Id, Ego, and Superego

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To appear in V.S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior,* 2nd Ed. Elsevier. Publication date: 2011

Glossary

Eros One of the two classes of instincts that motivate behavior. It is described as "life" instinct, the "preserver of all things," incorporating the elements of sexuality and self-preservation. This is in contrast to the opposing tendency to reduce life to an inanimate state, or the "death instinct," which is revealed by aggression and sadism.

Erotogenic zones The zones of the body (oral, anal, phallic) that are sequentially invested with sexualized energy (libido), and are hence the source of autoerotic pleasure. The sexual instinct is thus a composite instinct, only to become organized in the service of reproductive, genital sexuality upon maturity.

Libido The name reserved for the sexual instincts.

Oedipus complex The libidinal cathexis of phallic erotogenic zone leads to a desire for union and contact with the opposite-sex parent, and a concomitant desire to displace the same-sex rival parent. The competition for the opposite-sex parent engenders anxiety, insofar as the retaliation of the rival is feared ("castration complex"). This is resolved by repressing incestuous desires, and identifying with the same-sex parent, which is the foundation of superego formation. Freud once suggested that the course of Oedipal development between boys and girls was exactly analogous, but later formulations postponed the resolution of the Oedipal conflict for girls until marriage and childbirth.

Pleasure principle The motivating principle of behavior is the pursuit of tension reduction, which is experienced as pleasure.

Primary process The workings of unconscious (id) processes. Instinctual energy is freely mobile, and capable of displacement and condensation. In contrast, secondary process, attributed to ego functioning, attempts to postpone, revise, or otherwise deflect instinctual motivations.

Transference In the therapeutic situation, the (unconscious) incorporation of the analyst in the internal conflicts of the patient.

Sigmund Freud divided mental life into three agencies or "provinces," id, ego, superego. The id is the oldest and most primitive psychic agency, representing the biological foundations of personality. It is the reservoir of basic instinctual drives, particularly sexual (libidinal) drives, which motivate the organism to seek pleasure. The ego is a modification of the id that emerges as a result of the direct influence of the external world. It is the "executive" of the personality in the sense that it regulates libidinal drive energies so that satisfaction accords with the demands of reality. It is the center of reason, reality-testing, and commonsense, and has at its command a range of defensive stratagems that can deflect, repress, or transform the expression of unrealistic or forbidden drive energies. The superego is a further differentiation within the ego which represents its "ideal." The superego emerges as a consequence of the Oedipal drama, whereby the child takes on the authority and magnificence of parental figures through introjection or identification. Whereas the id operates in pursuit of pleasure, and whereas the ego is governed by the reality principle, the superego bids the psychic apparatus to pursue idealistic goals and perfection. It is the source of moral censorship and of conscience.

(I.) Freud in Context

Psychoanalysis is one of those rare intellectual achievements that had the effect of radically transforming human self-understanding. Indeed, Freudian notions have so thoroughly permeated human culture that the jargon (if not the substance) of psychoanalysis is accessible to even the most untutored observers of human behavior, so much so that the poet W. H. Auden could write that for us Freud is not so much a person but rather "*a whole climate of opinion under whom we conduct our different lives.*" By Freud's own estimation psychoanalysis effectively completed the intellectual revolution begun by Copernicus, and advanced by Darwin, a revolution that undermined human conceit regarding its putatively special and privileged position in the cosmos and in nature. Whereas Copernicus displaced mankind's planet from the center of the heavens, and whereas Darwin showed that no comfort can be taken in the idea that we are nonetheless above the forces of nature, Freud completed the assault on human pretence by showing that even human reason is not what it has been supposed, that human psychology is, in fact, besieged and driven by irrational, unconscious motivations. Indeed, Freud's discovery of a hidden psychic reality that is beyond the pale of sensible consciousness was thought (by Freud) to be an application of the same Newtonian dualism that accepted the distinction between human sensory abilities (percepts) and a

hidden physical reality that could only be apprehended by mathematics and the armamentum of physical science. The Newtonian scheme was invoked by psychoanalysis to advance an understanding of psychic life, an application that hinges on the distinction between conscious and unconscious mental life. Just as physics develops scientific techniques to apprehend a physical universe that is beyond immediate human sensibility, so too does psychoanalysis attempt to pierce hidden unconscious realities with its special clinical techniques. Psychoanalysis, then, according to Freud, is to be counted among the natural sciences; it is a specialized branch of medicine (with the caveat that medical training gives no necessary expertise in psychical affairs), with mental life the object of inquiry.

