

## II-Science Philosophy and Discussions (Freudianism and More)

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# Sigmund Freud

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- Sigmund Freud may justly be called the most influential intellectual legislator of his age.
- His creation of psychoanalysis was at once a theory of the human psyche, a therapy for the relief of its ills, and an optic for the interpretation of culture and society.
- Despite repeated criticisms, attempted refutations, and qualifications of Freud's work, its spell remained powerful well after his death and in fields far removed from psychology as it is narrowly defined.



- In 1859 the Freud family was compelled for economic reasons to move to Leipzig and then a year after to Vienna, where Freud remained until the Nazi annexation of Austria 78 years later.
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- Despite Freud's dislike of the imperial city, in part because of its citizens' frequent anti-Semitism, psychoanalysis reflected in significant ways the cultural and political context out of which it emerged.
  - For example, Freud's sensitivity to the vulnerability of paternal authority within the psyche may well have been stimulated by the decline in power suffered by his father's generation, often liberal rationalists, in the Habsburg empire. So too his interest in the theme of the seduction of daughters was rooted in complicated ways in the context of Viennese attitudes toward female sexuality.

\* Anti-Semitism-Hostility or prejudice against Jewish people.

## Early Life And Training

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- Freud's father, Jakob, was a Jewish wool merchant who had been married once before getting married to Amalie Nathansohn.
- The father, 40 years old at Freud's birth, seems to have been a relatively remote and authoritarian figure, while his mother appears to have been more nurturant and emotionally available.
- Although Freud had two older half-brothers, his strongest if also most ambivalent attachment seems to have been to a nephew, John, one year his senior, who provided the model of intimate friend and hated rival that Freud reproduced often at later stages of his life.



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- In 1873 Freud was graduated from the Sperl Gymnasium and, apparently inspired by a public reading of an essay by Goethe on nature, turned to medicine as a career.
  - At the University of Vienna he worked with one of the leading physiologists of his day, Ernst von Brücke, an exponent of the materialist, antivitalist science of Hermann von Helmholtz.
  - In 1882 he entered the General Hospital in Vienna as a clinical assistant to train with the psychiatrist Theodor Meynert and the professor of internal medicine Hermann Nothnagel.
  - In 1885 Freud was appointed lecturer in neuropathology, having concluded important research on the brain's medulla. At this time he also developed an interest in the **pharmaceutical benefits of cocaine**, which he pursued for several years.

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- Although some beneficial results were found in eye surgery, which have been credited to Freud's friend Carl Koller, the general outcome was disastrous.
  - Not only did Freud's advocacy lead to a mortal addiction in another close friend, Ernst Fleischl von Marxow, but it also tarnished his medical reputation for a time.
  - Whether or not one interprets this episode in terms that call into question Freud's prudence as a scientist, it was of a piece with his lifelong willingness to attempt bold solutions to relieve human suffering.



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- Freud's scientific training remained of cardinal importance in his work, or at least in his own conception of it.
  - In such writings as his "Entwurf einer Psychologie" (written 1895, published 1950; "Project for a Scientific Psychology") he affirmed his intention to find a physiological and materialist basis for his theories of the psyche.
  - Here a mechanistic neurophysiological model vied with a more organismic, phylogenetic one in ways that demonstrate Freud's complicated debt to the science of his day.

\* Phylogenetic-relating to the evolutionary development and diversification of a species or group of organisms, or of a particular feature of an organism.

- In late 1885 Freud left Vienna to continue his studies of neuropathology at the Salpêtrière clinic in Paris, where he worked under the guidance of Jean-Martin Charcot.
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- His 19 weeks in the French capital proved a turning point in his career, for Charcot's work with patients classified as "hysterics" introduced Freud to the possibility that psychological disorders might have their source in the mind rather than the brain.
  - Charcot's demonstration of a link between hysterical symptoms, such as paralysis of a limb, and hypnotic suggestion implied the power of mental states rather than nerves in the etiology of disease.
  - Although Freud was soon to abandon his faith in hypnosis, he returned to Vienna in February 1886 with the seed of his revolutionary psychological method implanted.

\*Etiology-Cause



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- Several months after his return Freud married Martha Bernays, the daughter of a prominent Jewish family whose ancestors included a chief rabbi of Hamburg.
  - She was to bear six children, one of whom, Anna Freud, was to become a distinguished psychoanalyst in her own right.
  - Although the glowing picture of their marriage painted by Ernest Jones in his study *The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud* (1953–57) has been nuanced by later scholars, it is clear that Martha Bernays Freud was a deeply sustaining presence during her husband's tumultuous career.

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- Shortly after getting married Freud began his closest friendship, with the Berlin physician Wilhelm Fliess, whose role in the development of psychoanalysis has occasioned widespread debate.
  - Throughout the 15 years of their intimacy Fliess provided Freud an invaluable interlocutor for his most daring ideas.
  - Freud's belief in human bisexuality, his idea of erogenous zones on the body, and perhaps even his imputation of sexuality to infants may well have been stimulated by their friendship.



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- A somewhat less controversial influence arose from the partnership Freud began with the physician Josef Breuer after his return from Paris. Freud turned to a clinical practice in neuropsychology, and the office he established at Berggasse 19 was to remain his consulting room for almost half a century.
  - Before their collaboration began, during the early 1880s, Breuer had treated a patient named Bertha Pappenheim—or “Anna O.,” as she became known in the literature—who was suffering from a variety of hysterical symptoms.

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- Rather than using hypnotic suggestion, as had Charcot, Breuer allowed her to lapse into a state resembling autohypnosis, in which she would talk about the initial manifestations of her symptoms.
  - To Breuer's surprise, the very act of verbalization seemed to provide some relief from their hold over her (although later scholarship has cast doubt on its permanence).
  - “The talking cure” or “chimney sweeping,” as Breuer and Anna O., respectively, called it, seemed to act cathartically to produce an abreaction, or discharge, of the pent-up emotional blockage at the root of the pathological behaviour.

\*Abreaction- the expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion, achieved through reliving the experience that caused it.



# Freudianism

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- The definition of **Freudianism** lays out the basic ideas of Sigmund Freud, the recognized father of the field of psychoanalysis.
- The historic importance and world impact of these ideas are huge. The basic philosophical difference that Freud introduced to psychology was **the notion of what drives human nature**; Freud's big idea emphasized **the importance of unconscious forces in determining beliefs, decisions and actions in human beings**.

