

DUMONT

A History of
Personality Psychology



FRANK DUMONT (retired) was Full Professor in the Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology, and Director of the Ph.D. program in his field, at McGill University. He was the co-editor of *Six Therapists and One Client* (2000) and a co-editor of *Corsini's The Dictionary of Psychology* (1999). He gratefully acknowledges that much of this book on personality psychology was researched and drafted while he was Visiting Fellow at Wolfson College, Cambridge University (2005–2006).

Jacket illustration: detail from *The Blue Cloak* (De Blauwe Huik), 1559 (oil on panel) by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c. 1525–1569), Staatliche Gemaldegalerie, Berlin, Germany / The Bridgeman Art Library.

Frank Dumont presents contemporary personality psychology with a fresh description of its current status as well as its prospects. Play, sex, cuisine, creativity, altruism, pets, grieving rituals, and other oft-neglected topics broaden the scope of this fascinating study. This tract is imbued with historical perspectives that reveal the continuity in the evolving science and research of this discipline over the past century. The author places classic schemas and constructs, as well as current principles, in the context of their socio-political catalysts. He further relates this study of the person to lifespan developmental issues and to cultural, gender-specific, trait-based, genetic/epigenetic, and evolutionary research findings.

Personality psychology has recently reconciled itself to more modest paradigms for describing, explaining, and predicting human behavior than it generated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This book documents that transformation, providing valuable information for health-service professionals as well as to teachers, researchers, and scientists.

"I found this a thrilling book. I am full of admiration for the scope of Dumont's learning, leaping as he does across two millennia, and shifting effortlessly from literature to theology to science. It is a really stunning intellectual tour de force and a must read for anyone interested in the genesis of personality and its disorders."

EDWARD SHORTER

Hannah Professor of the History of Medicine and Professor of Psychiatry, University of Toronto

"This erudite but surprisingly readable account of scholars' attempts over centuries to understand the essence of human individuality plumbs the depths of what it means to be human, and does so with an amazing awareness of the breadth of writings relevant to the subject. Professor Dumont documents the rise of a scientific approach to the study of personality, the contributions of statistics, of the mental health industry, of trait theory, and of sophisticated test-construction methodology, but does not neglect the cultural, political, economic, and scientific context of these developments – even discussing such topics as play in middle and later adulthood, food preparation practices, illness and wellness models of personality, 'positive psychology,' and the role of religious practices. The creative originality, thoughtfulness, breadth, superb writing, and meticulous scholarship of this book make it a significant contribution to the psychology of personality, the history of psychology, and indeed to intellectual history in general."

MICHAEL WERTHEIMER

Professor Emeritus of Psychology, University of Colorado at Boulder

Jacket designed by Hart McLeod Ltd.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org

ISBN 978-0-521-11632-9



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