Although psychoanalysis shocked Victorian sensibilities, particularly with its claims regarding unconscious mental dynamics and infantile sexuality, it was grounded nonetheless in themes common to 19th century science. The Freudian theory of instincts seemed at home in a culture that was getting used to the ideas of Darwinian biology. Freud's use of spatial models to locate psychic structures was in keeping with efforts in neurology to localize brain functions. And the mechanistic Freudian image of the psychological architecture as an apparatus for channeling instinctual drive energies was not out of step with the energy mechanics of 19th century physics. Yet, for all the trappings of scientific positivism that Freud was wont to claim for psychoanalysis, the Freudian project was met with considerable resistance, and the history of the psychoanalytic movement is a history of a struggle for academic, clinical, and popular respectability, a respectability that is still not completely won. Freud himself was at pains to recount this struggle in a number of histories, outlines, and encyclopedia articles. Although one aim was to popularize the new science of mental life,

Freud was also keen to demarcate psychoanalysis from rival depth psychologies (e.g., Jung, Adler), and to show that controversial psychoanalytic claims were the result of careful scientific investigation of the positivist, natural science kind. He would claim, for example, that the hypothetical entities and forces of psychoanalysis were not different in kind from the hypothetical entities and forces claimed in the ostensibly harder, more respectable sciences. It will be of interest for our purposes to recount the early development of psychoanalysis in order to set the proper context for considering Freud's account of the tripartite personality. The structural notions of id, ego, and superego were rather late theoretical developments that can be understood properly only in the context of prior theoretical revisions — revisions that Freud would claim were forced upon psychoanalysis by the evidential warrant.

II. **The Cornerstone of Psychoanalysis**

Freud was drawn initially to the dynamics of depth psychology by the inability of the neurological community to come to grips with the problem of hysteria. Hysterics appeared to suffer a host of somatic and physical maladies (e.g., motor paralysis, glove anesthesia) that had no apparent neurological basis. One promising treatment was the use of hypnosis. Josef Breuer, a medical colleague of Freud, claimed to have relieved the hysterical symptoms of a female patient ("Anna O.") by such means. In *Studies on Hysteria* (1895) Breuer and Freud presented a series of case studies and theoretical articles on the etiology of hysteria and the role of hypnosis in treating it. The authors claimed that hysterical symptoms have a symbolic meaning of which the patient had no conscious knowledge. Symptoms are substitutes for mental acts that are diverted from normal discharge because the affect associated with the mental processes becomes "strangulated" (as a result of trauma) and channeled into physical symptoms ("conversion"). That is, a strong affect is prevented from being consciously worked out in consciousness, and is diverted instead into "the wrong path," taking the form of somatic symptoms. Under hypnosis this strangulated affect can be set free or purged ("abreacted"), allowed normal discharge into consciousness, thereby leading to a removal of symptoms. This treatment was called *the cathartic method*.

Moreover, patients, under hypnosis tended to recall "psychic traumas" from a remote past, extending to early childhood, so that Breuer and Freud could claim that hysterics "suffer from reminiscences." When these traumas are allowed expression in the hypnotic state, strangulated affect is released and directed into normal consciousness. One sees in these studies, and in the papers that followed the preliminary delineation of some of the foundational notions of psychoanalysis. To observe that traumatic "reminiscences" could be recalled only under hypnosis suggests that their conscious expression is met with certain resistances (defensive repression). These reminiscences, though resisted, continue to exert pathogenic effects (as symptoms), which are suggestive of unconscious mental processes. [*See* HYPNOSIS.]

Freud was soon to abandon the hypnotic technique for the good reason that not all of his patients were amenable to hypnotic induction. In addition, Freud observed that the amelioration of symptoms seemed to depend more on the nature of the patient–analyst relationship. If this relationship was disturbed, symptoms reappeared. This clinical insight was later reformalized as transference love. Transference describes a phenomenon

that emerges during the course of psychoanalytic treatment whereby the patient comes to involve the analyst as a substitute for a past interpersonal relationship, a finding that some consider being one of Freud's great discoveries.

