

# Anal stage and psychoanalytic theory essay



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Sigmund Freud was the main proponent of Psychoanalytic Theory but neo-Freudians such as Jung, Adler, Erikson and Horney are also major contributors. Freud believed that every personality has an unconscious component and that childhood experiences, even if not consciously recalled, continue to influence people's behaviours. The psychoanalytic theory states that a personality has three parts – the id, the ego, and the superego which serve to regulate instinctual energies and shapes our personalities.

The dynamic unconscious is populated by anxiety-provoking drives ideas which have been exiled from conscious awareness by psychological defence mechanisms such as repression. Defence mechanisms are the domain of the Ego, the portion of personality concerned with mediating between external reality and the internal reality. They operate to prevent the experience of intense conscious anxiety caused by a conflict between base drives and the moral aspect of the psyche, the Superego. Freud suggested that personality is formed during the first six years of life known as the Psychosexual Stages of Development.

The maturing child supposedly experiences a number of discrete and biologically-motivated psychosexual phases, during which their essential sexual energies (the libido) become invested in particular areas of the body. So, the Id-dominated oral stage, where sensual pleasure is derived via the mouth, gives way to the anal stage and the birth of the Ego. This is followed by the phallic stage, during which the Oedipus complex (children aspire to be the partner of the opposite-sex parent) occurs. Resolution of this complex results in the formation of the superego.

However, unsuccessful resolution and development of any stage leads to a fixation within that particular stage and would then be defined by exaggerated characteristics associated with that bodily zone. For example, an individual that experienced excessively strict potty training would in turn be afflicted with an anal fixation or “anal personality” and would typically display great discipline and thriftiness etc. Psychoanalytic theory of personality has both strengths and weaknesses: Unlike some other theories the psychoanalytic approach is a complete theory and can without difficulty explain behaviour.

It also emphasises the role of the unconscious and that the unconscious part of the mind can perceive things without conscious awareness. However, its main weaknesses are that it is not backed up by any empirical evidence; Freud’s case studies were subjective and extremely interpretative. Freud also placed an over-emphasis on sexual drive and provides us with an extremely pessimistic outlook on personality as it discounts the notion of free will!

The humanistic movement was led by Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers and concentrates primarily on an individual’s potential in terms of growth and satisfaction. Humanists have an optimistic perspective on human nature. They focus on the ability of human beings to think consciously and rationally, and to achieve their full potential. In the humanistic view, people are responsible for their own lives and actions, they also have the freedom and will to change their attitudes and behaviour.

Maslow believed a human has a hierarchy of needs to fulfil before becoming a self-actualised individual. After the basic needs such as food and shelter are met, humans seek safety and security and then seek love and acceptance. Only after all these things are done can a person fulfil their potential or achieve “ self-actualisation”. Rogers agreed with most of what Maslow believed in terms of striving towards self-actualisation but through the self-concept or one’s opinion of oneself. Roger’s approach is called person-centred.

He believed that for a person to “ grow”, they need an environment that provides them with genuineness (openness and self-disclosure), unconditional positive regard (acceptance, respect, love), and empathy (being listened to and understood). Without these, relationships and healthy personalities will not develop as they should. Another basic premise to Roger’s theory is the self or self concept, i. e. what one thinks of oneself is the self-concept, what one wants to be is the self-image, and how others see one is the actual self.