

Chapter 2: Freud's psychoanalytic perspective I: overview

Facts about Freud

- Freud is most influential both inside and outside of psych
- No personality theorist has had more experimental tests devoted to their theory
- He is committed to realism, materialism and determinism, interactionalism

Three blows to our self-importance

1. Copernicus showed that the sun does not rotate around the world and we are not the center of the universe
2. Darwin said we evolved like animals
3. Freud said we are not in control of our own minds

Myths about Freud

- Cocaine addict
- He believes everything has an underlying sexual meaning
- Findings based on limited samples
 - His samples went into the 100's and people from many walks of life
- Freud's theory has been discredited
- Every dream represents a wish
- Theory is unscientific because it is untestable

Overview of Freud's general theory

Five central elements

1. Motivation via a plurality of biological instinctual drives

- Instinctual drives correspond to basic physiological needs
- Primary drives of hunger, thirst and sexual
- Pleasure principle - These drives seek gratification immediately
- Reality principle – cognition
- Reality principle acts in service of pleasure principle, it does not replace it because you need cognition to get what you want – i.e. you need to know where it is and what you have to do to get it
- Freud describes instinctual drives deterministically – in terms of their physiological sources
- Drives are the biological engines of personality
- Freud's theory of motivation is pluralistic - driven by more than one motivational force

- The mind is not a unity – it is a society of competing impulses

2. Relatively long period of infantile dependence

- Compared to other animals, we are dependent on others for a long time of our infancy
- What happens during this time leaves a significant mark on us
- Freud believes in an interaction of nature and nurture – he is an interactionalist

- Primary objects – increased importance of people
- Notions of love and need begin here
- Influence of environment becomes important

3. Barriers of socialisation

- Socialization involves the primary caregivers rewarding some drive activities and punishing others, thereby setting drives against each other.
- Child's sexual and aggressive behaviors typically prohibited

4. Internal conflict and repression

- The setting of drives against each other during the process of socialisation constitutes internal conflict.
 - **Id:** Socially unacceptable impulses are repressed (i.e., pushed into the unconscious)
 - **Ego:** Socially acceptable impulses remain conscious
 - **Super ego:** Part of the process of giving up socially unacceptable impulses
 - Just because something is unconscious, does not mean it doesn't influence us
 - Defence mechanisms are a way of protecting ourselves from our anxiety and impulses and wishes

5. Compromise formations/symbolic substitutes

- Compromise formations: The results of competing aspects
- Search for substitute activities that lead to gratification which is acceptable
 - o Ie instead of hitting your boss you "accidentally" spill coffee on him
- Distinguishes between primary (direct) and secondary (indirect) gratification
- Everything we do is direct or indirect gratification of the primary drives

Some implications: Freud as iconoclast

- Iconoclast: destroyer of icons
- He challenged many of our illusions including:
 - o We have free will – he argues for determinism
 - o We always know what's going on in our minds – he argues for unconscious and repression
 - o Children are free from suffering – he argues that children suffer and have strong impulses
 - o There are gods that protect us – he argues that our long period of infantile dependence makes us create gods
 - o Love is free from hate and ambivalence – we are more likely to be hostile towards someone we love when they disappoint us than someone we don't love
 - o There are objective moral values outside the conventions and creations

of societies – he suggests that societies determine what is good, bad, right, wrong and these values vary from society to society