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- Before Freudianism, **psychology** primarily concerned itself with **cognition, rational thought** and the **conscious intellect**, which were deemed to be the dominant factors in mental health.
  - Freud turned this upside down, arguing that mental health was subject to "**subconscious**" desires, urges, instincts and various inhibitions.
  - He postulated that mental illness was traceable to **repressed memories of traumatic incidents**, usually from childhood, and usually of a sexual nature, which resulted in neurotic behavior and various manifestations of mental illness.
  - Mentally ill people are required, by the very definition of Freudianism, to "**discover**" these **repressed, hidden causes in order to cure their mental illness**.





# The interpretation of dreams

- In what many commentators consider his master work, *Die Traumdeutung* (published in 1899, but given the date of the dawning century to emphasize its epochal character; *The Interpretation of Dreams*), he presented his findings.
- Interspersing evidence from his own dreams with evidence from those recounted in his clinical practice, Freud contended that dreams played a fundamental role in the psychic economy.
- The mind's energy—which Freud called libido and identified principally, but not exclusively, with the sexual drive—was a fluid and malleable force capable of excessive and disturbing power.



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- Needing to be discharged to ensure pleasure and prevent pain, it sought whatever outlet it might find.
  - If denied the gratification provided by direct motor action, libidinal energy could seek its release through mental channels.
  - Or, in the language of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a wish can be satisfied by an imaginary wish fulfillment.
  - All dreams, Freud claimed, even nightmares manifesting apparent anxiety, are the fulfillment of such wishes.

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- More precisely, **dreams are the disguised expression of wish fulfillments**. Like **neurotic symptoms**, they are the **effects of compromises** in the psyche between **desires** and **prohibitions** in conflict with their realization.
  - Although sleep can relax the power of the mind's diurnal censorship of forbidden desires, such censorship, nonetheless, persists in part during nocturnal existence.
  - Dreams, therefore, have to be **decoded to be understood**, and not merely because they are actually forbidden desires experienced in distorted fashion. For **dreams** undergo **further revision in the process of being recounted to the analyst**.
  - \*Diurnality is a form of plant or animal behavior characterized by activity during daytime, with a period of sleeping or other inactivity at night.



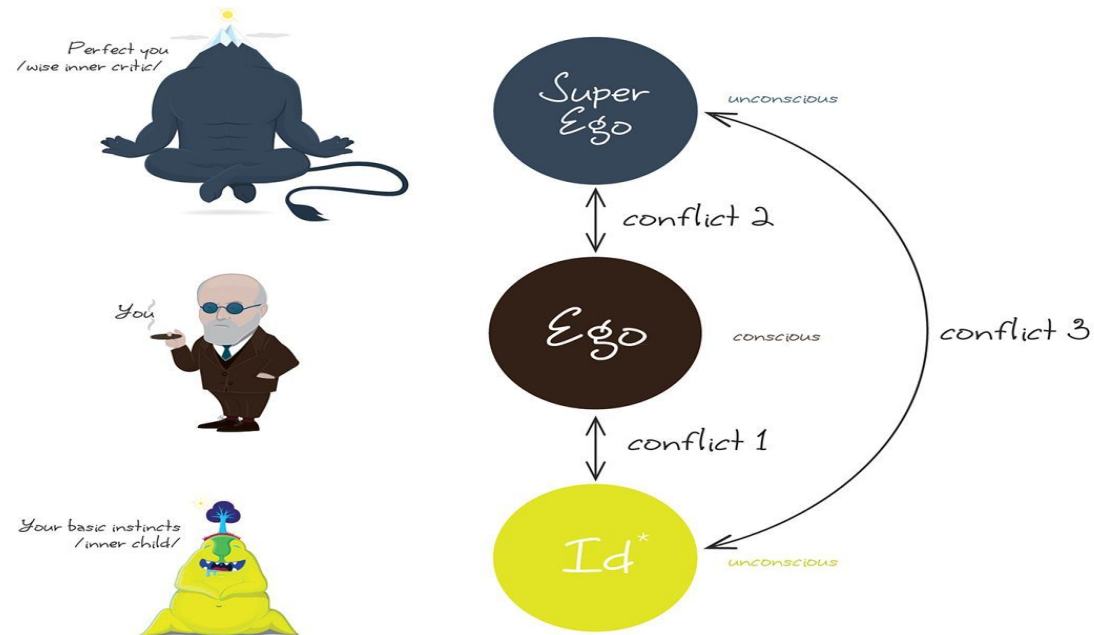
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- *The Interpretation of Dreams* provides a hermeneutic (branch of knowledge that deals with interpretation, especially of the Bible or literary texts) for the unmasking of the dream's disguise, or dreamwork, as Freud called it.
  - The **manifest content of the dream**, that which is remembered and reported, must be **understood as veiling a latent meaning**.
  - **Dreams defy logical entailment and narrative coherence**, for they **intermingle** the residues of immediate daily experience with the deepest, often most infantile wishes.
  - Yet they can be **ultimately decoded** by attending to four basic activities of the **dreamwork and reversing their mystifying effect**.

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- The first of these activities, **condensation**, operates through the **fusion of several different elements into one**.
  - As such, it exemplifies one of the **key operations of psychic life**, which Freud called **overdetermination**.
  - No direct correspondence between a **simple manifest content** and its **multidimensional latent counterpart** can be assumed. The **second activity of the dreamwork, displacement**, refers to the **decentering** of dream thoughts, so that the most urgent wish is often obliquely or marginally represented on the manifest level.



