

# FREUD AND THE UNCONSCIOUS MIND

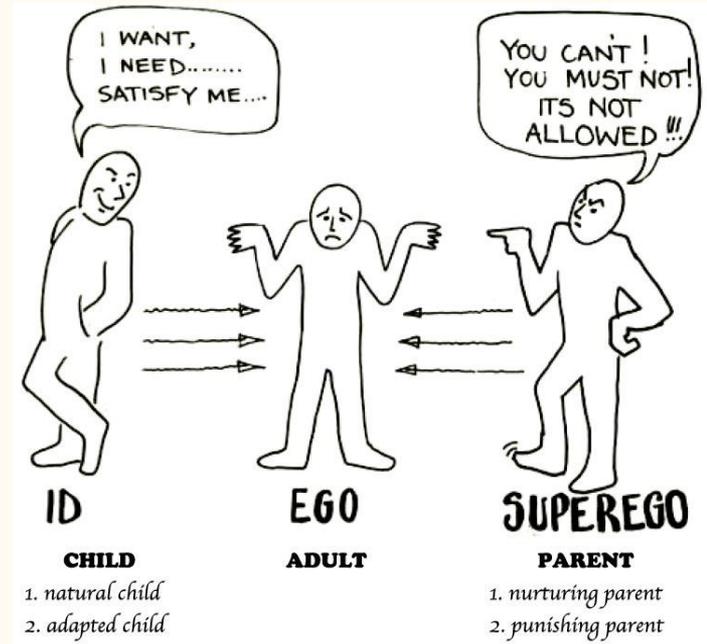
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# Treating “nervous diseases”

- Freud started in psychology by treating “nervous diseases” (i.e. psychological problems/distress)
- Mostly wealthy women experiencing speech and feeling loss, paralysis, etc. □  
“hysteria” relates to what were believed to be “disturbances of the womb”
  - Probably related to extreme positions of restriction for wealthy women
- Used hypnosis to uncover past trauma that the patient had forgotten
  - “This theory that people could suffer from an unconscious idea, an emotion-charged memory that they were not aware of, but from which they could be relieved by bringing it into consciousness, is the germ from which Freud’s psychoanalysis developed”

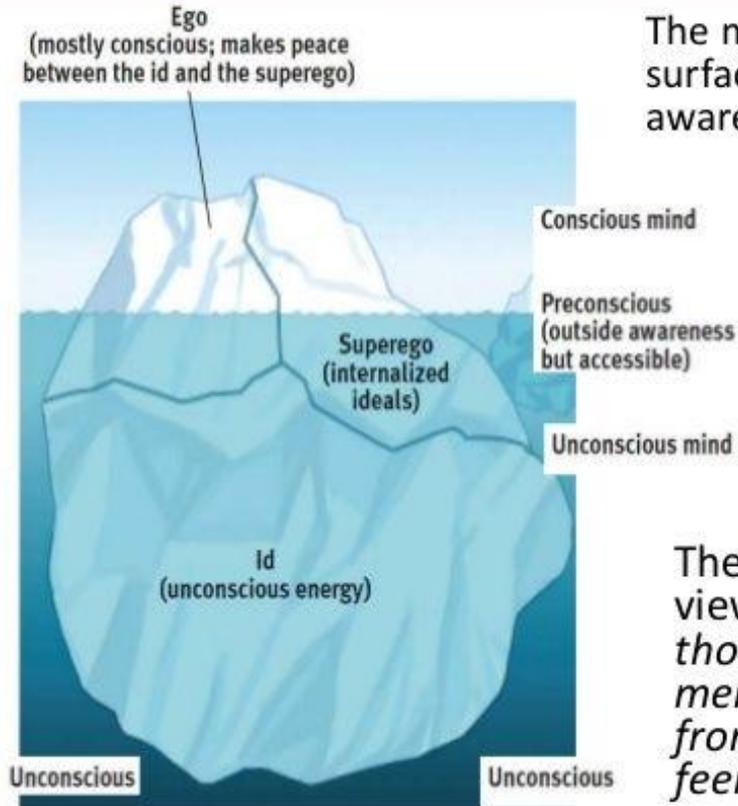
# Id, Ego, and Superego

- **Id:** animal, libidinal urges, desires, childlike, untamed, wild
- **Superego:** society, authority, “Thou Shalt”, laws, propriety, manners, politeness
- **Ego:** the synthesis of the two → the way the personality develops based on influences from id and superego
- **Neurosis:** the overpowering of the superego, repression of the id



# Levels of consciousness

## Freud's Personality/Mind Iceberg



The mind is mostly below the surface of conscious awareness

**Personality** develops from the efforts of our **ego**, our *rational self*, to resolve tension between our **id**, based in *biological drives*, and the **superego**, *society's rules and constraints*.

