

Psychoanalytic theory  
the nature of people  
psychology essay



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Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalytic counseling, held the position that humans existed in perpetual turmoil between two basic drives, sexual and aggressive or the life and death drives (Merydith, 2007). Freud also believed that the vast majority of our knowledge about our innate drives is buried in the unconscious part of the mind (Corey, 2005). Freud held the position that people are “ basically evil and victims of instincts that must be balanced or reconciled with social forces to provide a structure in which human beings can function” (Henderson & Thompson, 2011, p. 150)

According to the psychoanalytic view personality consists of three systems, id, ego and superego. The id is the primary source of psychic energy and is the center of one’s instincts. The ego is the controller or regulator of the personality and mediates between the instincts and the surrounding environment. The superego is the judicial branch of one’s personality whose primary concern is to determine if an action is good or bad, right or wrong (Merydith, 2007). Freud believed that energy could be directed into these three areas, however, the more energy that goes into one part, the less is available to the others (Henderson & Thompson, 2011). Freud explained the use of defense mechanisms which the ego employs to protect itself from heavy pressure and anxiety. These defense mechanisms are patterns of thoughts or behaviors that protect the person from overwhelming anxiety. Some defenses are healthy such as, affiliation, altruism, anticipation, humor, sublimation and suppression. While others may lead to maladaptive situations.

## **Overall Theory of Counseling and Methods**

The goal of psychoanalysis is to help the person to achieve a balance between conflicting forces by helping them to understand the nature of the conflict. This may include increasing self-understanding, accepting of feelings and desires, replacing maladaptive defense mechanisms and development relationships (Merydith, 2007). Psychoanalysis stresses the importance of the unconscious and dynamic forces in psychic functioning. Psychoanalysis strives on making the unconscious more conscious. To assist in this endeavor techniques such as free association, catharsis, interpretation of dreams, parapraxia (Freudian slips) and humor, analysis of transference, resistance and incomplete sentences, bibliocounseling, storytelling and psychoanalytic play are used (Henderson & Thompson., 2011).

## **The Nature of People**

Alfred Adler believed in the value, worth and dignity of every person and that cognition, emotions and behavior worked in unison to help the individual to move towards their self-created goals (Kelly & Lee, 2007). From this he built upon that which has been termed Individual Psychology. Adler also recognized the importance of heredity and environment as parameters or constraints for individual development. Thus, the family is the first social group to which the child belongs. It is from this trajectory he or she tries to answer the question of relationship. For Adler the child's ordinal position in the family and/or his or her situational dynamics plays a role in developing a view of self and the world and has a significant impact on the child's developing pattern of living or lifestyle (see attachment). Because no two

persons have exactly the same reaction to the same situation, each child interacts with and interprets experience in the family differently. This does not mean birth order is deterministic, but there is probability that the child will have a particular type of experience as he or she tries to understand how they fit in. Adler believed psychopathology was more of “ a reflection of discouragement rather than sickness” (Kelly & Lee, 2007, p. 131) Therefore, when one feels encouraged, one feels capable and appreciated and will generally act in a connected and cooperative way. When one is discouraged, one may act in unhealthy ways by competing, withdrawing, or giving up. Treatment or psychotherapy consists of finding ways of expressing and accepting encouragement, respect, and social interest that help the person to feel fulfilled and optimistic. Adler believed that “ a misbehaving child is a discouraged child” and that helping the child to feel valued, significant, and competent is often the most effective strategy in coping with difficult child behaviors (Henderson & Thompson, 2011). Adlerian counseling seeks to correct mistakes in perceptions and logic that people make in their effort to fit into social relationships and to overcome feelings of inferiority. These feelings of inferiority may derive from one’s position in the family constellation, particularly if early experiences of humiliation occurred; a specific physical condition or defect existed; or a general lack of social feeling for others was present. As a result of conclusions drawn about early experiences in the extended family, the person adopts “ mistaken goals.” Rather than pursuing social interest, they strive for attention, power, revenge, or assumed disability (Kelly & Lee, 2007).

## **Overall Theory of Counseling and Methods**

Adlerian theory states that each person creates his or her own lifestyle as a result of the interpretation made about early life experience. Lifestyles includes perceptions on one's self, personal values and beliefs and relationships to others, work and environment. Family systems develop their own lifestyles and behavioral patterns that the family members use to implement their views in their interactions with family members and others. Adlerian psychotherapy is a collaborative educational process between therapist and client to correct mistakes in cognitive schemas (Kelly & Lee, 2007). Adlerian play therapy is a combination of traditional play therapy in combination with assumptions and approaches of Individual Psychology in which the child is encouraged to express her or his desires, fears, anxieties and problems through play. For adolescents, which is a difficult period of struggling for individualism, autonomy and independence, the therapist recognizes the client's strength and assists and communicates respect to from a trusting alliance (Kelly & Lee., 2007). Other techniques include private logic, reframing, paradoxical intention, group therapy which therapeutic mechanisms, lifestyle groups, action therapy, social skills training, STET, Cooperative Discipline, parenting skills and family therapy.

### **Two major difference between the Psychoanalytic and Adlerian approaches.**

According to psychoanalytic theory people exist in constant turmoil by the tension of life and death drives which are the determining factors in life.

Freud believed people were basically evil. Adler on the other hand maintained it was a person's perception of the past and interpretation of

early events that had an effect upon a person, not a dualistic tension. Adler used a phenomenological perspective includes the person's perceptions, thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs, convictions and conclusions to develop a theory of personality; whereas Freud explained it in terms of Id, Ego and Superego. Both employed very different techniques in the counseling process.