Case study: psychoanalytic theory

This paper will describe an in depth analysis of the psychoanalytic theory. The paper covers the origins of the theory and its creator Sigmund Freud. This paper looks to examine what the theory is and how it affected psychology of its time and how it has progressed throughout time. Also discussed are the strengths and weaknesses of this theory. Another part to this paper looks to examine how psychoanalytic theory relates and diverges from Christian principles. And finally this paper will discuss some personal observations and thoughts on the theory.

Psychoanalytic Theory

What is psychoanalytic theory and who is its creator? Where did this theory originate and why is it important to psychology today? What are its strengths and weaknesses? How does it influence psychology today and how does it compare to Christian principles? The psychoanalytic theory is a complex and multifaceted idea that still commands for study and revision to this day. This paper is going to look at this complex and multifaceted theory in hopes of answering all the previous questions and to bring a greater appreciation for the groundbreaking theory that set psychology into a new era of knowledge.

Discussion

Creator/Origin

According to Rangell (2006) " In the hundred-year history of psychoanalysis, a new science and therapeutic discipline reached a peak, suffered a decline, and has settled down to have its permanent role objectively assessed" (p. 217) And because of this turbulent history its probably best understood by starting where it began and by first examining the life of its creator, Sigmund

Freud. Sigmund Freud started out life in 1856 and was the first child of eight in his family. His parents lived in poverty and shortly after Freud was turned 4 years old they moved and settled in Vienna. Freud would go on to attend a prominent high school and was an excellent student and graduated with honors. Although his parents were poor his parents did everything they could to help provide him with the best possible education.

Following high school Freud went on to study in the medical field. He worked with Europe's finest and most well known neurologist, Jean-Martin Charcot. It was while working and studying with Charcot, Freud would find himself most attracted to the practice of medical psychopathology. Charcot's specialty was in hysteria and hypnosis. Freud although greatly respected Charcot's work would ultimately reject the idea of hypnosis and would turn toward favoring ideas such as free association, dream analysis, and talking through problems. Around this time he would marry his wife, Martha Bernays and open his own medical practice specializing in neurology. Shortly after doing so he began to work with his neurotic patients and this work would lead to the development of terms like repression and psychosomatic, and eventually the development of the psychoanalytic theory.

Psychoanalytic theory is a theory that came out of a time when there was very little known about the study of human behavior and how it related to the human mind. Psychoanalytic theory was the first theory that brought attention to the complexity of the human mind and human behavior and how those two related to one another. Sigmund Freud developed this new concept after going through his own self analysis of his personal life. In many ways you might say that it was Freud's own self discovery that this theory

was originated. Only by looking back at his own childhood was Freud able to discover his repressed memories and feelings toward his parents. It was this self discovery that laid out the blueprints for the basis of the psychoanalytic theory.

Freud was able to develop a theory that looked to combine personality and therapeutic techniques to help explain ones thoughts and actions to ones unconscious motives and conflicts. Sugarman and Kanner (2000) reported, " Thus, psychoanalytic theory allows one to organize and to describe a meaningful relationship among pieces of data that might seem separate and unrelated without such a model." (p. 5). Freud was the first to develop a psychological therapeutic technique from his psychoanalytic theory. He did so by putting forth a theory that looks at bringing repressed feelings from the unconscious to the conscious. Thereby giving insight into the origins of their disorders and a way to help them come to terms with their feelings and grow from the experience.

Weaknesses

In spite of all that this theory has contributed to the study of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, it still has many weaknesses. One of its greatest weaknesses is that it lacks empirical evidence to support the theories complex nature. Critics of this theory argue that the theory relies so heavily on therapeutic achievements and therefore has less credibility in the scientific community. Another weakness that psychoanalytic theory faces is the types of methods or techniques used, such as dream analysis, free association, and interpretation. The final weakness that Freud's psychoanalytic theory faces is that many believe that it's not a science and

much of its key principles which it's based on are inaccurate or simply have no empirical evidence to support it.

Strengths

However, in spite of the theories many weaknesses it continues to this day to provide the foundation for the many new psychotherapy techniques used by therapists today. One of the psychoanalytic theory's greatest strengths is how it has stood the test of time and continues to be an innovative and a revolutionary theory. In addition this theory has helped to lead to the development of new theories and is a comprehensive theory that can in most cases fit with other theories. Also this theory can be used and applied in a practical way and is still recognized by others in the field to this day.

Personal Evaluation

After much examination into the psychoanalytic theory, I think the greatest flaw I have found in my evaluation was on how the theory itself was originated. The fact that Freud developed such a theory from his own personal self discovery of looking into his childhood interactions with his family to say the very least is lacking a degree of objectivity. Looking at your own personal memories and attempting to be objective is difficult to say the least. Much of what you can remember can easily be manipulated or misrepresented. My thoughts are mixed on this because in one hand I see how that has helped him create a theory that propelled psychology to a whole new realm of study, but I also see it as a huge leap without any scientific basis or objectivity.

Another flaw I found after researching Freud's views on religion and God was that in spite of the fact that Freud did not believe in the existence of God, he still intentionally or unintentionally incorporated Christian principles in his work. Freud in spite of his attempts to base his theory on biological and instinctual assumptions, much of his work reveals Christian principles. For example when Freud discussed the concepts of unconscious and conscious he referred to the unconscious as the evil self and the conscious as the moral self. Both Freud and Christian principles acknowledge that man is sinful and are afflicted by the unconscious or evil self. And both Christianity and Freud provide a means to redeem or guidelines to overcome the unconscious or evil self.

Another example of a parallel between Freud's work and Christian principles is seen with the concept of moral law. In the Bible, it discusses how man has built into them the knowledge of knowing right from wrong and that no man can live up to this moral law and therefore no man is perfect. And this is basically what Freud is talking about with his concept of the id as a self seeking potentially destructive entity of the human psyche. These two concepts essentially are the same idea only worded so that God is essentially hidden in the background. Parallels like these can be seen between Christian principles and Freud's psychoanalytic theory and throughout much of his other work.

All in all Sigmund Freud was a pioneer of his time. Freud developed the first of what would become the basis for psychotherapy and the future development of new theories designed to help further the psychology field. In many ways without Freud's insights into his own personal life and

memories, we wouldn't have progressed as far as we have today. In many ways we owe Sigmund Freud our professional respect and appreciation for his many contributions to psychology.