The hypnotic technique was replaced by the method of free association, a method that requires that patient to read off the content of conscious experiences and memories without judgment or embarrassment. The choice of this technique depends on the assumption of strict determinism which holds that associated ideas and memories are not randomly yoked but are instead determined by a dominant (and often pathogenically repressed) trend of thought which is unconscious (but is causally active nonetheless). Given the assumption that symptoms have sense and meaning, and are substitutes for actions that are omitted or repressed, the task of the analyst was to interpret the free associations in a way that successfully deciphered their meaning, a meaning that was otherwise obscured by censorship. To distinguish this technique from the cathartic method, Freud called this treatment "psychoanalysis." Freud claimed that the transition from catharsis to psychoanalysis yielded two important novelties: the extension of psychoanalytic insights to phenomena associated with normality, and the discovery of the significance of infantile sexuality for understanding the etiology of neuroses.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* (1901) Freud extended this notion of mental determinism to include not just the symbolic character of neurotic free associations which of necessity require analytic interpretation, but also the various parapraxes of normal life ("Freudian slips," accidental self-injury, and other putatively "haphazard" acts) and dreams. These too are like neurotic symptoms in that they express a meaning that can be deciphered by analytic interpretation. The difference between normality and neurosis was not as great as had been supposed. Indeed, the interpretation of dreams was to provide important clues to the nature of the unconscious and the process of symptom formation.

Freud distinguished between the manifest and latent content of dreams. The manifest content was simply the recollected dream, often bizarre and strange. The latent content is provided by analytic interpretation. Latent dream thoughts are distorted and condensed "residues" of the previous day. They are arranged so as to allow pictorial representation and, through "secondary revision," are given a sense of coherence. The motivation for dream formation is a repressed unconscious wish that seeks satisfaction ("wish fulfillment") in the form of the latent material of the dream. Dreams represent, then, a disguised attempt at fulfillment of an unconscious wish that was denied satisfaction. The attempt is disguised, that is, the manifest content is strange and bizarre, because of the efforts of a restrictive, disapproving agency in the mind (e.g., the ego). Dream censorship, according to Freud, points to the same mental process that kept the wish repressed during the day. So, on the one hand, there is an unfulfilled, repressed wish that is striving for expression. On the other, there is a disapproving, censoring ego that is striving to repress it. The result is a compromise formation that takes the form of dreams, in normality, and of symptoms, in the case of neurosis. Dream formation and symptom formation, then, are expressions of identical mental dynamics. Both are compromise formations that reflect the conflict between unconscious impulses (wishes) and the censoring ego. [*See* DREAMING.]

The second novelty revealed by the psychoanalytic method was that the search for pathogenically significant traumatic experiences typically took one back to early childhood. And these experiences were invariably a reflection of a disturbance of infantile sexual life. This remains one of the most controversial aspects of Freud's theory. Infantile sexuality refers to the sensations of pleasure that accompany holding, maternal caressing, and oral and anal satisfactions. Freud's use of the term sexuality is thus much broader and more general than common use of the term. Freud claimed that the development of human sexuality was diphasic. There is, first of all, an infantile period where the sexual instincts are sequentially invested in different zones of the body ("erotogenic zones"), and then a more adult period when the component sexual instincts (oral, anal, phallic) are organized in the service of genital, reproductive sexuality. Intervening between the infantile period and adult period is a latency period of childhood where the sexual motivations are diverted to other purposes (e.g., skill building, school work).

The sexual instinct is thus an organization of component instincts that takes the adult form only at puberty, and it is decisive for understanding the etiology of neuroses. This is particularly true when libido becomes invested in the phallic region, which gives rise to the Oedipus complex (ages 2–5). The Oedipus complex is foundational for the emergence of the superego and more will be said about it below. Suffice it to say here that this emotionally charged complex of family relationships is the source of the neuroses. As Freud noted, normal individuals survive and master their Oedipal feelings; neurotics continue to be mastered by them.