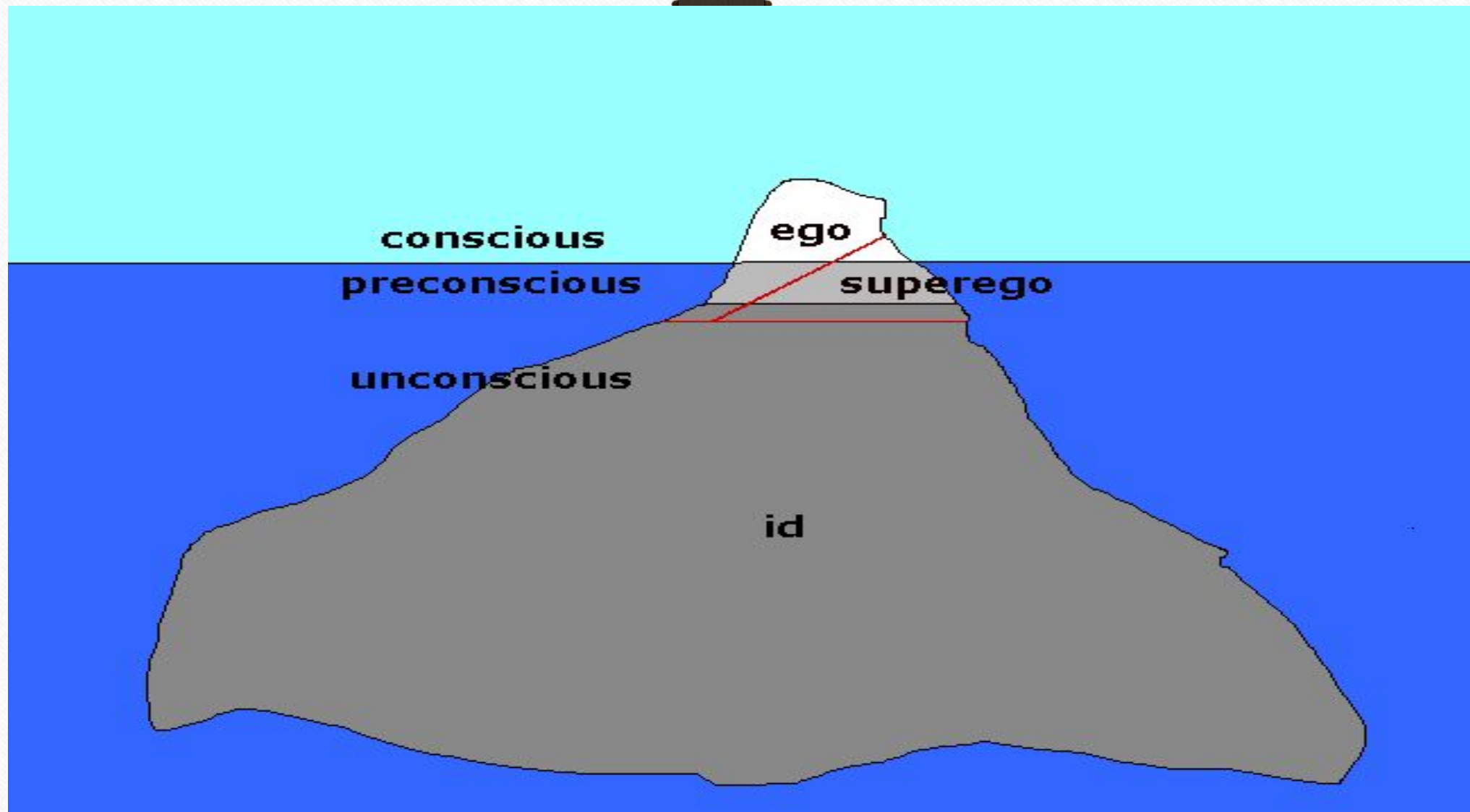
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- Displacement also means the **associative substitution of one signifier** [a sign's physical form (such as a sound, printed word, or image) as distinct from its meaning] **in the dream for another**, say, the king for one's father.
  - The third activity Freud called **representation**, by which he meant the **transformation of thoughts into images**.
  - **Decoding a dream thus means translating such visual representations back into intersubjectively available language through free association.**
  - The final function of the dreamwork is **secondary revision**, which provides **some order and intelligibility to the dream by supplementing its content with narrative coherence**.
  - The process of dream interpretation thus **reverses the direction of the dreamwork**, moving from the level of the conscious recounting of the dream through the preconscious back beyond censorship into the unconscious itself.

