

EYSENCK'S THEORY OF PERSONALITY

EYSENCK

- Hans Eysenck was born in Berlin, Germany (1916)
- PhD in Psychology from University of London
- Before his death in 1997, he was the most cited psychologist.
- He used questionnaires, self ratings, rating by others, objective behavioral tests, assessment of physique, physiological measurements, biographical and other historical information as means of data collection

KEY TERMS DEFINED BY EYSENCK

- He argues that much of personality is genetically determined
- Personality: a person's internally based characteristics way of thinking and acting
- Character: personal characteristics that have been judged or evaluated
- Temperament: hereditary aspects of personality, including sensitivity, moods, irritability and distractibility
- Traits: stable qualities that a person shows in most situations

HANS. J EYSENCK (1947): Definition of Personality

- Personality is “the sum total of the actual or potential behavior patterns of the organism, as determined by heredity and environment. It originates and develops through the functional interactions of the four main sectors into which these behavior patterns are organized - The cognitive sectors (Intelligence), conative sector (character) affective sector (temperament) and the somatic sector (constitution).”

THREE DIMENSIONS OF PERSONALITY

- EXTRAVERSION VERSUS INTROVERSION
 - EMOTIONAL STABILITY VERSUS NEUROTICISM
 - IMPULSE CONTROL VERSUS PSYCHOTICISM
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- His model is strongly rooted in biology
 - Believed that traits are heritable

EXTRAVERSION (E)

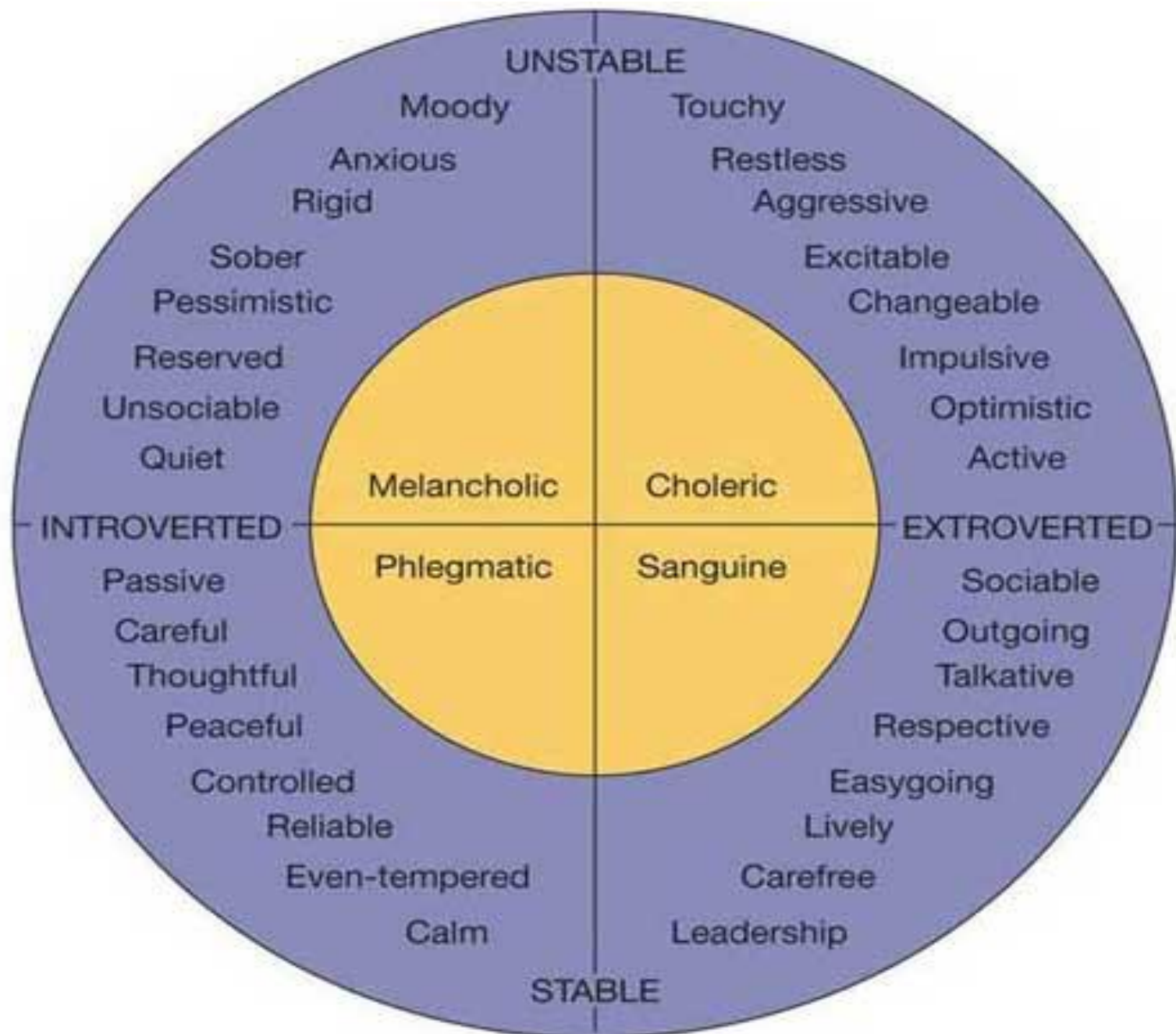
- Can be defined in behavioral terms
- **Traits such as sociability, impulsivity, activity, carelessness, liveliness, jocularity (Eysenck, 1976), tough mindedness, thrill seeking, desire for novelty, preference for vocations involving interactions with others, tolerance for pain define this factor**
- Introversion – tender mindedness, introspectiveness, seriousness, performance interfered by excitement, inhibited, easily aroused, preference for solitary vocations, sensitivity to pain