The **Unconscious**, in Freud's view: A *reservoir of thoughts, wishes, feelings, and memories, that are hidden from awareness because they feel unacceptable*.

# Sex and death – the two drives

- Most of his life, Freud believed that sex was our primary unconscious motivator
  - Initially believed all neurosis had sexual origin
  - Many patients recalled “infantile seduction” (child sexual abuse)



- *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: introduces the death drive, “Thanatos”
  - Attempts to explain self destructive behaviors

# Foundations

- Rejects the metaphysical and the spiritual □ wants to explore human psychology scientifically
- Leslie Stevenson: “Thoroughly steeped in the confidence of post-Darwinian biology, Freud accepted that human beings are a species of animal, albeit of a special sort. With this wide knowledge of biological science and his thorough training in physiological research, he assumed everything that happens in our *bodies* is determined by the laws of physics, chemistry, and biology. He has been described as a ‘biologist of the mind’ assuming that all our *mental* events and processes are equally determined by preceding causes”.

# Mental determinism

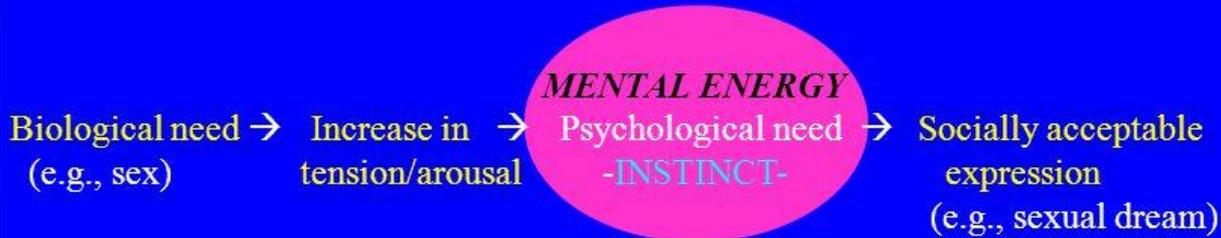
- Determinism: every event has a preceding cause
  - Freud applied this to the realm of the mental
- Accidental thoughts or behavior (e.g. slip of the tongue or dreams) thought to have no significance □ but Freud argued they have hidden mental causes
- Denial of free will □ there are hidden unknown causes influencing our decisions, actions, thoughts, choice
- These determining factors are individual and psychological □ rooted in biological drives (relationship between the id and the superego)

# PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

There is not such thing as random behavior; all our acts are determined by internal forces (wishes, fears) related to two basic instincts

**INSTINCTS:** LIFE (libido) & DEATH (aggression)

Mental representation of a biological need; Energy of the psyche



# A new scientific theory of dreaming

“But since the downfall of the mythological hypothesis an interpretation of the dream has been wanting. The conditions of its origin; its relationship to our psychical life when we are awake; its independence of disturbances which, during the state of sleep, seem to compel notice; its many peculiarities repugnant to our waking thought; the incongruence between its images and the feelings they engender; then the dream's evanescence, the way in which, on awakening, our thoughts thrust it aside as something bizarre, and our reminiscences mutilating or rejecting it—all these and many other problems have for many hundred years demanded answers which up till now could never have been satisfactory. Before all there is the question as to the meaning of the dream, a question which is in itself double-sided. There is, firstly, the psychical significance of the dream, its position with regard to the psychical processes, as to a possible biological function; secondly, has the dream a meaning—can sense be made of each single dream as of other mental syntheses?”

— Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

# Dreams and Sense Perception

“Properly speaking, the unconscious is the real psychic; its inner nature is just as unknown to us as the reality of the external world, and it is just as imperfectly reported to us through the data of consciousness as is the external world through the indications of our sensory organs.”

— Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*

- Dreams recuperated as a source of knowledge
- Empiricism: knowledge of outer world
- Dreams: knowledge of inner world

# The importance of dream content

“By exposing the hidden dream-thoughts, we have confirmed in general that the dream does continue the motivation and interests of waking life, for dream-thoughts are engaged only with what seems to be important and of great interest to us.”

— Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*