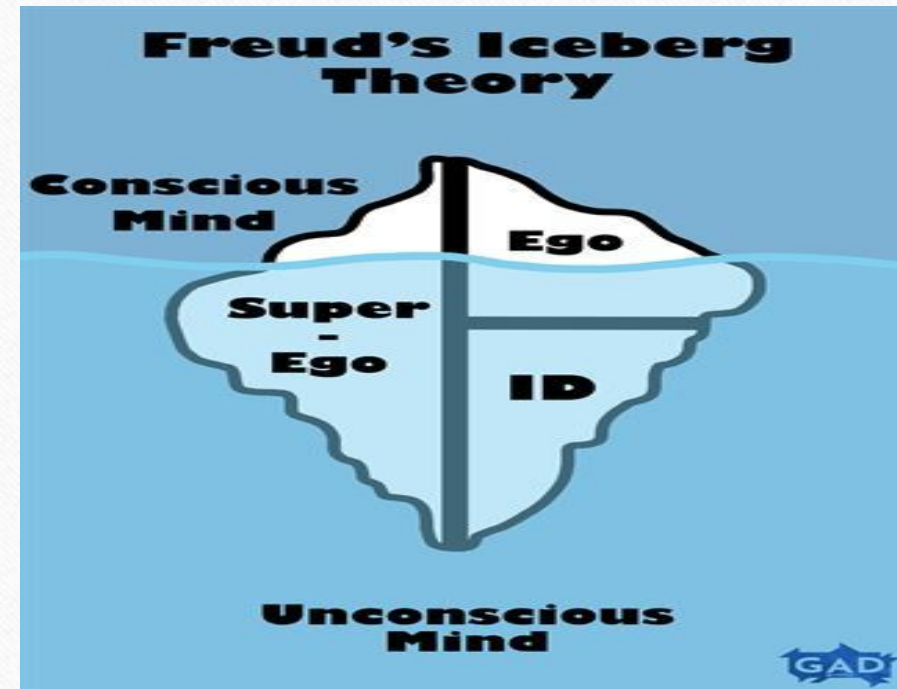
# Id Ego Super Ego



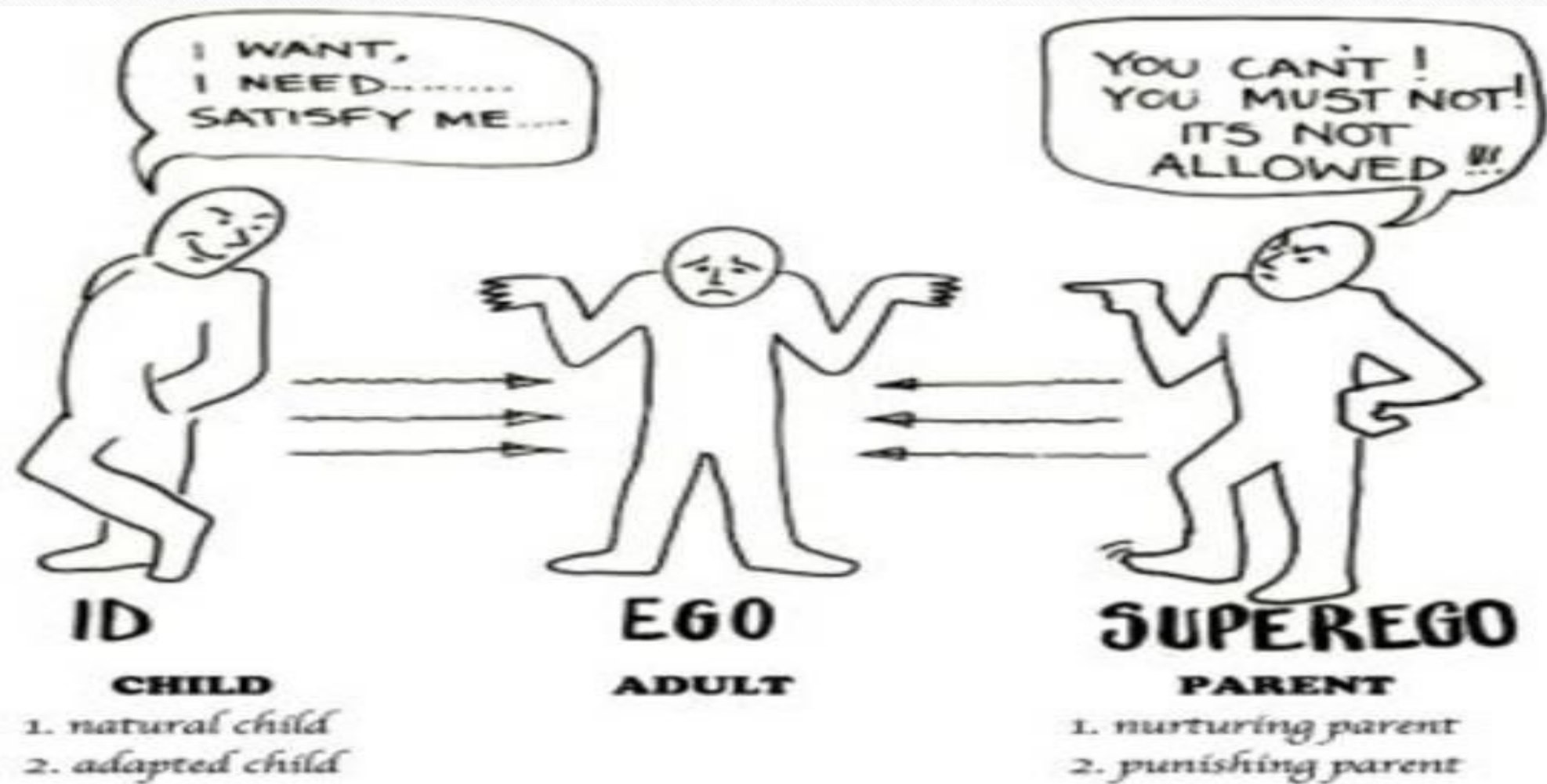
\*Id - Latin for "it"

