
Understanding The Id, Ego, And Superego

The psychiatric theory of psychoanalysis was developed by Austrian psychologist Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). Instead of developing his theory based on scientific experiments, such as correlation and controlled studies, he used the case study method by concluding mostly from his patients. Freud believed that the human mind is influenced by unacknowledged motives and unspoken memories which he referred to as the unconscious. Although his theories were controversial, Freud's study eventually branched out of psychology, making its way into other fields such as religion and even art.

Freud developed a lot of theories and has contributed a lot to the world throughout his life. One of his more prominent discoveries is his psychoanalytic theory of personality. In his theory, Freud divided the human mind into three parts—consisting of three different levels of mental functioning which he described as the conscious, the unconscious, and the preconscious. The conscious mind consists of information that the human itself is aware of such as thoughts, and the perceptions of the present. The preconscious works closely with the conscious mind as it stores information that can be easily made conscious at times of need such as addresses or telephone numbers that have been memorized. Lastly, the unconscious mind holds onto repressed feelings such as irrational urges, embarrassing experiences, fears, and selfish needs.

In the same theory, he also suggested that a human mind is made up of three different elements which he coined as the id, the ego, and the superego. He believed that both normal and abnormal behavior results from interactions among the id, ego, and superego. Each element is driven by a different motive, developed from different stages, and operates on different levels. The id operates on the unconscious; ego operates on both conscious and preconscious; superego operates on all three levels. These three elements of personality work together to create complex human behaviors that later define or make up the human personality.

The first part of the human personality that is developed during the infant stage is known as the id. Due to its inherently primitive and instinctual nature, it is impulsive and is often unaware of the implications of its actions. Hall summarized the id as “demanding, impulsive,

irrational, asocial, selfish, and pleasure-loving. It is the spoiled child of the personality” (27). The id acts following the pleasure principle as it strives to seek immediate gratification and by any means possible, to avoid pain. It is driven by internal and basic drives and primal instincts, such as hunger, thirst and is also a “great reservoir of libido” (Freud and Strachey 20). Relating to the instinctual nature of the id, Freud concluded two innate opposing instincts—life instinct (Eros) and death instinct (Thanatos). According to Freud, all the demands of the id would either fall into one of these two drives. For example, aggression and trauma would fall into the death instinct while sexual drives and needs for survival are related to the life instinct,

Operation on the conscious and pre-conscious level, the ego's responsibility is to mediate the demands of the id and the restrictions imposed by the superego. It seeks to rationalize the id's instinct and please the drives that benefit the individual in the long term while adhering to socially acceptable ways. In illustrating the relationship of the id and the ego, Freud compared a

horse to the id and a rider to the ego—the former having the energy while the latter directs that power towards a goal (Cherry). Lastly, the superego is driven by the morality principle. The superego is a complete polar opposite from the id as it operates based on the moral principle—restricting the impulsiveness and the irrationalities of the id and also demanding the ego to act morally instead of realistically. Operating on all levels of consciousness and the last to develop out of all three elements, the superego is composed of internalized moral ideals or standards that an individual has acquired from authority figures, parents, or society.

To further demonstrate how these three elements make up a human personality and how they influence the actions of the said person especially in times of conflict, the main character from the novel *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee will be observed. The main character, Jasmine traveled to America as an illegal immigrant after realizing that India had nothing good left for her. In America, she faced many obstacles and unexpected confrontations that often put her mind in a conflict where she had to struggle to get herself out of the said situation.

Jasmine's id is evident during the motel scene where she murdered her rapist, Half-face. Jasmine had just come to America alone and was unsure of where to go so she followed Half-Face—the captain of the ship she boarded with all the other illegal immigrants on their journey to the land of dreams. After she was forcefully raped, she took a shower, stabbed him with a knife, and escaped. This is a very irrational decision as she got out of the shower, the man was already “asleep in his total nakedness” (118) and was no longer violating her. However, her impulsiveness and desire to avenge and survive makes her kill him instead of making a safer or rational decision such as carefully sneaking out of the door. She did not think of the consequences that will soon follow suit if her crime was discovered and she was caught. However, Jasmine was lucky enough to be rescued by a kind woman who later helped her adjust to her new life in a foreign land.

Progressing with the story, Jasmine's ego was shown when she was living with Dave Vadhera and working as a caretaker for his parents. One day Dave's father injured his head on the bathtub's faucet. Although she knew the best option was to call the hospital, she “didn't know enough about the old man's immigration status and medical insurance” (151). In this situation, her id and superego are conflicted. Her id is inclining towards the survival instinct, wanting this man to survive and give him urgent medical attention. However, her superego is concerned about the consequences if the authorities were to figure out the Indian man's immigration status. Since she's an illegal immigrant herself and fears deportation, she fears for the man just the same. Eventually, her ego was able to resolve the conflict and decided on a safer option—to rush to Dave's workplace as soon as she obtained his address and told him about the incident.

Lastly, Jasmine let her superego takes over when she decided to leave the man whom she loves in New York by moving to Iowa. Jasmine was happy with the company of Taylor and Duff until she spotted Sukhwinder one evening—the man who killed her late husband Prakash years ago before she came to America. Taylor insisted on going to the police which she refused due to her immigrant status. Later, Taylor suggested that they all move downtown to New Jersey, convincing her that “if ghosts were scaring [her], he was the best ghostbuster available” (189). Although Taylor was prepared to protect her at all cost, Jasmine decided to leave him and the city, reminding Taylor that this battle is hers and that “he'd [Sukhwinder] kill [him], or Duff, to get at [her]” (189). Jasmine obeyed her moral principles—she cut ties with the man she loves, sacrificed her chance at love and happiness, and retreated to a dull city to avoid confrontation. Her first confrontation with Sukhwinder in India made her flee to America and this time, she's

doing the same thing. This shows how her moral principle had not changed as she still insisted on doing what she has done before rather than taking realistic actions towards this situation.

Undoubtedly, the key to a healthy personality is the perfect balance between all three elements. However, threats and conflicts are not limited to fictional narrations as they are also present here in the real world. In New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, Freud didn't fail to mention that the relationship between the horse and rider will not always go as planned (Cherry). In some instances, Jasmine made the right decision in letting her ego conciliate the id's demands and the superego's restrictions. Other times, she gave in entirely to either one or the other. It is also worth mentioning how the human mind works in a miraculous way to help humans escape difficult situations. Despite claims of being overly sexual or no longer relevant, Freud's contributions to psychology and society are immeasurable.

eduzaurus.com