To this point we have reviewed what Freud called the "cornerstones" of psychoanalytic theory: the discovery of unconscious mental processes, the theory of repression and of transference, and the importance of infantile sexuality and the Oedipus complex for understanding neuroses. No one could be called a psychoanalyst unless one accepted these tenets. Yet we are still far from articulating the structural features of the personality (id, ego, superego). This is best done by further recounting the evolution of his thinking on these important constructs.

(III.) Evolution of Theory and the Emergence of the Tripartite Personality

The division of mental life into that which is conscious and unconscious suggests a topographical hypothesis, viz., that mental life can be demarcated into psychic portions or regions. Unconsciousness is at once a quality that can be attributed to a repressed idea or impulse, and also a region or "province" (the "system *Ucs*") to where the idea is banished. Consciousness and its precursor ("preconsciousness") too, was formulated as a psychic province ("system *Cs*, *Pcs*"), and attributed to the workings of the ego. Psychic conflict, then, was a matter of unconscious ideas, emanating from the system *Ucs*, struggling against the repressive forces of the conscious ego. Furthermore, unconscious and conscious processes are seen to follow different laws. The *Ucs* consists of "instinctual representatives" or impulses that seek discharge. These impulses are illogical (not subject to contradiction) and timeless (not ordered temporally) and not oriented to reality. They are driven by the pleasure principle. They are also characterized as *primary process*. This means that wishful instinctual impulses are undirected and freely mobile, and therefore could be displaced or connected to various objects. This is in contrast to the *Cs* (*Pcs*), where secondary process is dominant. Secondary process is a later developmental achievement associated with the ego. As a reality oriented process it revises, censors or binds the discharge of instinctual impulses.

Although Freud never abandoned the notion of primary and secondary process, he did come to revise the provisional *topographical model* of the psychic architecture as one involving "systems," and also the *dynamic hypothesis* that the unconscious was in conflict with the conscious ego. These notions were revised in light of Freud's clinical observation that his patients were often unaware of the fact that they were employing certain resistances. If the ego is responsible for repression but is also the seat of consciousness, then it was inexplicable how one could not be conscious of one's own resistances and one's own act of repression. Freud concluded that much of the ego, too, must be unconscious. In other words, the unconscious does not consist entirely of that which is repressed (although all that is repressed is unconscious), a fact that makes the division of the psychic architecture into systems *Ucs* and Cs (*Pcs*) less compelling.

The ego concept was further clarified as a result of revisions to the instinct theory. Instincts arise from internal sources, and exert a constant force or pressure demanding satisfaction. The relentless pressure of instinctual drive energies makes it possible for the nervous system to remain in an unstimulated condition ("principle of constancy"), and hence motivates psychic adaptations so as to effect the satisfaction of internal needs. The *pressure* of an instinct is a "motor" factor, that is, a demand for psychic work. The *aim* of an instinct is gratification through tension reduction. The *object* of an instinct is anything through which satisfaction can be achieved. The *source* of an instinct is a somatic process experienced as a kind of "hunger" or "need." Indeed, Freud often described instincts as the "psychic representatives" of somatic processes.

In *The Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) Freud identified the sexual instincts as "libido." Libido is both a quantitative and qualitative variable—quantitative in the sense that it serves as a measure of the forces of sexual excitation, qualitative in the sense that it can be distinguished from other kinds of psychic energy. Psychoneurotic conflict could then be described as a clash between sexuality and the various functions of the ego (e.g., reality-testing, resistance, repression). However, in addition to libidinal (sexual) instincts, Freud later identified a second group of primal instincts, called *ego instincts*. Ego instincts subsumed the functions of self-preservation, repression, and all other impulses that could be distinguished from sexual (libidinal) instincts. By identifying a second group of primal instincts Freud could now characterize psychoneurotic conflict as a clash between libidinal (sexual) and the self-preservative (ego) instincts.

