

A Critical Appraisal of Freud's Ideas on Man and Personality

Dr. Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak

Dr. Nik Ahmad Hisham

Abstract

Since ancient times, scholars in the West have shown great enthusiasm towards understanding the subject on man and personality. Driven by this zeal, there appeared a multitude of theories discussing man and his nature. Though the various concepts on man showcased by the scholars complemented one another, at times their ideas also contradicted and discredited one another. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) the founding father of psychoanalysis presented to the world a concept on man and his personality which remains controversial to the present day. In realizing the fact that Freud's ideas have a huge impact on modern psychology and people in the West, the researchers of this study would like to revisit some of his ideas on man and personality. Upon making an exposition of his ideas, the researchers too would like to carry out an appraisal on Freud and to identify some of the underlying factors that led him towards conceptualizing a theory on man which is not only degrading to man's position as the most intelligent of God's creation but also an unprecedented one in the history of modern psychology.

Keywords: Critical Appraisal, Freud, Ideas, Man and Personality

Introduction

In the wake of a divergent theory existing on man, this research is propelled to revisit some of Freud's ideas on man and personality development. Due to the controversy that surrounds his theory on personality, within the confines of this research, the researchers will incorporate some discussion on the interplay of the psychic forces namely; id, ego and superego, as explained by Freud in his theory on personality development. It is thought that such a discussion is crucial in the proper understanding of his ideas. Apart from that, the researchers also intend to make an exposition of the various developmental stages described by Freud in his theory on personality. Since every theory has some underlying factors that influence the mind of the scholars in the conceptualization of their theories, this research would like to trace some of the factors that influenced Freud's mind in providing a theory on personality which is not only controversial but unprecedented in the annals of Western psychology.

Freud's Concept on Man

Contrary to the image of man explained in the Old and New Testaments, Freud gave a negative

image of man which says that man is not very different from the rest of the animal kingdom. He is of the opinion that man is an intellectual beast

doomed for destruction. His line of thought on man seems parallel to what has been illustrated by Darwin in his 'On the Origin of Species'¹ first published in 1859. Upon reading Freud, one would discover that his concept on man is one which is pessimistic and deterministic at the same time.² His pessimistic views on man are based on his assumption that man is evil and selfish by nature.

Freud's concept is deterministic in the sense that he thought every individual is being chained to the psychosexual developments of his or her life. According to him, man is no more than an animal enslaved to his sexual impulses. He further thought that man is controlled by his libidinal impulses and therefore should be un-socialized and irrational in his behavior. As such, Freud believed that man has no freedom to cut loose from the shackles of his psychosexual development. As a result of not having the freedom of choice, man's behaviour is determined by the warring parties of his psyche; namely the id, ego and superego.

An investigation into Freud's structural model on the human psyche reveals the fact that he believed man undergoes endless tension, stress, conflict, dilemma, chaos, and a whole range of psychopathological illnesses due to the turbulence created by the forces that reside within the human psyche.³ Man, according to Freud, is driven by two types of instincts. One is the life

instinct, which he called the Eros, and the other is the death instinct known as the Thanatos. The life instinct represents all that is vital for the survival of man on earth; like hunger, thirst and sex. The life instinct functions by using a form of energy called libido. With regards to the death instinct Freud referred it to all acts of violence, aggression, war and destruction caused to human lives. On the overall, he painted a mental picture for those immersed in his thoughts that human beings are caught in an ongoing conflict between their basic sexual and aggressive needs on the one side and the demands of the society on the other.⁴

Personality Development

Through his theory on personality, Freud explained to the world that the human personality develops through a series of reactions over a period of six years during early childhood development. This period is crucial as it leaves an imprint on the adult personality later on in life. Unlike the other schools, in Freud's psychoanalysis, this developmental stage is called the psychosexual development. Being influenced by the thermodynamic principles, Freud viewed human beings as energy systems. As such, the dynamics of personality consist in the distribution of energy to the three psychic components: the id, ego and the superego. Due to the fact that, the amount of energy is limited,

¹ Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

² Gerald Corey, *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy* (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1986), p.12.

³ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Human Nature: A Comparative Study between Western and Islamic Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 1997), p.160.

