

Week 11

Theories of Personality

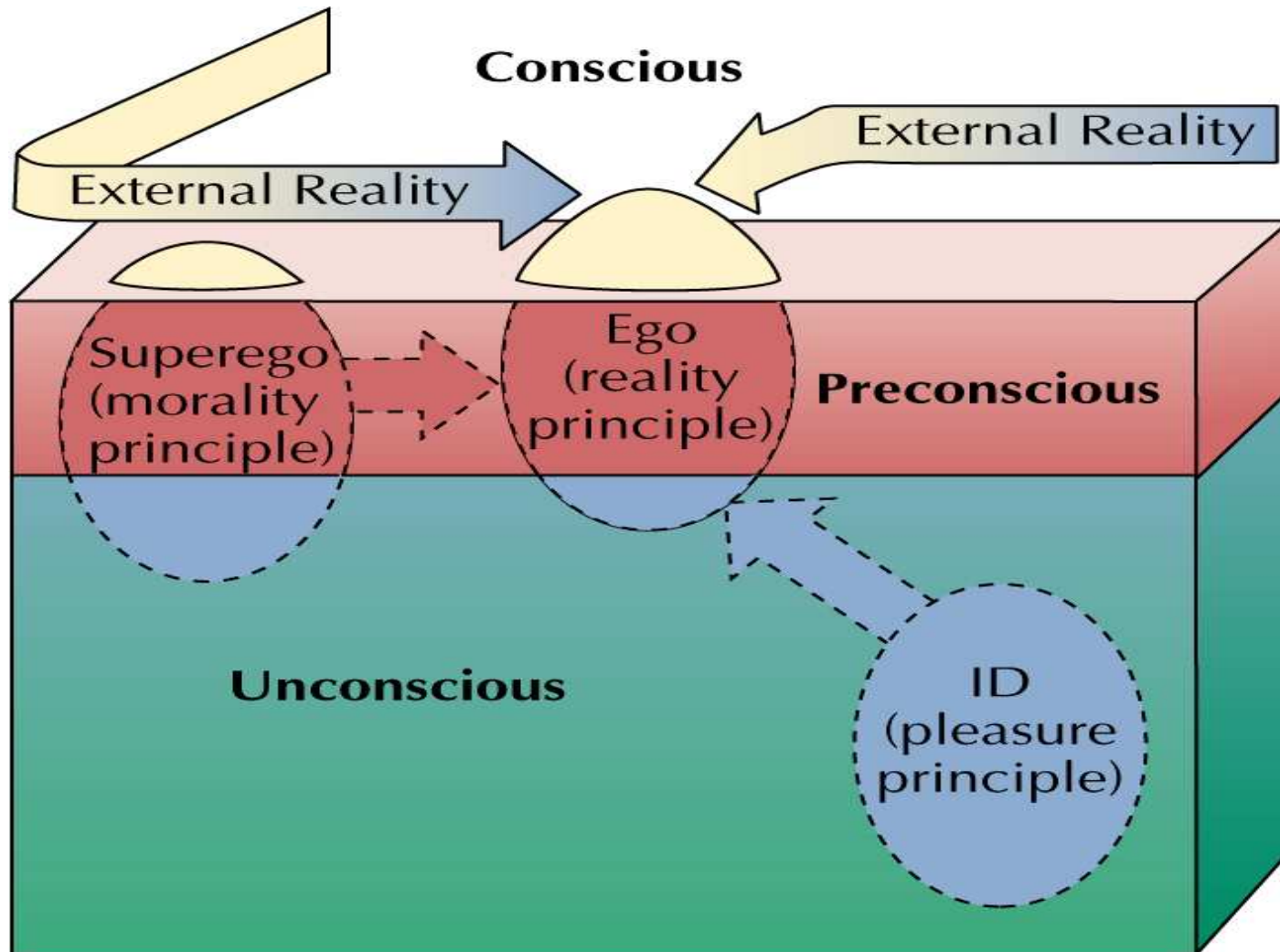
Theories of Personality

- Personality
 - consists of all of the relatively stable and distinctive styles of thought, behaviour, and emotional response that characterize a person's adaptations to surrounding circumstances

Psychoanalytic Theory

- **Psychoanalytic theory**, as devised by Freud, attempts to explain personality on the basis of unconscious mental forces
- Key points
 1. Levels of consciousness
 2. Personality is made up of multiple structures, some of which are unconscious
 4. Stages of personality development (Psychosexual)
 5. We have impulses that cause us anxiety; our personality develops defense mechanisms to protect against anxiety.

Levels of Consciousness



Structure of the Personality

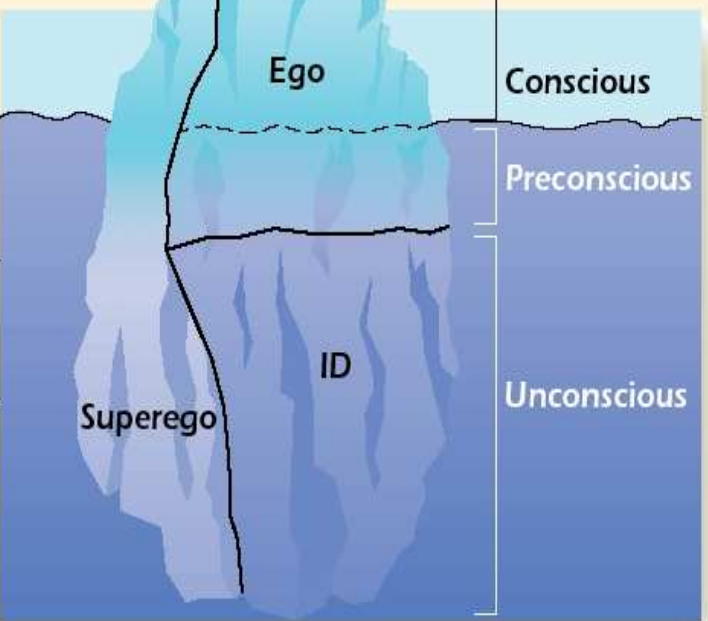
- ID: Impulsive and unconscious part of the psyche.
 - Operates on pleasure principle.
- EGO: Mediator between ID and Superego
 - Operates on reality principle.
- SUPEREGO: Represents the ideals and moral standards of society