Matters are further complicated, however, by the pivotal paper *On Narcissism* (1914). Here Freud argues that the sexual instincts are attached originally to self-preservation, which is an ego instinct. The sexual instincts detach from self-preservation only later when libido seeks external objects (e.g., mother). Libido that cathects with external objects was called object libido. Yet Freud observed that libidinal attachment towards objects (such as mother) could be derailed. Instead of seeking an external object it was possible to libidinally cathect one self. That is, rather than choose mother as a love object, one chooses oneself. Libido could be apportioned, then, depending on

the kind of object choice one made. Libido apportioned to oneself was called "narcissistic" (or ego) libido, to distinguish it from the libidinal cathexis of external objects (object libido). In Freud's view the narcissistic libidinal cathexis of the ego is the original state of things, and therefore the initial phase of libidinal development was one of *primary narcissism*. It is from the stance of primary narcissism that one seeks out interpersonal relations.

By 1920, however, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud rejected the dualism between libidinal instincts and ego instincts. In his view this distinction is no longer tenable because narcissistic self-preservative instincts were also libidinal. It would thus seem that all of instinctual mental life could be reduced to the sexual instincts after all, a conclusion that would either justify Jung's monistic use of "libido" as a term denoting a generalized psychic drive or vindicate those critics who accused Freud of pan-sexualism.

One solution to this theoretical problem was to group the libidinal instincts as *Eros*, or the life instincts, the "preserver of all things," and to contrapose to the life instincts (Eros) a contrary instinctual impulse that seeks to restore organic life to an inanimate state, which Freud called the *death instincts*. Freud was led to postulate the existence of death instincts by his observation that those who suffer from traumatic neuroses tend to repeat traumatic dreams. The dreams of war neurotics, for example, seemed contrary to the general case that dreams represent symbolic wish fulfillment. The compulsion to repeat traumatic experiences appeared, then, to operate "beyond the pleasure principle," and to point toward an instinctual tendency at odds with libidinal self-preservation.

The struggle of Eros and the death instincts can be observed at every level of biology, in every particle of substance, even in molecular organisms. Eros attempts to preserve life through combinations, and this to neutralize the instinctual striving toward death. The two instincts can also fuse together which results, at the psychic level, in sexual sadism. De-fusion can result in the discharge of death instincts toward objects, which then takes the form of aggression, destructiveness, or sadism. Masochistic tendencies result if the ego is the object of discharge. Indeed, if it is possible for erotic libido to cathect the ego and to result in a phase of primary narcissism, it must correspondingly be possible for the death instinct to cathect the ego and result in a phase of *primary masochism*, a possibility that Freud did not reject outright.

Freud's account of the two classes of instincts, Eros (sexuality and self-preservation) and death (aggression), allowed him to preserve a dualistic classification of the instincts. The question now loomed as to how these twin instincts interacted with topographical features of the mind, now that the notions of "consciousness" and unconsciousness" no longer had any straightforward implications for a structural depiction of mental life. This issue would be taken up in Freud's seminal work, *The Ego and the Id* (1923). In this work Freud amends the structural theory to include three psychic provinces, id, ego, and superego. He also describes how instinctual drive energies can be transmuted economically among these structures, and how certain neurotic conditions can be explained as a result of this hydraulic model of the mind.

(IV.) Id, Ego, and Superego

The mature structural theory largely replaces the ill-defined notions of unconsciousness and the system *Ucs* with the "id." The id becomes a psychical province that incorporates instinctual drive energies, and everything else that is part of our phylogenetic inheritance. The id operates unconsciously, accords with primary process, and impels the organism to engage in need-satisfying, tension-reducing activities, which are experienced as pleasure.

Within the id are undifferentiated elements that would later emerge as the "ego." Freud's conceptualization of the ego and its functions show clear lines of theoretical development. In early formulations it was identified with the system *Cs* (*Pcs*), and known largely in terms of its repressive and self-preservative functions, and for its putative opposition to things unconscious. As noted above a clear change became evident in the paper *On Narcissism*, where Freud argued not only that ego instincts were libidinal, but also that ego functions were largely unconscious. Two further developments are evident in this paper. First, the ego begins to be described not only as an impersonal "apparatus" whose function is to de-tension the biological strivings of the organism, or as a "device" for mastering excitations, but rather as a personal self. A second development is Freud's tentative hypothesis that ego development entails the renunciation of narcissistic self-love in favour of the idealization or aggrandizement of cultural and ethical ideals, which is represented to the child by the influence of parents. This "ego ideal" becomes a substitute for lost infantile narcissism at which time the child was his or her own ideal. Freud goes on to suggest that perhaps a special psychical agency emerges to observe the ego and to measure it by its ideal. This self-observing agency, and the ego ideal, will later take the form of a third psychical province, the superego.

