CHAPTER 3

THE PSYCHOANALYTICAL THEORY OF SIGMUND FREUD

part 1

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Background

• First personality theory and (arguably) the most comprehensive
• Possible contextual influences on Freud’s theory
  ▪ Freud’s relationship with his parents
  ▪ 19th century understanding of science
• Why have a thorough understanding of Freud’s theory?
  ▪ Common psychological terms and concepts developed by Freud
  ▪ Understanding the development of other theories in opposition to Freud

The View of the Person

• Three basic assumptions about human beings and science
  ▪ Psychosocial conflict
  ▪ Biological and psychic determinism
  ▪ Mechanistic human functioning

The View of the Person

• Psychosocial Conflict
  ▪ Constant conflict between drives in the psyche and social norms
    ▪ Sexual and aggressive drives versus society’s norms
  ▪ Outcome: maximum drive satisfaction with minimum guilt
  ▪ Psychoanalytic Theory = Psychosocial Conflict Theory
The View of the Person

• Biological and Psychic Determinism
  • Biological Determinism: Human drives are physiologically rooted in the body
  • Psychic Determinism: Conflict between drives within the psyche
    - Sexual and aggressive drives located in the Id
    - Societal rules absorbed into the Superego
    - Conflict that determines human behaviour located within the psyche

• The Mechanistic Assumption
  • Human beings function in a mechanistic way
    - Physical principles of energy consumption, conservation and transformation

The Structure of the Personality

• Three structural properties to the personality
  • the Id
  • the Ego
  • the Superego

• Personality functions on three levels of the consciousness
  • the conscious
  • the preconscious
  • the unconscious

• Three separate aspects of the personality function together to achieve three primary goals:
  • ensure survival
  • maximum experience of pleasure
  • minimum experience of guilt
The Structure of the Personality: Levels of Consciousness

- **Conscious** level
  - thoughts, feelings, and experiences in current awareness
  - contents change all the time

- **Preconscious** level
  - information that individual is not concentrating on at any particular moment but that can be recalled without too much effort
  - memories that are not painful or anxiety-provoking

- **Unconscious** level
  - ‘forbidden’ drives
  - memories or wishes that cause pain, anxiety and guilt that cannot be recalled to the conscious mind

- Structural elements of psyche differ from one another because they function on different levels of the consciousness
  - Id functions almost entirely on unconscious level
  - Can make wishes felt on preconscious level (dreams)
  - Ego and Superego function on all three levels of consciousness
The Structure of the Personality:

Id

- Innate, primitive part of the psyche containing primitive drives
- In direct contact with the body
  - Body is the source of energy for the life (eros) and death (thanatos) drives

Ego

- Develops from the Id to ensure survival
- Formed through individual’s contact with the outside world
- Serves the Id’s needs by finding suitable objects to satisfy drives

The Structure of the Personality:

Id

- Functions according to primary processes and the pleasure principle
  - Primary processes: Id incapable of thought, reflection, planning (it is selfish and unrealistic)
  - Pleasure principle: Id seeks immediate satisfaction of drives (wish fulfillment)

Ego

- Functions according to secondary processes and the reality principle
  - Secondary processes: Ego evaluates situation before action is taken (capable of reflection and planning) and can postpone action until appropriate time and place
  - Reality principle: Ego takes physical and social reality into account before action is taken (sensory perception, rational thinking, memory, learning)
### The Structure of the Personality: Ego

- Under constant pressure from the Id
- Must take reality and moral/social codes into account
- Conflicting demands between Id and Superego cause psychic difficulties for the Ego
- Functions on all three levels of consciousness but uses energy generated by the Id
- **Cathexis**: Ego invests energy in object deemed appropriate for satisfying drive generated by the Id
- Develops in first year of life, but continually develops in that it learns through experience (learns new ways to satisfy drives)

### The Structure of the Personality: Superego

- Develops from the Ego
- Represents society’s moral codes and pressurizes individual to live by these codes (**ego-ideal**)
- Functions according to the **moral principle**
  - Punishes individual (via feelings of guilt) for immoral wishes/behaviour
  - Punishment is known as the **conscience**
- Constantly puts pressure on the Ego via the conscience and the ego-ideal

### The Structure of the Personality: Superego

- Functions on all three levels of the consciousness
  - May feel consciously guilty about drives and wishes
  - Superego puts pressure on the Ego to keep forbidden drives and thoughts at an unconscious level
- **Anticathexis**: moral objection placed (by the Superego) on objects deemed unsuitable (inappropriate) for Ego to use to satisfy drives generated by the Id
- Tension between cathexis (potential objects identified by Ego as suitable) and anticathexis (the objection placed on these objects by the Superego) leads to anxiety
- Defense mechanisms used for protection against this anxiety

### The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives

- **Drives**: psychological representations of energy obtained from the body
- Main driving forces in human functioning
  - Encourage the person to function
  - Determine the direction of behaviour
**The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics**

- **Source**
  - From the body
  - Different drives obtain energy from different parts of the body
    - Source of the **Hunger drive**: organs involved in eating
    - Source of the **Sex drive**: genitals and sex glands (erogenous zone)

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**The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics**

- **Energy (impetus)**
  - Every drive has a certain amount of energy (intensity)

- **Goal**
  - Primary goal is satisfaction
  - Subjectively experienced as a desire to achieve something
  - This desire remains until it is satisfied
  - Many drives are experienced unconsciously

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**The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – General Characteristics**

- **Object**
  - All drives require an object that will satisfy it
  - Satisfaction achieved by using the energy of the drive
  - Object is chosen by the Ego, and psychic energy is transferred to the object
  - Object substitution = **displacement**
    - When chosen object is either unavailable or regarded by the Superego as inappropriate
    - Substitute object is not as satisfying as the original object (leading to a build-up of psychic energy)

