

PSYCHOLOGY
ESSAY

Part a.)

Structure and functioning of the personality in Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

Sigmund Freud, as the creator of psychoanalytic theory, has begun his career as a neurologist, treating patients with hypnosis to cure hysteria. Because it had almost no effect on curing the patient, he discovered the method of free association, in which patients say whatever comes to their mind. By listening and noticing what patients were saying, he found some similarities in their memories of dreams and their childhood memories.

For an easier understanding he compared our mind to an iceberg. One part (that is above the surface) represents our conscious mind; the other part (that is under the surface) represents our unconscious mind. The unconscious mind should not be confused with "being unconscious" and unconsciousness which is loss of consciousness.

He claimed that unconscious mind affects the largest part of our thoughts and behavior and that all our emotions and actions have causes in our unconscious mind. Although many people don't agree with Freud, his idea that people react for a reason is accepted. (*The Psychopathology of Everyday life – 1901*). Most of our behavior is, however, led by our unsatisfied drives and unconscious wishes. For Freud, the unconscious was a powerful force in behavior: thoughts and actions, which a patient didn't even realize were very important in his researches. Freud based his ideas on these claims.

The unconscious mind (or subconscious) is the feature of the mind of which we are not directly conscious or aware. Unconscious contains all those experiences and feelings that are »hidden« in our mind and we cannot recall them into the conscious mind, but they somehow "leak out" either directly or in a symbolic way. The concept of the unconscious mind is perhaps Freud's biggest contribution to psychology.

His bigger question was still at a distance: What is the biggest force that motivates our behavior? Of all biological influences, Freud thought that sexuality was the most powerful and that all pleasure is based in the sexual drive. Yet, he had to discover how does this basic drive result in so many forms of behavior?

Freud had also an early description of human motivation, which stated that we are driven to maximize pleasure and to avoid pain or unpleasantness. It is so-called pleasure principle.

Freud wanted to explain how the unconscious operates and therefore he suggested that it is structured of three major parts: id, ego and superego. The **Id** (Latin, "it" in English) is the most primitive part of the personality that responds to instincts, tries to avoid pain and is concerned with pleasure; it operates on the pleasure principle. It consists of the basic biological needs such as: the need to eat, the need to be close to someone etc. The demands of id normally operate outside our conscious awareness.

Soon, a child learns that not all his needs can be gratified so it accepts the reality. At that time a new part of personality develops: the **ego** (Latin, "I" in English) and it operates on the reality principle. It is the executive of the personality: it makes decisions, plans and performs logical thinking. The ego also decides which id impulses should be satisfied. It varies among the demands of the id and the demands of the superego. A healthy ego provides the ability to adapt to reality and interact with the outside world in a way that suits both Id and Superego. There is no rule determining how ego resolves conflicts within personality. It is just capable of rational thinking that is a part of our conscious mind.

Superego ("Über-ich" in the original German, roughly "over-me" in English) is the third part of the personality. It judges whether actions or decisions are wrong or right and is concerned with ideal. It develops in response to parental punishments and rewards. Through the influence of parents a child brings behavior under its own control. The superego, for example, tells them that it is wrong to steal. Those people who have a weak superego may be criminals or they fail to follow the social laws.

Freud was especially concerned with the relationship between these three parts of the mind. He claimed that these three components of the personality often oppose. That is why well-integrated and weak-integrated personalities exist. In the well-integrated personality the ego remains in control and the reality principle controls. In general, the structural theory of mind has not got on very well over the years.

Freud furthermore believed that humans were driven by two instinctive drives, libidinal energy - **Eros** and the death instinct - **Thanatos**. Sigmund Freud considered instincts to be basic structures of human behavior and play a central role in his drive theory, which suggests that human behavior is motivated by the desire to reduce the nervousness caused by unsatisfied instinctive wishes or drives. For Freud, the life instinct (Eros) and its components motivate people to stay alive and reproduce. The death instinct (Thanatos) represents the negative and destructive death forces of nature.

He further claimed that, as humans developed, they fixated on different and specific things through their **stages of development**—first in the oral stage, then in the anal stage, then in the phallic, latent and genital stage. Freud argued that children then passed through a stage where they fixated on the parent of the opposite sex and thought that the same-sexed parent is a rival. He was the first to offer a detailed human development based on stages.

The first stage is the **oral stage** (0 – 1,5 years), when the focus of sexual instinct and gratification is mouth. Nursing; sucking, swallowing and biting gratify an infant. Gratification may result in trust and independence and over- gratification or frustration may result in passivity, gullibility, immaturity, unrealistic optimism and manipulative personality.

The second stage is the anal stage (around 1,5 – 3 years). The focus of gratification shifts to the anal region. Pleasure comes from the process of elimination – retention and expulsion of feces. At the age of two, a child faces a major challenge: toilet training. For the child, bowel movement is intensively pleasurable. The infant experiences the conflicts between the demands of Id and the external world. The parents force the child with their demands about toilet training. The choice is between following the demands of Id or the demands of parents, who are the most important persons in a child's life. The result is either relatively traumatic or stormy and intense. If the parents are moderate, the child eventually learns that self-control and mastery is useful. If the parents are too strict this may result in over – cleanliness or messiness.

