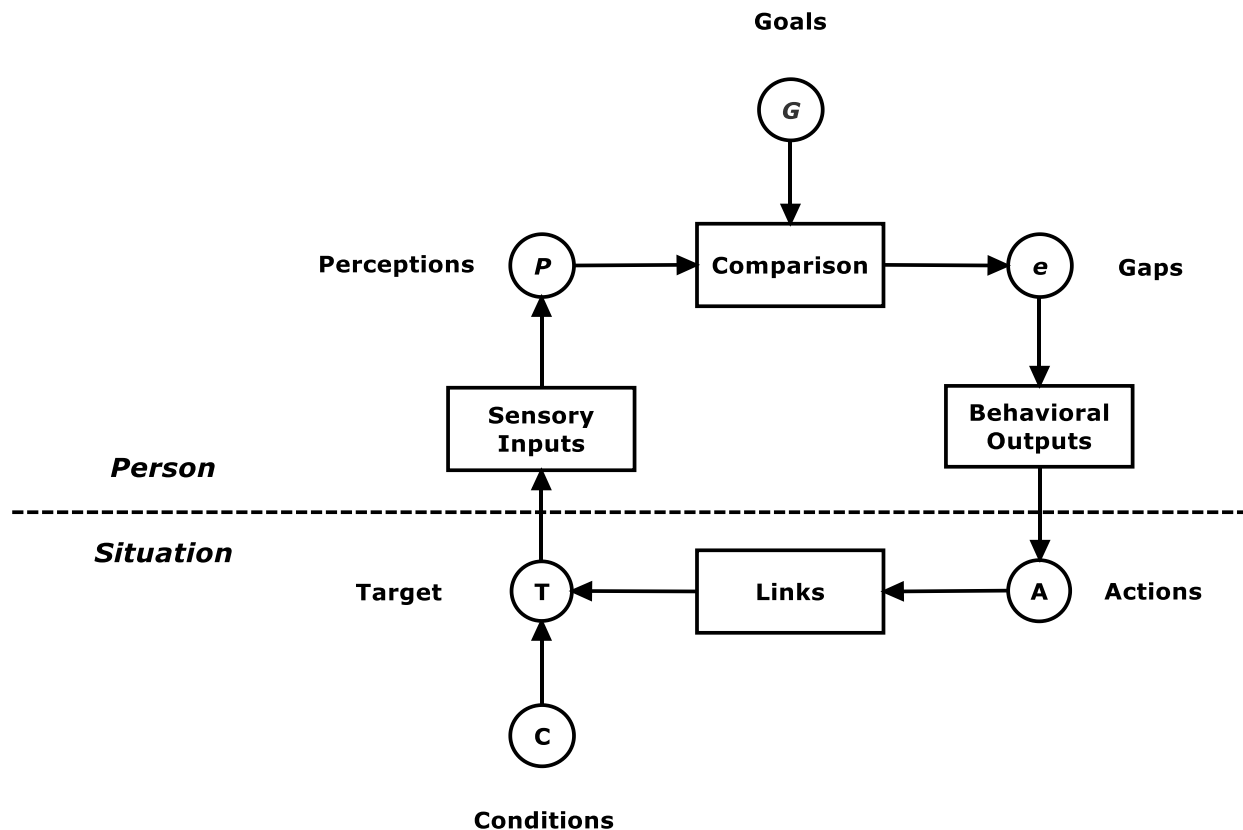


# People as Living Control Systems: A Basic View

We are purposeful beings. We set *Goals* and, barring any insurmountable obstacles, we achieve them. We select aspects of the world about us as *Targets*, as things to be controlled. *Targets* are typically variables (e.g., our educational or income level, the waste levels in a work process, the retention level of key employees, earnings per share, or perhaps some desired rank in the military). A *Goal* defines our intended value for a *Target*. Our *Sensory Inputs* provide us with *Perceptions* of the current value of the *Target*. We compare our *Perceptions* of the current value of the *Target* with our *Goal* for it and, if any unacceptable differences or gaps exist, we produce *Behavioral Outputs* that comprise *Actions* meant to close any gaps. The *Targets* we want to control can be near or far in space and time. Consequently, it is often the case that we cannot affect a *Target* directly. In such cases, we must avail ourselves of *Links* to the *Target* – some set of intervening variables that connects the effects of our *Actions* to the *Target* so as to indirectly but eventually change it in desired ways. To further complicate already complicated matters, there are often other *Conditions*, other actors and factors, independently affecting the same *Target* we want to control. Understandably then, our *Actions* must also compensate for or offset the effects of any of these other *Conditions*. When we succeed, we can be said to exercise control; we are able to align our *Perceptions* of the current value of a *Target* with our *Goal* for it.

The diagram below illustrates the discussion above and the fact that we are “living control systems.” For more, see the Control Theory section of my website at <https://www.nickols.us/controltheory.html>.



The diagram above is based on one that appears on page 28 of *Living Control Systems III*, authored by William T. Powers, and published in 2008 by Benchmark Publications.