⁴ R.L. George & T.S. Cristiani, *Counseling: Theory and Practice* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), p.41.

there happens to be a power struggle in order to gain control of the psychic energy.⁵

Besides the above, Freud's psychoanalytical school of psychology believes that in order to understand personality in totality; one has to expose what is hidden in the unconscious. This effort of knowing the unconscious is not an easy task because in most instances the unconscious tries to present itself in a disguised manner. The reason for the unconscious to disguise itself is mainly due to fact that much of its contents relate to many of the repressed painful or upsetting events that have occurred during early childhood. Though such is the nature of the unconscious, access to the contents of the unconscious can be made through the medium of dream interpretation, analyzing slips of the tongue and fantasies.⁶

In Freud's view, the unconscious part of the human psyche is the fountain from which the personality of an individual emanates. To him, the conscious part of the human personality is just a small piece of a total picture of an individual which is yet to be explored. What lies below the surface of the conscious is the region of the unconscious. Freud further believed that among the different levels of consciousness of the human mind, the unconscious plays a major role in the formation of the human behaviour and personality. According to him, the human personality in the

actual sense is something that lies below the level of human awareness. By this, what Freud meant to say is that the true personality of an individual lies in the region of the unconscious. In addition to this, Freud is of the contention that the answers to most important causative factors of an individual's behaviour can be found in the realm of the unconscious. As such, he believed that the personality can only be studied by probing and exploring the contents of the unconscious.⁷

In his theory, Freud further explained that personality is a product or rather an outcome of a tense situation that occurs in the human psyche. The tense situation described by Freud is caused by the three components of the human psyche which are opposed to one another. Being opposed and warring at the same time towards one another it causes them to strive for a domineering position, one that will gain control of the human psyche. The three warring components of the human psyche are the id, ego and superego. Knowing the nature and characteristics of the three components of the human psyche as described by Freud is very essential in understanding his concept on the human personality development.

Before advancing any further on the discussion on id, ego and superego, the researchers intend to clarify some information on the origin of these jargon used by Freud. Actually, the term id, ego

⁵ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Contribution of Iqbal's Dynamic Personality Theory to Islamic Psychology: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud and Selected Mainstream Western Psychology* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 2011), pp. 320-322.

⁶ Roberts S. Feldman & Joel A. Feinman, *Who You Are: Personality and its Development* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1992), pp. 21-31

⁷ Robert D. Nye, *Three Psychologies: Perspectives from Freud, Skinner and Rogers* (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1986), pp. 12-15.

and superego are not really words coined by Freud but rather they are words used by his translator by the name of James Strachey, who translated his works from the German language into English. Originally Freud used words like “*das Es*” for id, “*das-Ich*” for ego and “*das Uber-Ich*” for superego. The corresponding meanings for the three words in English will be “the It”, “the I” and the “Over-I”. As explained earlier on, much of Freud’s ideas on the conscious and unconscious are nothing more than some borrowed ideas which he further researched and conceptualized to provide a comprehensive explanation on the human psyche.⁸

Id

In Freud’s view, the id of the human psyche forms the innate part of an individual’s personality. Every individual is born with the id. As such, the innate component of human beings finds expression through the activities of the id. The main aim of the id is the preservation of the organism which is carried out through the gratification of its innate needs. Driven by impulses, the id cares less for the protection of the individual. In getting its wishes fulfilled it does not take precaution for the survival of the individual. In the haste for gratification it may lead an individual to clash with reality, the external world and even may cause death to an individual.

⁸ See Wikipedia, Id, Ego, and Super-ego (Retrieved: 5th March 2009), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/superego>.

⁹ Santokh Singh, *Limitations of Freud’s Psychology* (New Delhi: Munahiran Manoharlal, 1985).p.6.

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (James

The entire energy of the mental life of an individual is stored in the id.⁹

In describing the nature of the id, this was what Freud said in his ‘New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis’¹⁰ and later in ‘The Essentials of Psychoanalysis’:

It is the dark, inaccessible part of our personality. What little we know of it we have learnt from our study of the dream-work and of the construction of neurotic symptoms, most of this is of a negative character and can be described as contrast to the ego. We approach the id with analogies: we call it a chaos, a cauldron full of seething excitations... It is filled with energy reaching it from the instincts, but it has no organization, produces no collective will, but only a striving to bring above the satisfaction of the instinctual needs subject to the observance of the pleasure principle.¹¹

The id which forms the first part of the human psyche acts as the basic structure for the human personality development. It is largely buried in the unconscious region of the human psyche. The id forms the first part of the human psyche. Freud who called it as “*das Es*” had borrowed this term from Georg Groddeck (1866-1934) who in turn had taken it from the German philosopher, Nietzsche (1844-1900). In his philosophical writings, Nietzsche had used this jargon to explain the impersonal part of human nature. As for Freud, the id describes the dark and inaccessible part of the human personality. To him, the id is seen as the cauldron full of seething excitations. Freud through many of his works

Strachey,Trans.)(London:The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-analysis,1933).