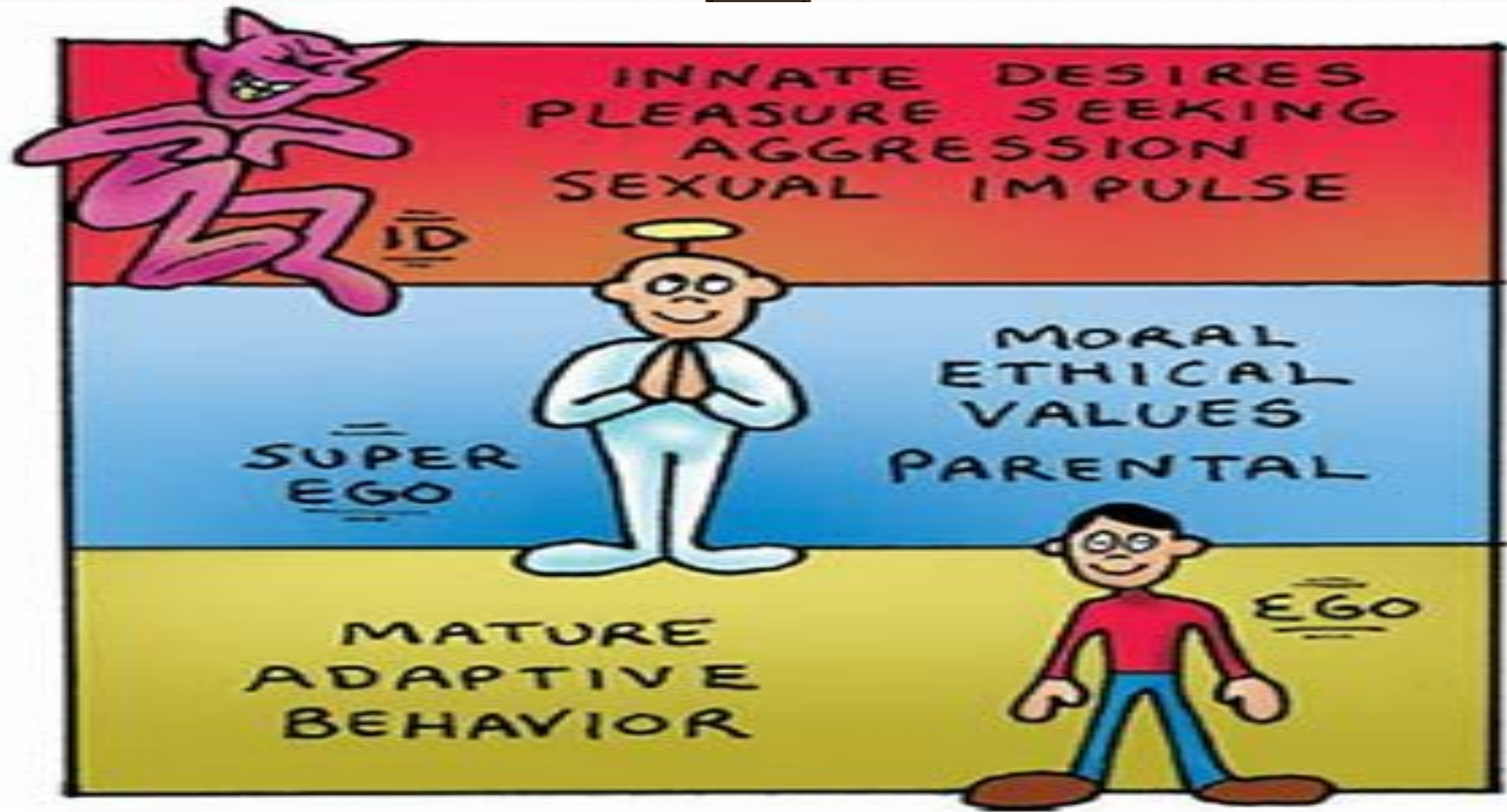














# Personality Theory

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- Freud's personality theory (1923) saw the psyche structured into three parts (i.e., tripartite), the **id, ego and superego**, all developing at different stages in our lives. These are **systems**, not **parts of the brain**, or in any way physical.
- According to Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the **id is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind** that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, the **super-ego operates as a moral conscience**, and **the ego is the realistic part** that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego.

- The **id** is the primitive and instinctive component of personality. It consists of all the inherited (i.e., biological) components of personality present at birth, including the sex (life) instinct – Eros (which contains the libido), and the aggressive (death) instinct - Thanatos.
- The id is the impulsive (and **unconscious**) part of our psyche which responds directly and immediately to basic urges, needs, and desires. The personality of the newborn child is all id and only later does it develop an ego and super-ego.
- The id remains infantile in its function throughout a person's life and does not change with time or experience, as it is not in touch with the external world. The id is not affected by reality, logic or the everyday world, as it operates within the unconscious part of the mind.



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- The id operates on the **pleasure principle** (Freud, 1920) which is the idea that every wishful impulse should be satisfied immediately, regardless of the consequences.
  - When the id achieves its demands, we experience pleasure when it is denied we experience 'displeasure' or tension.
  - **The id engages in primary process thinking, which is primitive, illogical, irrational, and fantasy oriented.** This form of process thinking has no comprehension of objective reality, and is selfish and wishful in nature.

## Id: Meeting Basic Needs (Examples)

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- The id is the most basic part of the personality, and wants instant gratification for our wants and needs. If these needs or wants are not met, a person becomes tense or anxious.
- Sally was thirsty. Rather than waiting for the server to refill her glass of water, she reached across the table and drank from Mr. Smith's water glass, much to his surprise.
- A hungry baby cried until he was fed.
- A toddler who wanted another helping of dessert whined incessantly until she was given another serving.



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- Michael saw a \$5 bill fall out of Nick's backpack as he pulled his books out of his locker. As Nick walked away, Michael bent over, picked up the money, and slipped it into his pocket, glancing around to make sure no one was looking.
  - On Black Friday, customers were so obsessed with getting a good deal that they shoved others out of their way and trampled them, not thinking twice about hurting people if it meant they could get what they wanted.
  - Bart was stuck in traffic. He just wanted his vehicle to move! Enraged at the situation, Bart pulled his car onto the shoulder and sped forward, not caring that he was clipping people's side mirrors as he tried to get ahead of the cars in front of him.

# Ego

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- The **ego** is 'that part of the id which has been **modified by the direct influence of the external world.**'

*(Freud, 1923, p. 25)*

- The **ego** develops to mediate between the unrealistic id and the external real world. It is the decision-making component of personality. Ideally, the **ego works by reason**, whereas the **id is chaotic and unreasonable.**



- The **ego operates according to the reality principle**, working out **realistic ways** of satisfying the id's demands, often compromising or postponing satisfaction to avoid negative consequences of society.
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- The **ego considers social realities and norms, etiquette and rules in deciding how to behave.**
  - Like the id, the **ego seeks pleasure** (i.e., tension reduction) and avoids pain, but unlike the id, the ego is concerned with **devising a realistic strategy to obtain pleasure**. The **ego has no concept of right or wrong**; something is **good** simply if it achieves its **end of satisfying without causing harm to itself or the id**.
  - Often **the ego is weak relative to the headstrong id**, and the best the ego can do is stay on, pointing the id in the right direction and claiming some credit at the end as if the action were its own.

- Freud made the analogy of the id being a horse while the ego is the rider. The ego is 'like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse.'

*(Freud, 1923, p. 15)*

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If the ego fails in its attempt to use the reality principle, and anxiety is experienced, **unconscious defense mechanisms** are employed, to help ward off unpleasant feelings (i.e., anxiety) or make good things feel better for the individual.

The ego engages in **secondary process thinking, which is rational, realistic, and orientated towards problem-solving**. If a plan of action does not work, then it is thought through again until a solution is found. This is known as reality testing and enables the person **to control their impulses and demonstrate self-control, via mastery of the ego**.



**EGO: Dealing with Reality** -The ego deals with reality, trying to meet the desires of the id in a way that is socially acceptable in the world. This may mean delaying gratification, and helping to get rid of the tension the id feels if a desire is not met right away. The ego recognizes that other people have needs and wants too, and that being selfish is not always good for us in the long run.

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- Examples-

-Imagine that you are stuck in a long meeting at work. You find yourself growing increasingly hungry as the meeting drags on. While the id might compel you to jump up from your seat and rush to the break room for a snack, the ego guides you to sit quietly and wait for the meeting to end. Instead of acting upon the primal urges of the id, you spend the rest of the meeting imagining yourself eating a cheeseburger. Once the meeting is finally over, you can seek out the object you were imagining and satisfy the demands of the id in a realistic and appropriate manner.