As ego grows stronger, the child begins to move into the third stage – the **phallic stage** (3 – 5 years). Gratification is focused on genitals. In Freud's days the thought about child's sexuality was shocking, because they saw it as an adult term.

A child seeks gratification and genital simulation is pleasurable. The major conflict in this stage are the Oedipal and Electra conflicts. The focus of these conflicts is attachment to the parents, who have become attractive. For the boy, the mother is becomes desired and the father is a focus of jealousy. For the girls, the Electra complex involves the same sense of attraction and jealousy, but the parents change their positions: now the mother is the rival and the father is the object of desire.

In this stage the gratifying behaviors are examining and touching genitals. Gratification results in sexual identity and healthy conscience, but the frustrations end in; men: vanity, recklessness, Juanism and exhibitionism. Women: striving for superiority over the men, flirtatiousness, seductiveness and promiscuity.

The development continues in the **latency stage** (6-12 years) that extends until puberty. The drives appear to be latent or hidden. A child finds its gratification in sports, hobbies, school and friendships.

The last stage is the **genital stage**, which lasts from puberty onward. Drive energy is focused on genitals, thought it is in a way different from the phallic stage. The basic task children need to complete is to get separated from their parents.

Part b.)

Evaluate this theory

Freud's theory cannot simply be stated wrong or right. He was gifted intellectually, a good observer and he explored and connected the explorations of previous researchers more precisely and effectively, but that does not tell us much about the quality of his work.

The most important criteria for a scientific theory are falsifiability and generality. Freud did not consider in what circumstances could his theory be proven wrong and it does not apply to a wide range of situations. Critics have tried to test some of his theories, but it is not really possible without falsifiability. If a theory cannot be proven wrong than it cannot be proven right. Freud was also an "armchair" scientist and his theories were based on memories of the patient, he took his notes after the session, did no measurements, designed no experiments, drew no graphs and calculated no statistics. He used a case-study method: it is considered the least scientific of all methods. One of the main criticisms is that many of his theories are difficult to measure objectively. He based his theory on observations of a very small range of people: the upper-middle-class in Victorian Vienna and Jews, all mentally disturbed.

Freud's key ideas were: motivation, pansexualism (everything is related to sex) and stages of development. He claimed that, when something is unconscious there has to be a motive for this action and it is hidden in our previous experience. The supportive arguments are: we make slips-of-the-tongue that show that we are secretly thinking; even those, who oppose psychoanalysis, support it and it is proved by many experiment; Freudian theories for curing the patients with its basis on the unconscious mind have helped many people. Rejective arguments are: the terms do not fit – he says that we have an unconscious consciousness and that is not logical; it is not the only explanation for such things as slips-of-the-tongue; it denies that we have our own free will and the theory may even not be true because other theories work, too.

Pansexualism argues that our every action is related to sex. He based his idea on curing women with hysteria and this cannot be generalized. One simple cause cannot affect all phenomenons and it is not really new- we prefer pleasure to pain in general.

Freud's third idea is that all children pass the same psychosexual stages of development. Some children pass through the stages more quickly and some get fixated in a particular stage. Freud changed our view on human development, but the stages are abstract – there may be not real borders between the stages.

E.g. Freud's theory of Oedipus and Electra complex has been criticized a lot, especially the part with Electra complex with its claims about penis envy of a girl. Many untypical families have raised their children normally and they have grown into normal people, so this does not prove this theory. Freudian theory also does not consider biological and environmental influences that affect a child.

E.g. Malinowski, a psychologist concluded that children do not have erotic feelings towards the opposite-sex parent with his research on Papua in New Guinea in a tribe. Their fathers do not raise children, but by their uncles and boys have dreams that something has happened to the uncle. This shows that they are not jealous, but perhaps scared of powerlessness. He proved that the Oedipus complex is not universal.

Freud's critics claim that Freud put together pieces of his behavior, of his own children and his patients. He was often too sure of himself. According to Eysenck, he was neurotic and he argued that his theory has to be tested by experiments and observations and its truth or falsity has to be objectively determined. Kline, for instance, thought that his theory should be seen as a collection of hypothesis and Fisher and Greenburg thought that some parts of his theory are true and they should just be reshaped. On the other side, Boring thought that Freud's genius is commonly accepted, despite of his theories.

Human personality is relatively fixed. That means that we truly have inborn drives and our personality is determined by them, as well as by environmental events. We also appear from psychoanalytic theory as passive creatures. Our unconscious seems to control all what we say,

do and think. And finally, as Freud noted, the goal of psychoanalysis was to ensure that “*were Id was, there shall ego be.*”(1933)