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, James Strachey, Anna Freud, *The Essentials of Psycho Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1986), p.498.

contends that the contents of the id can be made available or manifest; when one is dreaming, through slip of the tongue, through neurotic symptoms and also during a psychotherapy session. With regard to the contents of the id, Freud thinks they are negative in character in comparison to that of the ego. As to its function in the human psyche, it stands directly opposite to what the superego does.¹²

In examining the characteristics of the id one would arrive at the understanding that the id largely lies in the unconscious region of the human psyche. It forms the original system of the human personality. An individual is all id at birth before his other components of his psyche come into existence, namely the ego and superego. This situation explains that, the mind of a new born infant who is all id-ridden during birth demands for an immediate gratification of its needs when it is hungry and cleaning up when soiled. Being first to exist it serves as the primary source of psychic energy. In its nature, it lacks organization and always in the pursuit of pleasure seeking and by all means avoiding pain. In seeking pleasure and excitement it behaves as the spoilt brat of the personality, blindly and insistently demanding what it wants without taking into consideration of the desires of the superego. As such, it has no moral sense of judgment in deciding what is good and bad. As and when a tension is created in the human psyche it quickly functions to dispose or get rid of it immediately and wishes to return to a

homeostatic state. Being selfish in its principle the id acts in an illogical manner without taking heed of the things which have moral and religious values. Being driven by the pleasure principle, the id does not mature and remains as the immature and uncivilized component of the personality all throughout one's life. Its perpetual state of craving for pleasure makes it the seat of instincts.¹³

In addition to the above, the id as one of the components of the human psyche is responsible for demanding the human body to be provided with its basic needs such as water, food, sex and other basic impulses. Its existence is a timeless one which does not take into consideration of the immediate physical and social environment in which an individual lives. It is also seen as the warehouse from where an individual derives his limitless libido or instincts. Basically, the id's instincts can be classified into two contrasting categories known as the "life instinct" and "death instinct". The former is seen as a vital force responsible in calling for a pleasurable living such as eating, procreation, etc. While the latter calls for a termination of an individual's life by suggesting that death will end one's suffering in life. The death instinct is also seen as something that calls for the destruction and aggression in human lives.

¹² Sigmund Freud & Peter Gay, *The Ego and the Id* (London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.1989a), pp.17-20, Michael Jacobs, *Sigmund Freud* (London: Sage Publications, 1991), pp.57-62.

¹³ Gerald Corey, Op.Cit., 1986,pp.12-13. Wikipedia, Id, Ego and Super-ego (Retrieved: 5th March 2009, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/superego>.

Ego

In describing how the ego develops as the second component or apparatus of the human psyche, Freud gave the following explanation:

Under the influence of the external world which surrounds us, one portion of the id has undergone a special development. From what was originally a cortical layer, provided with organs for receiving stimuli and with apparatus for protection against excessive stimulation, a special organization has arisen which henceforward acts as an intermediary between the id and the external world. This region of our mental life has been given the name of ego.¹⁴

The id which forms the beginning of the mental life of an individual due to the mounting pressure from the external world may cause some part of its unconscious material to develop into a preconscious material. As a result, of this development the ego emerges. Propelled by the reality principle, the ego though seeks gratification; it takes into account the demands of the external world. In getting its gratification, the ego discovers the most favourable and the least dangerous method to get its will fulfilled. Due to this quality of the ego, it uses logical thinking in blocking some of the demands of the id. What is blocked of the contents of the id, do not stay blocked forever, except the ego allows them to manifest at an appropriate time and manner, and at times in a disguised manner. In describing this nature of the ego, Freud explained:

As regards internal events, in relation to the id, it performs that task by gaining control over the demands of the instincts, by deciding

whether they are to be allowed satisfaction, by postponing that satisfaction to times and circumstances favourable in the external world or by suppressing their excitations entirely.¹⁵

We have formed the idea that in each individual there is a coherent organization of mental processes; and we call this his ego. It is to this ego that consciousness is attached; the ego controls the approaches to motility—that is, to the discharge of excitations into the external world; it is the mental agency which supervises all its own constituent processes, and which goes to sleep at night, though even then it exercises the censorship on dreams.¹⁶

In Freud's view, the ego as the second component of the human psyche does not come to exist during birth but it is something that begins to develop after the existence of the id. He further believed that the ego is partially formed from part of the id but it modifies itself to suit the needs of the external world. Due to the reason it originates from the id, it borrows the energy from the id. Propelled by the reality principle it functions to ward off the unacceptable and reckless impulses of the id that contravene the norms and standards set by the society. It acts as the 'peace-maker' or the 'policeman' of the psyche in reducing the tension that arises due to conflict of interest that goes on between the id on one hand and the superego and the external world on the other.¹⁷ (Jacob: 1991). A more precise explanation on the characteristics and functions performed by the ego in human psyche has been given by Freud in his book 'The Ego and the Id':

The ego seeks to bring the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavours to substitute the

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Nandor Fodor & Frank Gaynor eds.)(New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p.65.