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- Sally was thirsty. However, she knew that her server would be back soon to refill her water glass, so she waited until then to get a drink, even though she really just wanted to drink from Mr. Smith's glass.
  - Even though Michael needed money, he decided not to steal the money from the cash register because he didn't want to get in trouble.
  - Mary really wanted to borrow her mom's necklace, but knew her mom would be angry if she took it without asking, so she asked her mom if she could wear it.
  - Hillary was so sweaty after her workout that she wanted to change her clothes right there by the car. However, she knew the other people around her would not approve, so she waited until she was in the restroom to change.



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- Katie's mom had given her \$25 to purchase groceries for dinner that night. At the mall, Katie saw shoes that she really wanted, and was tempted to use the money from her mom to make the purchase. However, if she spent the money on shoes, she wouldn't have enough to buy the groceries, so she decided she better not buy the shoes.
  - Tim really wanted to slug Mark for what he had just said. However, Tim knew if he hit Mark, he would be kicked off the baseball team, and since he loved baseball, he unclenched his fists and walked away.

# Superego

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- The superego incorporates the values and morals of society which are learned from one's parents and others. It develops around the age of 3 – 5 years during the phallic stage of **psychosexual development**.
- The **superego's function** is to **control the id's impulses**, especially those **which society forbids**, such as sex and aggression. It also has the function of **persuading the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection**.



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- The superego consists of two systems: **The conscience and the ideal self.** The **conscience can punish the ego** through causing **feelings of guilt.** For example, if the ego gives in to the id's demands, the superego may make the person feel bad through guilt.
  - **The ideal self (or ego-ideal) is an imaginary picture** of how you **ought to be**, and represents career aspirations, how to treat other people, and how to behave as a member of society.

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- The **superego** tries to **perfect and civilize our behavior**.
  - It works to **suppress all unacceptable urges of the id and struggles to make the ego act upon idealistic standards rather than upon realistic principles**.
  - The superego is **present in the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious**.



# Superego-Adding Morals

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- The superego **develops last**, and is based on **morals and judgments about right and wrong**.
- Even though the superego and the ego may **reach the same decision** about something, the superego's reason for that decision is **more based on moral values**, while the ego's decision is based more on **what others will think or what the consequences of an action could be**.

# Examples

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- Sarah knew that she could steal the supplies from work and no one would know about it. However, she knew that stealing was wrong, so she decided not to take anything even though she would probably never get caught.
- Maggie couldn't remember the answer to test question #12, even though she had studied. Nate was the smartest kid in the class, and from where Maggie sat, she could see his answers if she turned her head slightly. When Mrs. Archer turned her back, Maggie almost cheated, but her conscience stopped her because she knew it was wrong. Instead, Maggie took a guess at the answer and then turned in her paper.



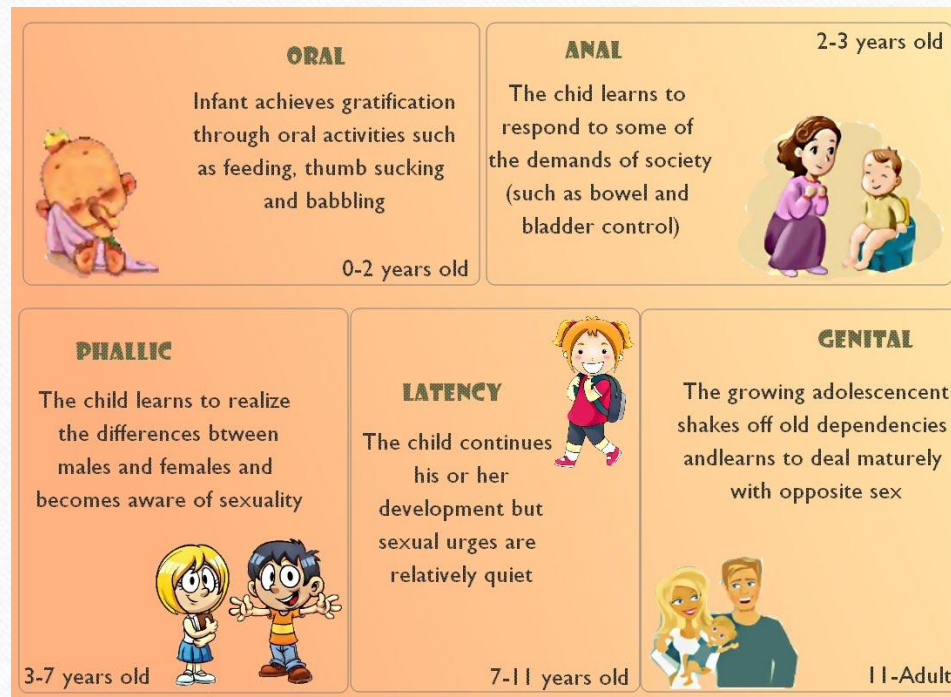
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- While away on business, Tom had many opportunities to be unfaithful to his wife. However, he knew the damage such behavior would have on his family, so made the decision to avoid the women who had expressed interest in him.
  - When Michael saw the \$5 bill lying on the floor with no one around it, he turned it into the school office in case anyone came looking for it. He wouldn't want to lose \$5, and hoped that whoever had lost it would ask about it in the office.
  - The cashier only charged the couple for one meal even though they had eaten two. They could have gotten away with only paying for one, but they pointed out the cashier's mistake and offered to pay for both meals. They wanted to be honest and they knew that the restaurant owner and employees needed to make a living.

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- On the playground, two kids were making fun of Joseph because he wore glasses. John was tempted to join in so that he could make himself look good, but when he thought about how bad Joseph must already feel, he knew that he couldn't.
  - Will had worked hard all season to break the school record in cross-country. During his last race he had the opportunity to cut a corner and therefore lower his time, because no officials were watching that part of the course. As much as he wanted to break the school record, Will knew he wouldn't feel good about himself if he cheated, so he stuck to the course and ran as fast as he could.



