychology for several years, until CJ Peek loaned CJ Stone his personal copies of the lectures. CJ Stone immediately recognized their value to anyone seeking to learn the Person Concept. His patient but persistent efforts led to their release in this DVD format (first distributed to members of the Society for Descriptive Psychology as an annual membership benefit). We owe each of these men an enormous debt of gratitude for their parts in making this material available to us.

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