What is the nature, then, of ego and superego formation, as outlined in *The Ego and the Id*? At the outset the psychic system is described as an undifferentiated id-ego matrix. Topographically, a portion of the id lies in proximity to the boundaries of preconsciousness and external perceptual systems (system *Pcpt*), which brings the influence of the external world upon it. The resulting modification results in the formation of the ego. Hence, the ego is that part of the id that is modified as result of the perceptual system and by its proximity and access to consciousness, although the ego itself, like the id, is unconscious.

The ego takes on a a number functions. It commands voluntary movement. It has the task of self-preservation, and must therefore master both internal (id) and external stimuli. The ego masters external stimuli by becoming "aware," by storing up memories, by avoidance through flight, and by active adaptation. Regarding internal drive stimuli, it attempts to control the demands of the instincts by judiciously deciding the mode of satisfaction, or if satisfaction is to be had at all. Indeed, the ego attempts to harness instinctual libidinal drives so that they submit to the reality principle. If the id is a cauldron of passions, the ego is the agent of reason, commonsense, and defense. Yet the ego is never sharply differentiated from the id. Freud argues that the "lower portion" of the ego extends throughout the id, and it is by means of the id that repressed material communicates with (presses "up" against the resistances of) the ego.

The nature of ego functioning is further clarified, and complicated, by superego formation. One clue to understanding superego formation was provided by Freud's analysis of melancholia. He suggested that when a personal (or "object") relationship is "lost," the lost object can be regained nonetheless by "identification," that is, the lost object is "set up again inside the ego." When the sexual object is given up, the ego is altered, insofar as the abandoned libidinal object is now set up inside the ego. The ego incorporates the object within itself (as an introjection), "identifies" with it, and thereby builds up its structure or "character." In this way an object cathexis is substituted by an introjection. Freud suggests that perhaps the id can give up its objects only by identifications of this sort, and that the ego can consequently be considered a precipitate of abandoned object cathexes.

It was from this analysis of how the ego can be built up and altered by identification that Freud found the theoretical foundation of superego formation. He argued that the first identifications in early childhood would be those that would have lasting and momentous significance in the sense that here would be found the origins of the "ego ideal." Moreover, the necessity for making these identifications would be found in the triangular character of the Oedipus complex.

For illustrative purposes consider the simple oedipal situation for boys. The boy develops a libidinal attachment to mother while identifying with father. Eventually, the erotic investment in mother intensifies and father now comes to be seen as an obstacle or as a jealous rival. The boy desires to possess mother but also to displace his rival, who is now viewed with some ambivalence. Yet this engenders considerable anxiety insofar as the powerful rival is capable of significant retaliation through the threat of castration. Hence, the oedipal situation is untenable for the boy given the surge of castration anxiety. The libidinal cathexis must be given up. Although many complications are possible, some with pathological consequences, the standard maneuver is for the boy to repress his oedipal desires for mother.

Yet the infantile ego is still too feeble to carry this out effectively. Since the expression of oedipal desires is met with an obstacle in the person of the boy's father, one way of repressing these desires suggests itself: set up the obstacle within oneself by intensifying one's identification with father. In this way the boy musters the wherewithal to carry out the required act of repression, insofar as this identification is a way of borrowing the strength of the powerful father. But, as we have seen, identification typically results in an alteration of the ego. Indeed, the incorporation of father as a solution to the Oedipus complex is so momentous that a new psychical agency emerges from within the ego, the superego, which will thereafter retain the character of the father. Furthermore, every act of identification results in a sublimation of libido. Libido is "desexualized." But this sublimation also means that the aggressive (death) instincts are no longer bound to erotic libido—it is now "defused," set free, and no longer neutralized. Freud suggested that herein lies the source of the cruel harshness of the dictatorial injunctions ("Thou shalt") of the superego—it lies in the pool of aggressive energies set free by the act of identification and libidinal diffusion.