Psychoanalytic Theory: Concept Review

TABLE 15.1
CONCEPT REVIEW

Personality Structures of Psychodynamic Theory. According to Freud, the id, the ego, and the superego are the bases for personality development and expression.

| Structure | Levels of thought | Operating principle | Description |
|-----------|---|---------------------|---|
| Id | Unconscious; primary process | Pleasure | Source of psychic energy and instinctual impulses |
| Ego | Largely conscious; secondary process | Reality | Mediator among the id, the superego, and external reality |
| Superego | Largely unconscious; | Idealism | Comprises the <i>conscience</i> (prohibitions, based on punishments) and the <i>ego ideal</i> (ideal behaviors, based on rewards) |



Personality Structures of Psychodynamic Theory. According to Freud, the id, the ego, and the superego are the basis for personality development and expression.

Stages of Psychosexual Development

- Involves movement of psychic energy across stages with a certain fixation at each stage.
- Stages
 - Oral stage (first year of life)
 - Sexual pleasure is focused on the mouth's activities.
 - Anal stage (second year of life)
 - Sexual pleasure is focused on bowel control.
 - Phallic stage (3rd to 6th year of life)
 - process of identifying with same-sex parent after resolution of Oedipal conflict as a result of castration anxiety.
 - Latency (from age 5-6 until puberty)
 - Sexual impulses are repressed while child learns cognitive and social skills.
 - Genital Stage (from puberty on)
 - Sexual pleasure focused on autoeroticism and intercourse.

Anxiety and Defense Mechanisms

- Anxiety
 - the inner struggle that arises when the ego realizes that the expression of an id impulse will lead to some kind of harm, and/or that the superego is making an impossible demand



Defense Mechanisms

- **Defense mechanisms** refer to unconscious mental processes that protect the conscious person from developing anxiety
 - Sublimation: person channels energy from unacceptable impulses to create socially acceptable accomplishments
 - Denial: person refuses to recognize reality
 - Projection: person attributes their own unacceptable impulses to others
 - Repression: anxiety-evoking thoughts are pushed into the unconscious

Criticisms of Psychoanalytic Theory

- Theory is difficult to test
- Theory places an overemphasis on unconscious forces
- Inadequate evidence to support the theory (only a few case studies)
- Sexism may have tainted the theory
- Lack of cross-cultural support for theory

Challenges to Freud: NeoFreudians

- Alfred Adler (*Individual Psychology*)
 - Emphasized social urges as opposite to sexual urges
 - Talked about conscious rather than unconscious
 - Origins of anxiety: organ defect
 - Role of birth order in personality development

Neo-Freudians (cont.)

- Carl Jung (*Analytic Psychology*)
 - More optimistic view of unconscious
 - Collective unconscious
 - Personality development: life-long process
 - Key to mental health: harmonious coexistence of opposing forces.

Neo-Freudians (cont.)

- Karen Horney
 - Emphasized cultural perspective over biological perspective
 - Basic anxiety: result of insufficient nurturing and protection by parents.
 - Neurosis: develops from difficulty in coping with basic anxiety
 - Moving toward others (approval seeking)
 - Moving against others (find security in dominating others)
 - Moving away from others (become withdrawn)

Object Relations Theory

- Came out of people's concern about self-esteem.
 - “How does a person develop a sense of self and then attempt to protect its integrity?”
- Experience with important others (“objects”) in past are represented in present self.
- Nurturing parent represents nurturing part of self.
- Human motivation: emphasizes “relationship seeking” over gratifying sexual urges.
- Key to mental health: develop trusting relationships with good boundaries.

Trait Theories

- Trait
 - any relatively enduring way in which one individual differs from another
 - relatively stable over time
 - consistent over situations
 - individual differences are the result of differences in the strength and combination of traits

Trait Theories

- Allport's trait approach
 - central traits
- Cattell's research approach
 - factor analysis
- Eysenck's dimensions of personality

The “Big 5”

- Modern personality research argues for 5 basic personality traits (OCEAN)
 - Openness: whether a person is open to new experiences
 - Conscientiousness: whether a person is disciplined and responsible
 - Extroversion: whether a person is sociable, outgoing and affectionate
 - Agreeableness: whether a person is cooperative, trusting, and helpful
 - Neuroticism: whether a person is unstable and prone to insecurity

Social Cognitive Theories

- Observational learning
 - self-efficacy
- Schemas
- Tasks
- Strategies
- Self-schemas

Humanistic Theories

- Rogers' Theory of the self
 - self-actualization
 - conditional positive regard
 - conditions of worth

Abraham Maslow (1908-1970)

- Argued that people are “basically good”
 - Critical of psychoanalytic view
- Everyone has an impulse to fulfill their potential (self-actualization).
- Psychopathology results from societies “twisting and frustration” of this impulse.
- Hierarchy of needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Biological Approaches

- The evolutionary approach
 - must consider the adaptive tasks human beings face over time
 - historical context
 - ontogenetic context
 - immediate situational inputs

Biological Approaches

- The behavioural genetic approach
 - seeks to explain individual variations of human behaviour
 - genetic factors shape experiences
 - Big Five factors usually display heritabilities between 30 and 60%