

The

Attribution Theory



Attribution Theory, proposed by Fritz Heider (1958), explores **how we explain causes behind people's actions** — whether it's someone else's behavior or our own.

When we ask, “Why did he do that?”
...our mind instantly creates a reason.
But is it the truth?



We Have Two Choices:

When explaining a behavior, we either blame:

1.

The situation around the person
(external cause)

2.

The person themselves
(internal cause)

We make this judgment in seconds, without realizing it.

External (Situational) Attribution

Here, we believe the environment caused the behavior.

Examples:



- He's probably late because of traffic.



- She failed the test because the paper was too hard.

It's not their **personality** — it's their **circumstance**.

Internal (Dispositional) Attribution

This time, we assume the behavior reflects who the person is.

Examples:



- She's late because she's irresponsible



- He failed because he's lazy

It focuses on **character**, not **context**.



So What's the Problem?

When others mess up, we say it's
“just who they are.”

When we mess up, we say,
“You don't know what I'm going through.”

This is called the Actor-Observer Bias

And it silently shapes how we misunderstand
people every day.

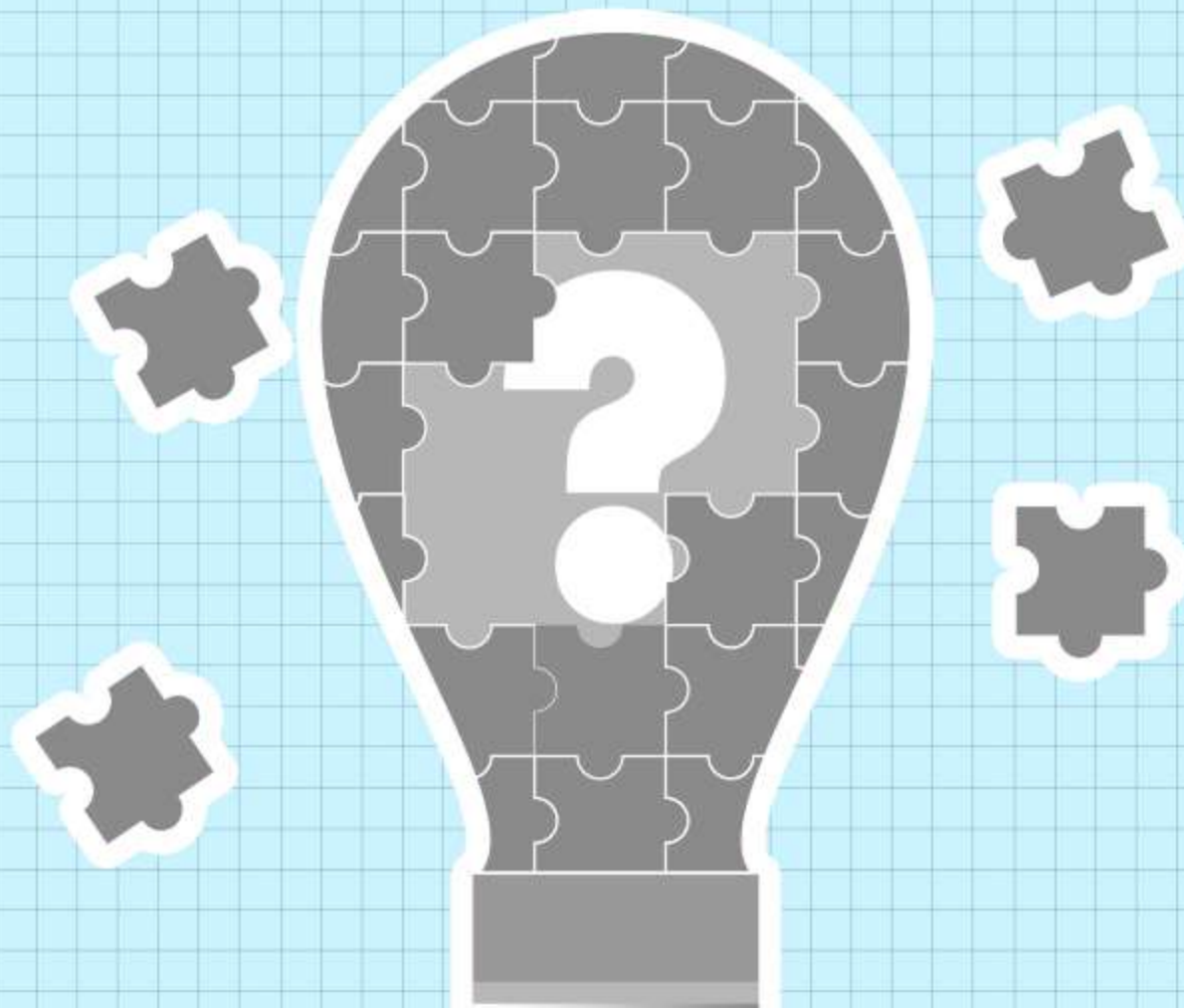
Why This Theory Matters

Understanding attribution can help you:

- Avoid quick judgments
- Build better relationships
- See people more fairly
- Develop self-awareness

It's not always who they are.

It might just be where they are in life.



Have you ever judged someone...
then realized you were wrong?

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Attribution Theory forever.



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