The superego is thus a precipitate of family life. It is an agency that seeks to enforce the striving for perfection, as it holds out to the ego ideal standards and moralistic goals. As a consequence the superego is the "conscience" of the personality, and it can retaliate against the imperfections of the ego by inducing guilt. Insofar as the superego is derived from the id's first object cathexis (in the oedipal situation), the superego remains close to the id "and can act as its representative" (in contrast to the ego, which represents

reality). And because the origin of conscience is tied to the Oedipus complex, which is unconscious, the corresponding sense of guilt, too, must be unconscious. Indeed, Freud asserts that the superego reaches down into the id, and is consequently "farther from consciousness than the ego is." This leads to an interesting paradox that was noted by Freud. Because one is unconscious of having irrational libidinal and aggressive desires, one is far more "immoral" than one believes. But because the superego (and the guilt that it imposes as punishment) is also unconscious, one is also more moral than one knows.

Superego formation, then and the ideals that it represents, allows one to master the Oedipus complex. And because it emerged at a time when the ego was still vulnerable, it retains a dominant position with respect to the ego. Freud was keen to point out that the superego is that part of his theory that expresses the "higher nature" of man. He argued that as children we knew these higher natures in the person of our parents, "we admired and feared them; and later we took them into ourselves" as introjections. And if religion, morality, and sociality are held to be what is higher in mankind, these too find their psychological origin in the workings of the superego. The religious longing for a protective and nurturing God finds its origin in the fact that the superego is a precipitate of our infantile longing for father. Our religious humility in the face of a judgmental God is a projection of the self-criticism of an ego that has fallen short of the ideals held out by the superego. With development the injunctions of the father (which are introjected as the superego) are supplemented by other moral authorities, which then fortifies the workings of conscience and thereby intensifies the feelings of moral guilt. And social feelings of all kinds are rooted in the kind of object identification of which superego formation is the model.

In addition to representing that which is higher in human nature, the superego is also implicated in a variety of pathological conditions. It is implicated in a "resistance to therapeutic recovery," since the prolongation of neurotic suffering is a kind of punishment for failing to meet the exacting demands of the superego. Melancholia results when the superego appropriates the violence of aggressive instincts and directs them against the ego. Certain kinds of obsessional neuroses ("tormenting" the object, as opposed to the self), too, can be linked to the harsh reproaches of the superego.

It should be clear that the ego is besieged from two directions. It must cope with the libidinal and aggressive drives of the id, from "below," and also the harsh moralistic and perfectionistic demands of the superego, from "above." The ego must further reconcile these contrary tendencies with the demands of external reality. "Whenever possible," Freud writes, "it [the ego] clothes the id's *Ucs.* commands with *Pcs.* rationalizations; it pretends that the id is showing obedience to the admonitions of reality, even when in fact it is remaining obstinate and unyielding; it disguises the id's conflicts with reality and, if possible, its conflicts with the superego, too." Freud also likened the ego to a man who struggles to check the superior power of a horse, to a constitutional monarch who is ultimately powerless to frustrate the will of parliament, and to a politician who too often "yields to the temptation to become sycophantic, opportunist and lying." One has recourse to psychoanalysis when such a struggle batters the personality into neurosis.

V. Summary

One way to summarize Freud's account of the tripartite personality is to make explicit the metapsychological assumptions that have until now remained only implicit. Freud's *topographical* perspective is that the critical determinants of human behavior are unconscious; emanating from a biological province which he calls the "id." The *dynamic* point of view is that these critical determinants are instinctual drives, of which two classes can be identified: Eros (sex, self-preservation) and the death instinct (aggression, sadism). The *economic* point of view is that the "hydraulic" dispositions of these drive energies among the psychic regions is a regulator of behavior.

