

**Describe and evaluate any one approach to the study of Human Behaviour.**

***Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytical approach.***

Sigmund Freud was a pioneer in the recognition of the unconscious mind, becoming the first Psychoanalyst and his theories are now widely accepted. Psychoanalysts today believe that Psychoanalysis is the most effective method of obtaining knowledge of the mind. It is a method of understanding mental functioning and the stages of growth and development. The Psychoanalytic theory seeks to explain the complex relationship between the body and mind and its theories can be used to understand the role of emotions in medical illness. The validity of Psychoanalysis as a theory has been questioned since it was conceived in the early 1900's. Questions have been raised as to whether or not it is a science and the value of the data from which the theories involved are based.

Psychoanalysis begins with the three forces of the physical apparatus - the id, the ego and the super ego. The id is unconscious, containing everything that is inherited or present at birth and instincts.

The ego is conscious, it is responsible for the limitation of satisfactions and represents the influence of others such as parents, teachers, significant others, and other influences such as racial and cultural traditions.

The theory states that instincts are the ultimate cause of all behaviour, the instincts being Eros (love) and Thanatos (the death or aggressive instinct). Eros serves to establish and maintain a unity through relationships, whereas Thanatos will undo connections and unity which interfere with the gratification of the libido. The instincts both combine through attraction or work against each other.

Freud believed that sexual life begins soon after birth and identified four main phases; the Oral stage, the Anal phase, the Phallic phase and the Genital phase. The Oral phase shows an emphasis, by an individual, on providing satisfaction for the mouth, the first erotogenic zone. In the Anal phase satisfaction is achieved via aggression and the excretory function. The Phallic phase, a young girl enters the Electra phase, where penis envy is experienced resulting in the girl shying away from sexual life all together. In contrast a young boy enters the Oedipus phase where both castration and the father figure are feared, but sexual relations with the

mother are a fantasy. After the Phallic phase a period of latency is experienced where sexual development halts. Finally, in the Genital phase sexual function is completely organised and sexual urges begin as pleasure is sought. According to Freud, errors within the development of sexual function lead to homosexuality and sexual perversions.

Freud defines the qualities of physical process as being conscious, pre-conscious or unconscious. Conscious ideas are those of which we are aware, yet only briefly remain conscious. Pre-conscious ideas are defined as being capable of becoming conscious. Ideas considered to be unconscious are defined, in contrast, as being difficult to access, but can be inferred, recognised and explained through analysis.

The three parts of the personality are often in conflict and a balance of the id and super ego is maintained by the ego utilising defence mechanisms.

The defence mechanisms are used to distort or deny reality and are unconscious. There are many such defence mechanisms, but one of the most frequently referred to is repression, this involves making guilty secrets and things that we would try to cover up, go into an unconscious state. Denial is often mentioned and this involves an individual refusing to accept events or denying the presence of certain emotions which promote anxiety. Displacement involves diverting emotions from the original source towards a less dangerous one, for example a student failing an exam may blame a teacher, as to admit their own failure would create anxiety. Other such defence mechanism includes; projection, reaction formation, regression and rationalisation, there is no agreed list of the mechanisms but these are the most frequently referred to.

Freud was interested in the role of dreams and how they can be interpreted and spent many years hypothesizing about this. In the Psychoanalytic theory the state of sleep is defined as a period of uproar and chaos, during this period the unconscious thoughts of the id try to force their way into consciousness. In order to interpret dreams developing from the id or ego it must be acknowledged that what is recalled from a dream is merely a façade, behind which the meaning is inferred. Freud believed that dreams are caused by the ability to reminisce about memories that the dreamer has forgotten their ability to reproduce repressed images of the dreamer's childhood, and their strong usage of symbolism. According to Freud, dreams are a fulfilment of wishes and are capable of bringing up impressions which cannot be derived from the dreamer's life.

Using the Psychoanalytic approach, psychoanalysis aims to remove neuroses and thereby cure patients by returning the damaged ego to its normal state. Analysis can take a number of years and is a process involving a patient telling an analyst what they feel to be unimportant and important. Transference is an aspect of analysis that has both positive and

negative effects, it occurs when patients view their analysts as parents, role models or significant others from their past. Transference causes patients to become concerned with pleasing their analyst and the rational aim of getting well is lost.

Psychoanalysis involves several steps; first, analysts obtain material with which they can work from patient's slips and parapraxes. The analysts then form hypotheses about events in the patient's past and what is happening in their present everyday life. The analysts do not relay their conclusions of the observations until a patient has arrived at the same conclusion on their own accord. If the conclusions were revealed too soon resistance occurs, due to repression. Once the conclusion is accepted by the patient they are then cured.