# Freud and Personality Development

## -Psychosexual Stages



## Freud & Personality Development

“personality forms during the first few years of life, rooted in unresolved conflicts of early childhood”

### Psychosexual Stages

**Oral** (0-18 mos) - centered on the mouth

**Anal** (18-36 mos) - focus on bowel/bladder elimination

**Phallic** (3-6 yrs) - focus on genitals/“Oedipus Complex”  
(*Identification & Gender Identity*)

**Latency** (6-puberty) - sexuality is dormant

**Genital** (puberty on) - sexual feelings toward others

Strong conflict can **fix a t e** an individual at Stages 1,2 or 3



**Table 1.2****Freud's Psychosexual Stages**

Psychosexual Stage	Period of Development	Description
Oral	Birth-1 year	The new ego directs the baby's sucking activities toward breast or bottle. If oral needs are not met appropriately, the individual may develop such habits as thumb sucking, fingernail biting, and pencil chewing in childhood and overeating and smoking in later life.
Anal	1-3 years	Toddlers and preschoolers enjoy holding and releasing urine and feces. Toilet training becomes a major issue between parent and child. If parents insist that children be trained before they are ready, or if they make too few demands, conflicts about anal control may appear in the form of extreme orderliness and cleanliness or messiness and disorder.
Phallic	3-6 years	As preschoolers take pleasure in genital stimulation, Freud's Oedipus conflict for boys and Electra conflict for girls arise: Children feel a sexual desire for the other-sex parent. To avoid punishment, they give up this desire and adopt the same-sex parent's characteristics and values. As a result, the superego is formed, and children feel guilty each time they violate its standards.
Latency	6-11 years	Sexual instincts die down, and the superego develops further. The child acquires new social values from adults and same-sex peers outside the family.
Genital	Adolescence	With puberty, the sexual impulses of the phallic stage reappear. If development has been successful during earlier stages, it leads to marriage, mature sexuality, and the birth and rearing of children. This stage extends through adulthood.

# Freud's Theories

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- **Oedipus complex**, in psychoanalytic theory, is a desire for sexual involvement with the parent of the opposite sex and a concomitant sense of rivalry with the parent of the same sex; a crucial stage in the normal developmental process.
- Sigmund Freud introduced the concept in his *Interpretation of Dreams* (1899).
- The term derives from the Theban hero Oedipus of Greek legend, who unknowingly slew his father and married his mother; its female analogue, the Electra complex, is named for another mythological figure, who helped slay her mother.



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- Freud attributed the **Oedipus complex** to children of about the **ages three to five**.
  - He said the **stage usually ended** when the child identified with the parent of the same sex and repressed its sexual instincts.
  - If previous relationships with the **parents were relatively loving and nontraumatic**, and if parental attitudes were **neither excessively prohibitive nor excessively stimulating**, the stage is passed through harmoniously.

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- In the presence of trauma, however, there occurs an “infantile neurosis” that is an important forerunner of similar reactions during the child’s adult life.
  - The superego, the moral factor that dominates the conscious adult mind, also has its origin in the process of overcoming the Oedipus complex.
  - Freud considered the reactions against the Oedipus complex the most important social achievements of the human mind.



# Oedipus

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- Oedipus was a mythical Greek king of Thebes.
- A tragic hero in Greek mythology, Oedipus accidentally fulfilled a prophecy that he would end up killing his father and marrying his mother, thereby bringing disaster to his city and family.
- The story of Oedipus is the subject of Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, which is followed in the narrative sequence by *Oedipus at Colonus* and then *Antigone*.
- Together, these plays make up Sophocles' three Theban plays. Oedipus represents two enduring themes of Greek myth and drama: the flawed nature of humanity and an individual's role in the course of destiny in a harsh universe.

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- In the best known version of the myth, Oedipus was born to King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes.
  - Laius wished to thwart the prophecy, so he sent a shepherd-servant to leave Oedipus to die on a mountainside.
  - However, the shepherd took pity on the baby and passed him to another shepherd who gave Oedipus to King Polybus and Queen Merope to raise as their own.
  - Oedipus learned from the oracle at Delphi of the prophecy that he would end up killing his father and marrying his mother but, unaware of his true parentage, believed he was fated to murder Polybus and marry Merope, so left for Thebes.
  - On his way he met an older man and killed him in a quarrel.



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- Continuing on to Thebes, he found that the king of the city (Laius) had been recently killed, and that the city was at the mercy of the Sphinx.
  - Oedipus answered the monster's riddle correctly, defeating it and winning the throne of the dead king – and the hand in marriage of the king's widow, who was also (unbeknownst to him) his mother Jocasta.
  - Years later, to end a plague on Thebes, Oedipus searched to find who had killed Laius, and discovered that he himself was responsible.
  - Jocasta, upon realizing that she had married her own son, hanged herself. Oedipus then seized two pins from her dress and blinded himself with them.
  - The legend of Oedipus has been retold in many versions, and was used by Sigmund Freud to name and give mythic precedent to the Oedipus complex.

# Electra Complex

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- In Neo-Freudian psychology, the **Electra complex**, as proposed by Carl Jung in his *Theory of Psychoanalysis*, is a girl's psychosexual competition with her mother for possession of her father.
- In the course of her psychosexual development, the complex is the girl's phallic stage; a boy's analogous experience is the Oedipus complex.



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- As a psychoanalytic term for daughter–mother psychosexual conflict, the Electra complex derives from the Greek mythological character Electra, who plotted matricidal revenge with Orestes, her brother, against Clytemnestra, their mother, and Aegisthus, their stepfather, for the murder of Agamemnon, their father (cf. *Electra*, by Sophocles).
  - Sigmund Freud developed the female aspects of the sexual development theory—describing the psychodynamics of a girl's sexual competition with her mother for sexual possession of the father—as the **feminine Oedipus attitude** and the **negative Oedipus complex**; yet it was his collaborator Carl Jung who coined the term *Electra complex* in 1913.

# Electra

## -Sophocles

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- Set in the city of Argos a few years after the Trojan War, the play tells of a bitter struggle for justice by Electra and her brother Orestes for the murder of their father Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and their stepfather Aegisthus.
- When King Agamemnon returns from the Trojan War, his wife Clytemnestra (who has taken Agamemnon's cousin Aegisthus as a lover) kills him.
- Clytemnestra believes the murder was justified, since Agamemnon had sacrificed their daughter Iphigenia before the war, as commanded by the gods.
- Electra, daughter of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, rescued her younger brother Orestes from her mother by sending him to Strophius of Phocis.
- The play begins years later when Orestes has returned as a grown man with a plot for revenge, as well as to claim the throne.



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- Orestes arrives with his friend Pylades, son of Strophius, and a pedagogue, i.e. tutor (an old attendant of Orestes, who took him from Electra to Strophius).
  - Their plan is to have the tutor announce that Orestes has died in a chariot race, and that two men (really Orestes and Pylades) are arriving shortly to deliver an urn with his remains.
  - Meanwhile, Electra continues to mourn the death of her father Agamemnon, holding her mother Clytemnestra responsible for his murder. When Electra is told of the death of Orestes her grief is doubled, but is to be short-lived.