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**The Dynamics of the Personality: Drives – Types**

- **Life drives** (serves to preserve life)
- **Ego drives**
  - All drives aimed at satisfying basic survival needs (eating, drinking, breathing)
  - Responsible for the development of the Ego
  - Provide energy for the functioning of the Ego
The Dynamics of the Personality:
Drives – Types

- **Sexual drives**
  - Primary function is erotic pleasure
  - May result in discomfort due to strict moral codes regarding the satisfaction of these drives (leading to mental disturbance)
  - Babies: source is the mouth area (lips and inside the mouth)
    - Original object = mother’s breast
    - Sucking the breast satisfies ego drive of hunger and sexual drive
  - Sexual drives develop and change with age as other body parts become the sources of sexual drive energy

- **Comparing Ego drives and Sexual drives**
  - Ego drives related to the survival of the individual; Sexual drives related to the survival of the species
  - Ego drives generally not associated with moral codes and guilt feelings; Sexual drives often are
  - Ego drives provide energy for the Ego; Sexual drives do not

The Dynamics of the Personality:
Drives – Types

- **Death drive**
  - Intra-psychic explanation for war, aggression, murder, suicide
  - Primary objective: to break down living cells into dead matter
  - Original object is the individual’s body
  - Conflict with life drives results in outward projection of the death drive onto other people or objects
  - Operates in various ways:
    - Projected onto other people or objects
    - Via the feelings of guilt generated by the Superego
    - Self-harm (‘performance errors’)

- **Anxiety**
  - Ego’s reaction to danger
  - Conflict between Id’s forbidden drives and Superego’s moral codes
  - Motivates the ego to avoid danger
  - **Reality Anxiety**: anxiety about actual danger in external environment (fear)
  - **Neurotic** and **Moral Anxiety**:
    - Intra-psychic origin of threat (fear that forbidden drive may become conscious / fear of punishment by the Superego)
    - Difficult to deal with these forms of anxiety
    - Important in the development of psychological disturbances
### The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

- **Defence mechanisms, dreams and performance errors used to deal with anxiety**
- **Use a variety of defense mechanisms to defend against anxiety**
- **Denials and distortions of reality**
- **Operate unconsciously and aim to keep anxiety-provoking material unconscious**

**Definition:** unconscious strategies used by the ego to defend itself against conflict between forbidden drives (the Id) and moral codes (the Superego), which cause neurotic and moral anxiety.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Repression</strong></td>
<td>Unconscious mechanism used to keep aggressive and sexual wishes in the unconscious</td>
<td>- Small children repress aggressive and sexual urges towards parents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Not the same as purposefully ‘forgetting’ or suppressing conscious information</td>
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**Definition:** the basic defence mechanism which transfers (represses) drives, wishes, or memories that are unacceptable to the Superego, to the unconscious.

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<td><strong>Projection</strong></td>
<td>An attempt to keep unconscious psychic material unconscious by subjectively ‘changing’ the focus to the drives or wishes of other people</td>
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<td><strong>Reaction Formation</strong></td>
<td>A mechanism whereby the individual tries to keep a forbidden desire unconscious by adopting a fanatical stance that gives the impression that they experience the exact opposite desire.</td>
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**Definition:** individual's attempt to explain their behaviour by providing reasons that sound rational, but which are not the real reasons for their behaviour.

- Differs from lying in that a person who uses rationalisation is not consciously aware of the real reasons for the behaviour they are trying to explain.
The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

• Fixation

**Definition:** occurs when an individual's psychological development becomes partly stuck at a particular developmental stage.

- Too much energy remains invested in the objects of a particular stage - energy should have been cathetced (transferred) to objects appropriate to the next developmental stage
- Causes include:
  - Experiencing a particular developmental stage as too pleasant
  - Frustration of drive satisfaction in a particular stage
  - Perceiving the next developmental stage as too threatening

• Regression

**Definition:** partial or total return to the behaviour of an earlier stage of development.

• Identification

**Definition:** the desire to be like somebody else

- Boys: *Oedipus complex* – sexual attraction towards the mother and hatred of the father indicates identification with the father
- Fulfills various functions (boys):
  - Keeps forbidden sexual desires concerning the mother and aggressive wishes towards the father at an unconscious level
  - Allows him to satisfy his sexual wishes concerning his mother in his fantasies
  - Leads to the development of the Superego

• Displacement

**Definition:** finding a substitute for the object that society's moral codes forbid and using the substitute object for drive satisfaction.

- The psychic energy invested in original forbidden object is displaced to the substitute object
- Some of the excess drive energy can be used, easing psychic discomfort
### The Dynamics of the Personality: Defence Mechanisms

**Sublimation**

*Definition*: finding displacement objects and actions which are regarded by society as culturally valuable. Expressing unacceptable drives in an acceptable/valuable way.

- Is the most effective form of displacement
- Maintains the repression of unacceptable desires
- Allows for the use of great amounts of drive energy
- All cultural activities are at least partly due to sublimation

### The Dynamics of the Personality: Dreams

- Produced by forces within the psyche
- Result from the repression of desires
- When sleeping, the preconscious censoring of desires by the Ego is less efficient
- Forbidden/repressed desires break into the consciousness in disguised form
- Dreams are a means of accessing the unconscious and can be used to identify underlying problems

### The Dynamics of the Personality: Parapraxes

- Everyday mistakes that are normally regarded as insignificant
- Freud: no mistake is ever accidental
  - They are caused by unconscious desires/fears
  - Mild form of psychopathology
  - Caused by underlying unconscious sexual/aggressive desires that are in conflict with the Superego’s moral code