Critics claim that psychoanalysis cannot be considered a science due to its lack of predictions. Critics maintain that psychoanalysts state that certain childhood experiences such as molestation or abuse produce certain outcomes or states of neurosis. Using this idea it could be predicted that if children experience abuse, for example, they will become characterised by certain personality traits. This concept would also theoretically work in reverse. For example, if an individual is observed in a particular neurotic state then a certain childhood experience should be able to be predicted. Neither of these predictions can be made with any accuracy.

Popper, by far one of the most well known critics of the psychoanalytic approach insists that psychoanalysis cannot be considered a science as it cannot be falsified. He claims that psychoanalysis' predictions are not of overt behaviour but of hidden psychological states and therefore are untestable. Popper claims that it is only possible to empirically determine whether prospective patients are currently neurotic when individuals are not neurotic. He states that psychoanalysis often maintains that every individual is neurotic to agree due to the fact that everyone suffers a trauma at some point in their life. However this concept of ubiquitous repression is impossible to test as there is no overt behavioural method of doing so.

Further critics insist that psychoanalysis is not a science due to the lack of interpretive rules and regulations. Colby contends that critics of psychoanalysis have difficulty with the idea that there are no clear lines of reason between theory and observation. For example, one psychoanalyst will interpret one case in a certain way, whereas another may observe the same case and observe it another, possibly contradictory to the initial psychoanalyst's interpretation.

Critics such as Popper insist that Freud's theories cannot be falsified and are therefore none scientific whereas, Eysenck claims that the theories can be falsified and therefore are scientific. Grünbaum agrees with

Eysenck but claims that Freud's theory of psychoanalysis has been proven wrong and is in fact bad science.

To evaluate the strengths of Freud's psychoanalysis theory, qualities which make a good behaviour theory must be considered. A theory must address a problem and be able to be applied in practical ways, fit with other theories and over time still prove to be correct. Many science philosophers also believe that a good theory is falsifiable, able to lead to new theories and ideas, able to be generalized and recognised by others in the field.

Psychoanalysis remains a valid option for patients in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, even though the approach was initiated by Freud in 1856. Numerous institutes, organisations and conferences have been established around the world focusing on psychoanalysis, proving its acceptance and popularity globally. The psychoanalysis approach in its conception was innovative and revolutionary, and clearly, has stood the test of time.

The success of psychoanalysis can be assessed also by the fact that it has acted as a catalyst to many professionals within the field of psychology, prompting many to see connections they may otherwise have missed. The approach has helped highlight, to health professionals, many aspects of the human mind and its inner workings, phenomena which previously had been unexplained. As a result of psychoanalysis approaches to psychology, which are now considered common routine, were developed worldwide.

One of psychoanalysis' great strengths is that it is a very comprehensible theory. It was originally intended as a theory to explain therapeutic or psychological concepts, but through further research, explains the nature of human development and behaviour. However, many experts contend that psychoanalysis can also be used to explain a vast array of concepts outside of the psychological field. Psychoanalysis can offer explanations towards an artist's paintings, religion, characters in literature such as the many complex characters of Shakespeare and in many other day to day situations. The comprehensiveness of the theory suggests that it is to some extent, pointing in the correct direction of the truth behind human behaviour.

In conclusion, we have examined the many strengths and indeed weaknesses of the psychoanalytic approach to human behaviour, considering as well both the criticisms and supports of Freud's contemporaries and fellow practitioners. It can be agreed that the invalidity of Freud's evidence, due to the lack of empirical data, and the demographically restricted sample of individuals on which Freud's evidence is based somewhat deters from the validity of the theory. It also appears that common sense does not have a place in the psychoanalytic theory and as a result I believe that irrelevant and often false assumptions

are made all too frequently. Parts of the theory are also a little too generalized, failing to leave adequate room for exceptions to the general rule. It is also hard to accept that all mental problems stem from sexually related issues, such as unresolved Oedipal and Electra complexes. This seems to be a gross overgeneralization and exaggeration.

Although these weaknesses are presented, I believe that the many strengths of the theory are tremendously significant. The psychoanalytic approach should not be disregarded, it was conceived over a century ago and is still considered as a credible and effective method of treating mental illness and examining human behaviour, therefore we can say that at least significant parts of the theory are accurate. I believe that psychoanalysis can be called a scientific theory due to the fact that it is falsifiable and has, in fact been proven false as certain other methods of treatment have been proven effective. Psychoanalysis is comprehensive, can be applied in practical ways and contains valid arguments. I believe that psychoanalysis is a substantial theory of personality as it is directly responsible for the development of further psychological theories and hypotheses, which otherwise may have been missed.

Although widely deputed the defence for psychoanalysis is best summed up by Freud (1949) wrote, himself, in his ***Outline of Psychoanalysis***, “*the teachings of psychoanalysis are based on an incalculable number of observations and experiences, and only someone who has repeated those observations on himself and on others is in a position to arrive at a judgment of his own upon it*” (pg. 11)

Personally I feel that to dismiss the theory completely would be a tremendous oversight, without it, many other valuable psychological techniques and theories would have remained undiscovered .

