

CHAPTER 3

THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY OF SIGMUND FREUD

part 1

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Background

- First personality theory and (arguably) the most comprehensive
- Possible contextual influences on Freud's theory
 - Freud's relationship with his parents
 - 19th century understanding of science
- Why have a thorough understanding of Freud's theory?
 - Common psychological terms and concepts developed by Freud
 - Understanding the development of other theories in opposition to Freud

The View of the Person

- Three basic assumptions about human beings and science
 - **Psychosocial conflict**
 - **Biological and psychic determinism**
 - **Mechanistic human functioning**

The View of the Person

- **Psychosocial Conflict**
 - Constant conflict between drives in the psyche and social norms
 - ❖ Sexual and aggressive drives versus society's norms
 - Outcome: maximum drive satisfaction with minimum guilt
 - Psychoanalytic Theory = Psychosocial Conflict Theory

The View of the Person

- **Biological and Psychic Determinism**

- Biological Determinism: Human drives are physiologically rooted in the body
- Psychic Determinism: Conflict between drives within the psyche
 - ❖ Sexual and aggressive drives located in the ***Id***
 - ❖ Societal rules absorbed into the ***Superego***
 - ❖ Conflict that determines human behaviour located within the psyche

The View of the Person

- **The Mechanistic Assumption**

- Human beings function in a mechanistic way
 - ❖ Physical principles of energy consumption, conservation and transformation

The Structure of the Personality

- Three structural properties to the personality

- the ***Id***
- the ***Ego***
- the ***Superego***

- Personality functions on three levels of the consciousness

- the ***conscious***
- the ***preconscious***
- the ***unconscious***

The Structure of the Personality

- Three separate aspects of the personality function together to achieve three primary goals:

- ensure survival
- maximum experience of pleasure
- minimum experience of guilt

**The Structure of the Personality:
Levels of Consciousness**

- **Conscious** level
 - thoughts, feelings, and experiences in current awareness
 - contents change all the time

**The Structure of the Personality:
Levels of Consciousness**

- **Preconscious** level
 - information that individual is not concentrating on at any particular moment but that can be recalled without too much effort
 - memories that are not painful or anxiety-provoking

**The Structure of the Personality:
Levels of Consciousness**

- **Unconscious** level
 - 'forbidden' drives
 - memories or wishes that cause pain, anxiety and guilt that cannot be recalled to the conscious mind

**The Structure of the Personality:
Levels of Consciousness**

- Structural elements of psyche differ from one another because they function on different levels of the consciousness
 - Id functions almost entirely on unconscious level
 - ❖ Can make wishes felt on preconscious level (dreams)
 - Ego and Superego function on all three levels of consciousness

The Structure of the Personality: Id

- Innate, primitive part of the psyche containing primitive drives
- In direct contact with the body
 - Body is the source of energy for the life (*eros*) and death (*thanatos*) drives

The Structure of the Personality: Id

- Functions according to **primary processes** and the **pleasure principle**
 - Primary processes: Id incapable of thought, reflection, planning (it is selfish and unrealistic)
 - Pleasure principle: Id seeks immediate satisfaction of drives (wish fulfillment)

The Structure of the Personality: Ego

- Develops from the Id to ensure survival
- Formed through individual's contact with the outside world
- Serves the Id's needs by finding suitable objects to satisfy drives

The Structure of the Personality: Ego

- Functions according to **secondary processes** and the **reality principle**
 - Secondary processes: Ego evaluates situation before action is taken (capable of reflection and planning) and can postpone action until appropriate time and place
 - Reality principle: Ego takes physical and social reality into account before action is taken (sensory perception, rational thinking, memory, learning)

The Structure of the Personality: Ego

- Under constant pressure from the Id
- Must take reality and moral/social codes into account
- Conflicting demands between Id and Superego cause psychic difficulties for the Ego
- Functions on all three levels of consciousness but uses energy generated by the Id
- **Cathexis**: Ego invests energy in object deemed appropriate for satisfying drive generated by the Id
- Develops in first year of life, but continually develops in that it learns through experience (learns new ways to satisfy drives)

The Structure of the Personality: Superego

- Develops from the Ego
- Represents society's moral codes and pressurizes individual to live by these codes (**ego-ideal**)
- Functions according to the **moral principle**
 - Punishes individual (via feelings of guilt) for immoral wishes/behaviour
 - Punishment is known as the **conscience**
- Constantly puts pressure on the Ego via the conscience and the ego-ideal

The Structure of the Personality: Superego

- Functions on all three levels of the consciousness
 - May feel consciously guilty about drives and wishes
 - Superego puts pressure on the Ego to keep forbidden drives and thoughts at an unconscious level
- **Anticathexis**: moral objection placed (by the Superego) on objects deemed unsuitable (inappropriate) for Ego to use to satisfy drives generated by the Id
- Tension between cathexis (potential objects identified by Ego as suitable) and anticathexis (the objection placed on these objects by the Superego) leads to anxiety
- Defense mechanisms used for protection against this anxiety

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives

- **Drives**: psychological representations of energy obtained from the body
- Main driving forces in human functioning
 - Encourage the person to function
 - Determine the direction of behaviour

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics

• Source

- From the body
- Different drives obtain energy from different parts of the body
 - ❖ **Source of the Hunger drive:** organs involved in eating
 - ❖ **Source of the Sex drive:** genitals and sex glands (erogenous zone)

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics

• Energy (impetus)

- Every drive has a certain amount of energy (intensity)

• Goal

- Primary goal is satisfaction
- Subjectively experienced as a desire to achieve something
- This desire remains until it is satisfied
- Many drives are experienced unconsciously