NEUROTICISM (N)

- Conceived as strong, prone to anxiety in case of excessive stress
- Below average emotional control,
- low will-power,
- slowness in thought and actions,
- Lack of persistence,
- Below average sensory acuity but high level of activation

PSYCHOTICISM (P)

- Poor concentration, poor memory, insensitivity, lack of care for others, cruelty, disregard for danger, original minded, creative, like unusual things, considered peculiar by others
- Being solitary, troublesome, not fitting anywhere, lack empathy, hostile, aggressive to loved ones

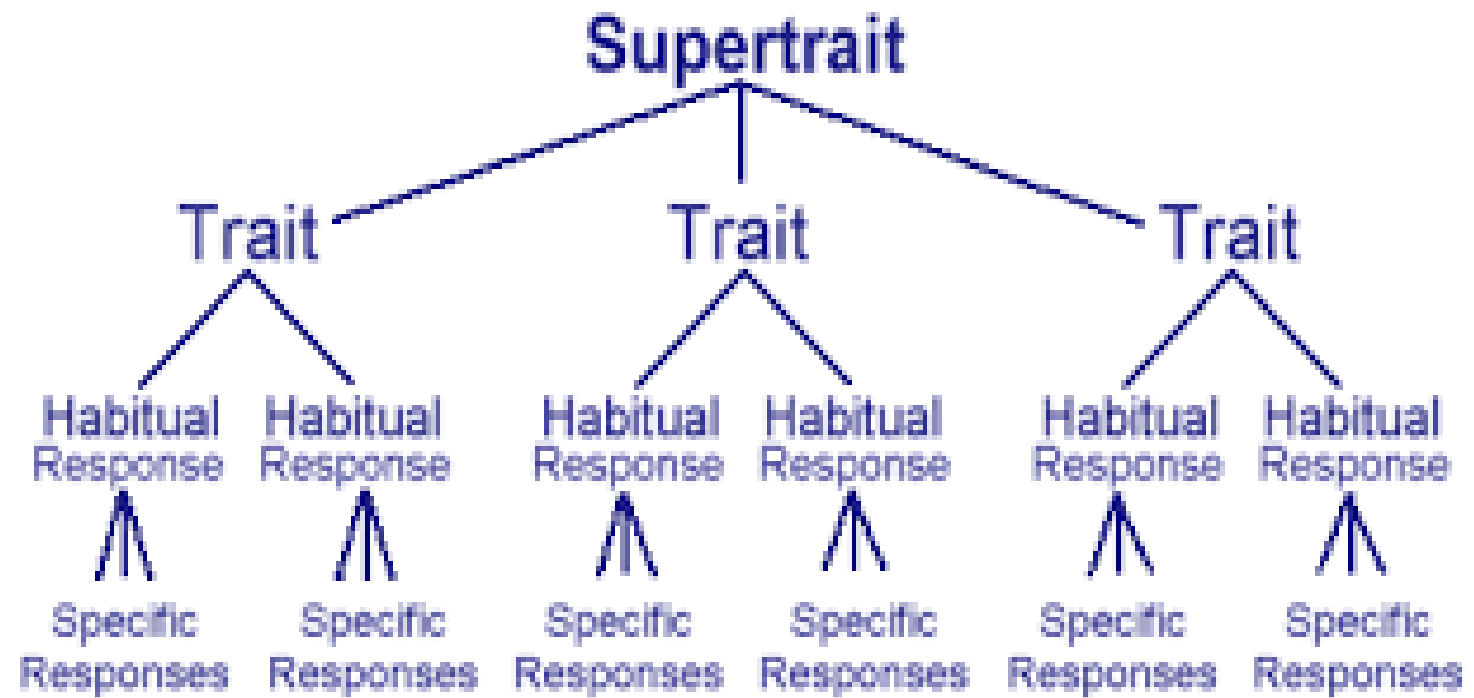


4 basic temperaments

- First two factors create 4 combinations, related to the four basic temperaments recognised by Greeks:
- **Melancholic (introverted + unstable) = sad, gloomy**
- **Choleric (extroverted + unstable) = hot-tempered, irritable**
- **Phlegmatic (introverted + stable) = sluggish, calm**
- **Sanguine (extroverted + stable) = cheerful, hopeful**

HEIRARCHICAL STRUCTURE

- Eysenck conceptualized each of these three traits – P, N AND E as sitting on top of their own heirarchy
- Ex- at the top level is the super trait of **psychoticism** followed by second level narrow trait of *aggressiveness* and third level habitual act of *attacking*
- Specific response – *ex. Biting, hiting.*



TYPE	EXTRAVERSION
TRAIT	SOCIABILITY
HABITUAL RESPONSE	PARTIES
SPECIFIC RESPONSE	INVITING OTHERS

BIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- Eysenck's personality system has a biological foundation
- It has two aspects: HERITABILITY AND IDENTIFIABLE PHYSIOLOGICAL SUBSTRATES