VI. Selected Post-Freudian Developments

Although there are still many adherents of Freud's classical theory, a palpable development since Freud has been the proliferation of competing psychoanalytic theories, all of which claim some support or other from the many searching insight to be found in the vast Freudian corpus. The most important post-Freudian development is a collection of related theories that is denoted as the "object relational" school. Although these theories can be cleanly distinguished on both obvious and subtle theoretical points, it is fair to say that they share in common distaste for Freud's emphasis on energy dynamics as the foundation of human personality, and for his division of personality into tripartite, evolutionary layers. They deny, for example, that the human organism is at first asocial, convulsed by bestial instinctual passions, embedded in primary narcissism, and only later to become social and socialized. To picture the human person as one driven by libidinal and aggressive energies is to liken it to a "centaur"—the mythological creature with a human head affixed to the body of a beast.

One objection to the "Centaur model" is that it is yoked to an implausible notion of "instincts." Freud suggested that human motivation can be explained with reference to two instincts, sex and aggression. But sex is not an instinctual impulse that exerts constant pressure but is rather like an "appetite" that shows a measure of periodicity. Aggression is not even an appetite, but is rather an ego reaction to a threat to the personality. And both sex and aggression are aspects of personhood that are ineradicable from interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, Freud's notion that human psychology is driven by the energies afforded by the struggle between life and death instincts has been dismissed by some critics as mere "biological mysticism." [*See* AGGRESSION.]

A related criticism concerns Freud's account of the ego. In Freud's theory the rational ego emerges from a portion of the irrational id, but only as an impersonal apparatus or device for channeling drive energies and for securing the de-tensioning of the organism. What Freud described is a control system and not a personal self who is involved in motivated relationships from the very beginning. When Freud describes the tripartite personality as consisting of "provinces" that are "extended in space" he is describing a material reality that is based on a biological model of localization, and not the psychodynamic reality that whole human selves are formed in meaningful relationships that begin at birth. Hence, object relations theory rejects the Centaur model, rejects the instinct theory, rejects primary narcissism (and masochism), and rejects the impersonal ego.

Yet the object relations approach is often thought of as a movement that develops Freud's own best object relational insights. The notion of transference, for example, and the Oedipus complex of family relations, and the account of the ego as an "agency" (as opposed to a "province") would be ready examples of object relational insights that counter Freud's own preoccupation with impersonal, biological energy mechanics. It is ironic that the oedipal theory, which is generally considered to be that which is most unpalatable about Freud's theory, is actually the foundation of the keen object relational insight—that personality is grounded in the nexus of family relationships. Of all the psychic structures the superego is the only one to emerge as consequence of interpersonal relationships. It comes to represent the influence of family and societal institutions on the formation of personality. Transference enshrines the view that the history of our experience of interpersonal relationships provides us with a template by which we attempt to manage our current relationships. Hence, the object relations approach tends to focus on the agentic whole self (the "person ego") whose personality develops within the dynamics of complicated, meaningful relationships—and the warrant for this conceptualization, too, is often to be found in Freud's own writings.

We noted at the outset that psychoanalysis has revolutionized human self-understanding in this century. Yet, for all that, the theory is still very much a product of 19th century conceptions of science. While one has cause to question Freud's reliance on outdated biological and physical science metaphors, his mechanistic conception of energy dynamics and his preoccupation with brain physiology and with localization, what will survive are the psychodynamic features of his theory, and the clinical insights about human personality that have given everyone a new vocabulary. Defense mechanisms, ego, insight therapy, unconscious processes, the symbolic nature of symptoms, dreams, parapraxes, and transference—these are notions that are not far from even lay discourse. Indeed, some core Freudian notions such as unconsciousness, and the localization of "psychic provinces" in the brain, are being rehabilitated by recent developments in cognitive and social neuroscience. Contemporary attachment theory has strong object relational elements that bear resemblance to Freud's theory.

Although it is not easy to divorce the clinical facts attributed to Freud from the theories developed to explain them, especially when the probative and epistemic status of the theory is at stake, it is fair to say that the contemporary study of psychopathology and personality, the conduct of clinical practice, and the way ordinary people confront themselves and others would be very different were it not for Freud's monumental, pioneering work. When one adds to this the whole domain of "applied psychoanalysis"—the extension of psychoanalytic insights for understanding the artistic process, group psychology, esthetics, religious experience, and other cultural products, then the justice of W.H. Auden's elegy is apparent. Freud lurks wherever one considers the human condition: a "whole climate of opinion under whom we conduct our different lives."

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