

Freud's theory of id, ego, superego

Psychology



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Sigmund Freud believed that our mind always have conflicts with itself. Anxiety and unhappiness is the main symptoms for this situation. Bertha Pappenheim alias Anna O case is one of the classic case study by Freud (Stevenson, 1996). Anna O is a young girl in her early twenties; she was a patient of Dr. Breuer. She showed some physiological and psychological disturbance like nervous cough, rigid paralysis, eye movement disturbed, power of speech reduces and others (Stevenson, 1996). After doing some hypnosis, Freud noticed that these disturbances are actually parts of her memories while she was nursing her dying father. There was once where her neighbour played a wonderful music, she was so excited and she started dancing; soon she had an urge to be at her neighbour's house and thus leaving her father's bedside. At that moment, she felt guilt and sadness for leaving her father's bedside. After some time, she covers the internal conflict by coughing (Stevenson, 1996). This case had brought Freud to believe that our mind is divided into three parts- unconscious, conscious and preconscious minds which more commonly known as the id, ego and superego (Ciccarelli & White, 2012). The id or it is the primary personality found in an infant. The ids are usually demanding, immoral, illogical, irrational and selfish. It ignores about other's desire or the reality and place it's satisfaction at the first place (Ciccarelli & White, 2012). This is because id only functions to seek and maximize it's pleasure and avoid pain, we say that id serves the pleasure principle (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). For example, a newborn baby; one who cries when the need is not reached but does not have the knowledge to satisfy the pleasure. Hence, the only way for the hungry infant to bring satisfaction is through reflex action. Freud has proposed this as the primary principle process (Schultz & Schultz, 2009). The <https://assignbuster.com/freuds-theory-of-id-ego-superego/>

only part in our mind which is in contact with reality is the ego (Feist & Feist, 2009). The ego is influenced by the "reality principle". Ego will become more rational and logic. Besides, the ego is able to make the right decisions on each level. Ego does not ignore id's demands but it will try to delay the action to bring satisfaction. As a child is growing up, they tend to receive punishments and gain rewards from their parents. Thus, they will learn how to avoid pain and gain pleasure at the same time (Feist & Feist, 2009). For instance, a child may want to steal some cookies from the kitchen, but will not when the parent is around (King, 2010). In short, ego can be explained as "if it feels good, do it, but only if you can get away with it" (Ciccarelli & White, 2012). The superego has the meaning of "above I" in Latin. Superego usually includes the moral values that obtained from the parents or society (McLeod, 2008). This is mainly guided by the idealistic principle where it convinces the ego to turn into moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones. Freud suggested that around the age of 5, the superego starts to develop. According to Freud, superego consists of two parts, the conscience and ideal self. The conscience punishes the ego by creating feelings of guilt (McLeod, 2008). For example, a child steal some cookies from the kitchen, he or she will feel guilty. While for the ideal self develops from the experiences with reward for telling us how to behave and treat other people. Freud's theory had attracted many followers due to the theory was new and creative (Plotnik, 2002). Vienna Psychoanalytic Society had formed to commence meetings with the supporters. However, some of the group members disagree with Freud's theory and assumptions. One of the members who disagreed with Freud's theory is Carl Jung. He was the first president of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. At the beginning he

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supported Freud fully; however Jung and Freud not only ended their personal relationship but also professional relationship after four years. Jung disagree that Freud emphasis too much on the sex drive, he believes that the collective unconscious is the main force in developing personality (Plotnik, 2002). The collective, universal human memories are called the archetypes (Boreree, 2006). Another member who disagrees with Freud is Alfred Adler (Plotnik, 2002). He was another contemporary of Freud who later became the president of the society. He was criticized badly by other members after he voiced out his disagreement on Freud's theory, not long later he reigned. Alder believed that child-rearing practices and sibling influence are the main force for the development of personality. He had mentioned that the driving force behind all human endeavors is not seeking for pleasure but for superiority. Other than that, he suggested that the order of a child is born also affects the personality development (Plotnik, 2002). For instance, firstborn feel inferior when a younger child gets all the attention. Thus, they tend to be a little more competitive (Boreree, 2006). Although Freud's theory had attracted so many followers, however there are some flaws in this theory. The main reason for this is because most of Freud's researches are based on case study. Due to the inherent subjectivity, case study is difficult to generalize (Achilleos, 2012). The data are not gathered systematically and they are mainly based on the qualitative subjective data. In Freud's case study, he did not keep any records of the therapy session. Besides, the validity of Freud's data may be one of the weaknesses of this theory. He believes that taking notes during a therapy session may distract the patient, thus he discourages the analyst to take notes during the therapy session. As a result, Freud only gathers and records data based on his memory, and this

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might cause the data to be incomplete (Achilleos, 2012). I believed that many of us may be familiar with these three personalities. These personalities are frequently shown in the animated form (Ciccarelli & White, 2012). The little devil as the id, the superego is the little angel while the ego is the individual that is caught in the middle struggling to decide which action is right. Normally the id will demand for an act; the superego put restrictions on how the demand can be reached while the ego will negotiate between id's demand and superego's restrictions. Anxiety and unhappiness will form when the id or superego does not get things done according to its way. The constant id-superego inner conflict is Freud's view on how the personality works (Ciccarelli & White, 2012). Although there are some flaws and lack of evidence to prove this theory, but certain parts of the theory does explain the personality of an individual.