- After a choral ode Orestes arrives, carrying the urn supposedly containing his ashes. He does not recognize Electra, nor she him.
  - He gives her the urn and she delivers a moving lament over it, unaware that her brother is in fact standing alive next to her.
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- Now realizing the truth, Orestes reveals his identity to his emotional sister. She is overjoyed that he is alive, but in their excitement they nearly reveal his identity, and the tutor comes out from the palace to urge them on.
  - Orestes and Pylades enter the house and slay Clytemnestra.
  - As Aegisthus returns home, they quickly put her corpse under a sheet and present it to him as the body of Orestes. He lifts the veil to discover who it really is, and Orestes then reveals himself.
  - They escort Aegisthus off set to be killed at the hearth, the same location Agamemnon was slain. The play ends here, before the death of Aegisthus is announced.



# Oedipus Complex- Films and Literature

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- This complex psychological phenomenon is not completely generalizable but is evident in some films which explored the theme, or insinuate it.

- **Psycho (1960)**

Hitchcock's revolutionary psychological thriller-horror

- **Mommy (2014)**

Xavier Dolan's most successful film till date

- **Only God Forgives (2013)**

Nicolas Winding Refn's follow up to his cult hit "Drive" is a Danish-French arthouse thriller

### **-The Grifters (1990)**

This neo-noir crime drama film directed by Stephen Frears, produced by Martin Scorsese, and written by Donald E. Westlake, based on Jim Thompson's pulp novel of the same name.

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### **-I'm Glad My Mother Is Alive (2009)**

This French Drama follows Thomas Jovet (Vincent Rottiers), and his younger brother, Patrick, who were given up for adoption by their birth mother when Thomas was 5-years-old.

### **-I Killed My Mother (2009)**

Xavier Dolan wrote the script for his directorial debut when he was just 16-years-old and directed it when he was 19-years-old. His Quebec semi-autobiographical explores the complex relationship between mother and son, especially as both of them get older.



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### **-Harold And Maude (1971)**

Hal Ashby's cult film revolves around the young and rich Harold Chasen (Bud Cort, who was 21-years-old at the time) whose obsession with death stems from his fear of life and aging. His time is spent attending strangers' funerals and staging elaborate and theatrical fake suicide attempts to attract his mother's (Vivian Pickle) attention.

### **- Hallam Foe (2007)**

Alternatively known as Mister Foe in the states, David Mackenzie's British drama based on Peter Jinks' novel follows Hallam Foe (Jamie Bell), a 17-year-old boy who spends most of his time spying on others from his tree house that is decorated with a huge wall-to-wall photograph of his beautiful deceased mother.

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**- New York Stories (Woody Allen's Segment: Oedipus Wrecks) (1989)**

‘New York Stories’ is an anthology film which consists of three short films that are thematically linked through New York City. The first is ‘Life Lessons’, directed by Martin Scorsese, the second is ‘Life Without Zoë’, directed by Francis Ford Coppola and written by Coppola and his daughter, Sofia Coppola. The last is ‘Oedipus Wrecks’, directed, written by and starring Woody Allen.

**-The Reader (2008)**

Neustadt, Germany, is the backdrop. The story is about 15-year-old Michael (David Kross – an older Michael is portrayed by Ralph Fiennes) and 36-year-old Hanna Schmitz (Kate Winslet in her Oscar winning role).



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### **-The Mother (2003)**

Reminiscent of Fassbinder's "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul", Roger Mitchell's fearless dark drama takes a deep look at a conventional British family drama that is anything but ordinary. It follows May (Anna Reid) whose husband dies on a family visit to London. After he dies, her life loses meaning as she seeps into the background of everyone else's busy lives, including her children's – Paula (Cathryn Bradshaw) and Bobby (Steven Mackintosh).

### **-Spider (2002)**

David Cronenberg's psychological thriller based on the novel of the same name by Patrick McGrath, who also wrote the screenplay, follows Dennis Cleg (Ralph Fiennes), a man who is at a halfway house for mentally disturbed people after being released from a mental institution. He starts to piece together the loose strands of memory he holds close and recreates them through his imagination.

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### **-The Living And The Dead (2006)**

Simon Rumley's underrated and fast-paced British thriller follows an unfortunate family in a gigantic country manor house in a series of time-lapses, blinking match-cuts and tragic misunderstandings.

### **-A Dangerous Method (2011)**

David Cronenberg's historical drama adapted by writer Christopher Hampton from his 2002 stage play *The Talking Cure*, which was based on the 1993 non-fiction book 'A Most Dangerous Method: The story of Jung, Freud, and Sabina Spielrein'. It focuses on the turbulent relationships between Carl Jung (Michael Fassbender), founder of analytical psychology; Sigmund Freud (Viggo Mortensen), founder of the discipline of psychoanalysis; and Sabina Spielrein (Keira Knightley), initially a patient of Jung and later a physician and one of the first female psychoanalysts.



### **-Peeping Tom (1960)**

Michael Powell's British thriller horror film written by the World War II cryptographer and polymath Leo Marks, revolves around a serial killer who murders women and films their dying expressions of terror. The film was incredibly controversial and received very harsh criticism by critics – which destroyed Powell's career as a director in the United Kingdom. However, it later attracted a cult following.

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Covertly filming his victims with a camera hidden under his coat, the film slips into the point of view of the camera viewfinder, creating a disturbing perspective that makes the audience a participant in his violent acts.

Mark is a shy, reclusive young man who hardly ever socializes, living in the house of his late father, who is revealed to have used him as a guinea pig for his psychological experiments on fear and the nervous system.

He kept his son under constant watch, filming his every move – including his reaction to when his mother was on her deathbed. His bedroom was filled with cameras that spied on him and thus led to his son's obsession with photography and capturing the last breath of a person's life on film – just like his mother's.

Peeping Tom has been praised for its psychological complexity especially in the Freudian relationships between the protagonist, his father, and his victims. It explores sexual repression, patriarchal obsession, voyeuristic pleasure and perverse violence in a way that was never explored in such a way before.

Happy Reading