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics

• Object

- All drives require an object that will satisfy it
- Satisfaction achieved by using the energy of the drive
- Object is chosen by the Ego, and psychic energy is transferred to the object
- Object substitution = **displacement**
 - ❖ When chosen object is either unavailable or regarded by the Superego as inappropriate
 - ❖ Substitute object is not as satisfying as the original object (leading to a build-up of psychic energy)

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – Types

• Life drives (serves to preserve life)

▪ Ego drives

- ❖ All drives aimed at satisfying basic survival needs (eating, drinking, breathing)
- ❖ Responsible for the development of the Ego
- ❖ Provide energy for the functioning of the Ego

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – Types

▪ Sexual drives

- ❖ Primary function is erotic pleasure
- ❖ May result in discomfort due to strict moral codes regarding the satisfaction of these drives (leading to mental disturbance)
- ❖ Babies: source is the mouth area (lips and inside the mouth)
 - Original object = mother's breast
 - Sucking the breast satisfies ego drive of hunger and sexual drive
- ❖ Sexual drives develop and change with age as other body parts become the sources of sexual drive energy

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – Types

▪ Comparing Ego drives and Sexual drives

- ❖ Ego drives related to the survival of the individual; Sexual drives related to the survival of the species
- ❖ Ego drives generally not associated with moral codes and guilt feelings; Sexual drives often are
- ❖ Ego drives provide energy for the Ego; Sexual drives do not

The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – Types

▪ Death drive

- ❖ Intra-psychoic explanation for war, aggression, murder, suicide
- ❖ Primary objective: to break down living cells into dead matter
- ❖ Original object is the individual's body
- ❖ Conflict with life drives results in outward projection of the death drive onto other people or objects
- ❖ Operates in various ways:
 - Projected onto other people or objects
 - Via the feelings of guilt generated by the Superego
 - Self-harm ('performance errors')

The Dynamics of the Personality: Anxiety

- Ego's reaction to danger
- Conflict between Id's forbidden drives and Superego's moral codes
- Motivates the ego to avoid danger
- **Reality Anxiety:** anxiety about actual danger in external environment (fear)
- **Neurotic and Moral Anxiety:**
 - Intra-psychoic origin of threat (fear that forbidden drive may become conscious / fear of punishment by the Superego)
 - Difficult to deal with these forms of anxiety
 - Important in the development of psychological disturbances

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

- Defence mechanisms, dreams and performance errors used to deal with anxiety
- Use a variety of defense mechanisms to defend against anxiety
- Denials and distortions of reality
- Operate unconsciously and aim to keep anxiety-provoking material unconscious

Definition: unconscious strategies used by the ego to defend itself against conflict between forbidden drives (the Id) and moral codes (the Superego), which cause neurotic and moral anxiety.

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Repression

- Unconscious mechanism used to keep aggressive and sexual wishes in the unconscious
 - ❖ Small children repress aggressive and sexual urges towards parents
- Not the same as purposefully 'forgetting' or suppressing conscious information

Definition: the basic defence mechanism which transfers (represses) drives, wishes, or memories that are unacceptable to the Superego, to the unconscious.

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Projection

Definition: an attempt to keep unconscious psychic material unconscious by subjectively 'changing' the focus to the drives or wishes of other people

• Reaction Formation

Definition: a mechanism whereby the individual tries to keep a forbidden desire unconscious by adopting a fanatical stance that gives the impression that they experience the exact opposite desire.

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Rationalisation

Definition: individual's attempt to explain their behaviour by providing reasons that sound rational, but which are not the real reasons for their behaviour.

- Differs from lying in that a person who uses rationalisation is not consciously aware of the real reasons for the behaviour they are trying to explain

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Fixation

Definition: occurs when an individual's psychological development becomes partly stuck at a particular developmental stage.

- Too much energy remains invested in the objects of a particular stage - energy should have been cathected (transferred) to objects appropriate to the next developmental stage
- Causes include:
 - ❖ Experiencing a particular developmental stage as too pleasant
 - ❖ Frustration of drive satisfaction in a particular stage
 - ❖ Perceiving the next developmental stage as too threatening

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Regression

Definition: partial or total return to the behaviour of an earlier stage of development.

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Identification

Definition: the desire to be like somebody else

- Boys: **Oedipus complex** – sexual attraction towards the mother and hatred of the father indicates identification with the father
- Fulfills various functions (boys):
 - ❖ Keeps forbidden sexual desires concerning the mother and aggressive wishes towards the father at an unconscious level
 - ❖ Allows him to satisfy his sexual wishes concerning his mother in his fantasies
 - ❖ Leads to the development of the Superego

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Displacement

Definition: finding a substitute for the object that society's moral codes forbid and using the substitute object for drive satisfaction.

- The psychic energy invested in original forbidden object is displaced to the substitute object
- Some of the excess drive energy can be used, easing psychic discomfort

The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Sublimation

Definition: finding displacement objects and actions which are regarded by society as culturally valuable. Expressing unacceptable drives in an acceptable/valuable way.

- Is the most effective form of displacement
- Maintains the repression of unacceptable desires
- Allows for the use of great amounts of drive energy
- All cultural activities are at least partly due to sublimation

The Dynamics of the Personality: Dreams

- Produced by forces within the psyche
- Result from the repression of desires
- When sleeping, the preconscious censoring of desires by the Ego is less efficient
- Forbidden/repressed desires break into the consciousness in disguised form
- Dreams are a means of accessing the unconscious and can be used to identify underlying problems

The Dynamics of the Personality: Parapraxes

- Everyday mistakes that are normally regarded as insignificant
- Freud: no mistake is ever accidental
 - ❖ They are caused by unconscious desires/fears
 - ❖ Mild form of psychopathology
 - ❖ Caused by underlying unconscious sexual/aggressive desires that are in conflict with the Superego's moral code