- Central nervous system is responsible for personality traits
- Extraversion-introversion is linked with chronic levels of excitation in the cortex
- Introverts are over aroused and easy to stimulate
- Extraverts are under aroused and thus difficult to stimulate. So they seek out exciting situations

BIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- Introverts less tolerant of painful electric shocks (Bartol and Costello, 1976)
- Corr et al. (1995): after high dose of caffeine: introverts did poorly on a task as they got over-stimulated; extroverts perform better when over stimulated
- Frontal lobes of introverts are more active than extroverts (PET scan) (Johnson et al. 1999)

BIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS

- Neuroticism reflects the degree to which Autonomic Nervous System reacts to stimuli. The more reactive a person, the more neurotic he or she is.
- High visceral brain activation makes a person emotionally reactive or neurotic. Visceral brain system consists of limbic system and hypothalamus. It mediates emotional activation
- Low VB activation makes a person emotionally non-reactive
- Psychoticism is linked with high levels of testosterone and low level of MAO, a neurotransmitter that inhibits impulses

MEN VS. WOMEN: WHO IS HIGHER ON P?

- Males are higher on psychoticism than females
 - Females higher on N
 - EVALUATION OF BIOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS
- Twin studies : E AND N 50% genetic

ACTIVITY

- <http://similarminds.com/eysenck.html>