

# Comparison of freudian and humanistic personality theories



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Most people use the term “ personality” to explain the most obvious characteristics and social skills of a person. However, psychologists utilize the term “ personality” in their attempt to explain the main reasons behind people’s motivations and different reactions in specific situations.

Psychologists want to figure out why people have different personality as personality is the sum total of all the ways of thinking, feeling and acting that are typical for one person makes another person so different. The studies of personality include various aspects of human behavior. There are four different approaches to explain personality, which are psychodynamic, behavioral, biological and humanistic views. In this essay, I will compare and contrast two popular personality theories; namely Freudian and Humanistic Personality Theories.

## **Freudian Personality Theories**

Freudian Personality Theory is one of the most popular personality theories. It has been published by Freud and developed by Freud’s students. This personality theory establishes the idea that human behavior is dominated by childhood experiences that affect his/her understanding of recent events. It says that if you experienced something traumatic in your childhood, it may very well reappear in your adulthood as traumatic memories get repressed in our subconscious and resurface back in adulthood through various means. (Boeree, 2009) That theory comprises of the conscious-unconscious dimension. Freud’s theory of conscious-unconscious dimension thoughts state that repressed feelings in the unconscious mind of a person can affect his/her current or future psychological situation. For example, if a child witnessed a traumatic car accident during early years of his life, he may

grow up to have a phobia for driving even though the accident doesn't have any strong impact on a conscious level but we can see the expression of the trauma through the unconscious.

### Subsystems

Also Freud suggested that the mind has three subsystems. The first one is the conscious thoughts a person is aware of every moment. People's previews experiences such as feelings, fantasies, memories, etc. The second one is termed as the "preconscious" which is the thoughts that a person is not immediately aware of. It is working closely with conscious. The third subsystem is the "unconscious". Unconscious are thoughts that a person is not aware of which takes me to what I stated before, our childhood experiences. These could be the repressed memories of horrible experience one had had in the past. (Boeree, 2009)

Freud believed humans were born with psychic energy or libido. This energy is the other link to affect human's personality. Freud termed it as Id thereby linking this libido with the mind structure. (Boeree, 2009)

### **Structure of Mind**

Freud developed his personality theories on the concepts of id, ego and superego which helped him to improve his to understanding of human psychology and the organization of feelings and thoughts. It is very important to have a good understanding of these concepts in order to understand Freud's theory in depth. Freud's demonstrates his classification in the following way:

## **Id**

Id is the most primitive driving force behind a person's behaviors for fulfilling personal pleasure. It has been referred to as the irrational and emotional aspects of the mind. It is always selfish since it always wants to work for the individual's personal benefit. Also it is work with unconscious moment.

(Boeree, 1997)

## **Ego**

Ego carries the reality in principle. It is capable of understanding and taking the reality into consideration. It tries to meet the basic needs; however, it also takes the real world into account. The ego weighs the advantages and disadvantages of a certain situation and trims to understand balance them out making a decision. (Boeree, 1997)

## **Superego**

Finally, superego is based on moral principles. This means that it is the moral /ethical limitations of an individual's behaviors. Individual's ideas, goals and conscience as well as the society links it encompasses. The superego is concerned with what others will think and stands in opposition to the id. It acts to perfect and civilize our behavior. It also works with morality and compromise. Superego is the moral standard and knowledge about the social norm taught by our parents and teachers. (Boeree, 1997)

According to Freud, a healthy individual has developed a strong ego to keep the id and superego in balance. If Id outweighs the impulse and desire might take over knowing that might end up with affecting interpersonal relationships. Such a person may develop prejudgment about others. As a

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result, the interpersonal relationships might get be affected in a disadvantageous way.

In my opinion, this scenario is quite applicable in everyone's life because morality and our desires affect our lives like our id and superego. However these diagrams result is generally our needs and environment. In this case, Humanistic Theory set forth by Abraham Maslow, counteracts Freud's. However, I strongly believe that the ideas of these two psychologists are based on the similar concept, reason being that our environment could affect our childhood experiences.

## **2-Humanistic Personality Theories: Maslow and Rogers**

This particular aspect of psychology is often termed as the third force in psychology. Essentially, humanists view people as good but see society depicting a negative force that interferes with an individual's inner direct growth.

### **Inter-Directness and Subjectivity**

According to humanists, all human possess an internal force referred inner-directness and this pushes them to grow, improve and eventually reach their maximum potential. This is the primary force that decides the ultimate development of the personality. Although humanists have got positive view of human species, they are not oblivious to the fact that everyone struggles at some point and not everyone succeed. We lose the ability to grow and make correct judgments when we live with critical people or when society tries to shape us into something that we are not. Therefore Maslow reached the conclusion that when basic motives are unsatisfied; it is not possible to

embark further higher motives. The humanists in something called subjective reality. (Lahey, 478-481) This entails that everyone views life on a personal level. So this basically means that personality is in fact a direct reflection of the individual subjective view of reality.

## **The Self Concept**

This is one of the central ideas of the humanistic view point. This idea states that our subjective perception of who we are is derived from self-concept. We learn our concept of “ self” from our various interactions with others on different walks of life. An example would be, one might think that he/she is a good athlete either based on observing that he/she is comparatively better runner than the peers or by friends/families emphasis on this matter. Roger also points out two distinct types of self: the person one thinks he/she is (self) and the person one anticipates to become (the ideal self). Problems arise due to excessive discrepancies between the self and the ideal self. (Layer, 478-481)

## **Self- Actualization**

This part of the humanistic theory emphasize on our inner drive to grow and improve ourselves in quest for attaining the highest level possible. Maslow labels this as this utmost fulfilled growth as self-actualization. This level is reached when a person is fully aware of his/her potential and has attained the highest level of personal development. He points out the successful achievement of the highest level would have strong moral development so they would be caring and protective of others. They would also be honest and have courage to act on their convictions even if it is a hurdle for them.

They would always find life challenging and have a accurate view of life rather than a romanticized one. (Layer, 478-481)

## **Conclusion**

Psychoanalysis and humanism they differ from each other in their basic views on society and the nature of human beings. The psychoanalysis theory gives a selfish and hostile view of people at birth comprising of nothing but id. Society on the other hand is viewed as the positive force that instills the ego and the superego into children and thus children are able to behave moral and realistic way, appropriate and required for the social world.

To humanists however, psychoanalytic viewpoint is wrong. They claim that we are born with a positive inborn drive to grow and improve ourselves. And they object the view the society is positive and instead view depicts it on a negative light calling destructive as it leads people to deny their true feelings such as insecurity, passion, jealousy and creates unattainable ideal self-concepts such that we can now witness in the media's reinforcement of reality such as athletic, sexy, famous, etc.

Both the theories however takes into account the fact that we internalize society's standards into judging what is moral and desirable act accordingly to guide to our behavior. While Freud spoke in terms of the conscious (id, ego and superego), Rogers spoke in terms of an ideal self.