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud in William W. Meissner, *Freud and Psychoanalysis* (Indiana: University of North Dame Press, 2000), p.165.

¹⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Op.Cit.*, 1989a, p.8

¹⁷ Micheal Jacobs, *Op. Cit.*, 1991, pp.57-60.

reality principle for the pleasure principle which reigns unrestrictedly in the id. For the ego, perception plays the part which in the id falls to instinct. The ego represents what may be called reasons and common sense, in contrast to the id, which contains the passions. All this falls into line with popular distinctions which we are all familiar with; at the same time, however, it is only to be regarded as holding good on the average or ideally.¹⁸

Compared to the id, the ego is rational and realistic in conducting its role as the peace-maker. In the human psyche, it plays a dominant role by employing logical thinking in formulating action plans that can satisfy the irrational demands of the id and the unrealistic and high level of moral standards set by the superego. In describing the ego's relationship with the id, Freud provided the following analogy as to how the two are related:

Thus in its relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with the difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go; so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id's will into action as if it were its own.¹⁹

From the above quote, one can sense that the ego as a mediator among the id, the superego and external world, functions by using the borrowed energy from the id. In the personified form it becomes a slave to the three masters it has to serve. Among the three, it somehow becomes more loyal to the id by allowing some of its demands to materialise. The superego which has a watchful eye on the ego will punish the ego

on its negligence with feelings of guilt and anxiety. Further information derived from Freud's theory of personality describes that the other functions of the ego are to be in charge of the defence, perceptual, intellectual, cognitive and executive duties of the human mind. Besides that, it has the qualities to judge, tolerate, conduct reality-testing, control plan, defend, synthesize information, employ intellectual thinking, and to act as a storehouse of memory. On its role in maintaining a balanced state of the human psyche the ego as stated by Freud, allows some of the aggressive and wishful demands of the id to manifest by using its defence mechanisms. The manner in which the ego allows the demands of the id to manifest its will is in a disguised or indirect manner that uses any one of its defence mechanisms. Among the defence mechanisms employed by the ego of an individual, as identified by Freud are: denial, displacement, intellectualization, fantasy, compensation, projection, rationalisation, reaction formation, regression and sublimation. However, his daughter, Anna Freud, who was a child psychologist, went on to add her father's list with other defence mechanisms like: undoing, suppression, dissociation, introjection, inversion, somatisation, splitting and substitution.²⁰

If all the above activities of the ego are carried out during an individual's state of awake and alert, then what happens to the ego when he or she goes to sleep? According to Freud, human beings go to sleep as a wish of the ego to withdraw its

¹⁸ Sigmund Freud, Op. Cit., 1989a,p.19.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.19.

²⁰ Gerald Corey, Op.Cit., 1986,pp.14-16. Wikipedia, Id, Ego and Super-ego(Retrieved: 5th March 2009, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/superego>.

psychical energy from all the interests of life. By doing so, the ego is able to reduce its expenditure of energy which it uses during the state of wake of an individual in order to carryout repressions on the unconscious. During sleep, when the ego is in a relaxed condition, some of the contents of the unconscious make their way to the conscious level of the human psyche in the form of dreams. Though the body is at sleep the ego is not fully negligent of its duty to maintain a check and balance on the powerhouse of the human psyche. A point to note, that during sleep the ego is not too repressive on the unconscious. A more lucid description on the ego during sleep as explained by Freud is:

But the repressive resistance of the ego is not abolished in sleep but merely reduced. Some of it remains in the shape of a censorship impulse to express itself in the forms which it would properly assume. In consequence of the severity of the censorship of dreams, the latent dream-thoughts are obliged to submit to being altered and softened so as to make the forbidden meaning of the dream unrecognizable. This is the explanation of the *dream-distortion*, which accounts for the most striking characteristic of the manifest dream. We are justified in asserting that a dream is the (disguised) fulfilment of a (repressed) wish.²¹

Further reading of Freud's structural model of the human psyche reveals another interesting point on the characteristic of the ego. According to Freud, the id and superego do not have a will of their own as an aspect in their basic characteristics. The id has been mainly influenced by what has been passed on to it through the genes in the form of heredity, while

the superego has been influenced by the parents and others in the society. In comparison to the id and superego, the ego has a will of its own in making decision. This aspect of the ego makes it unique among all the other components of the human psyche.²²

Superego

According to Freud, the development of the superego in the human psyche comes later than the id and ego. Actually, the emergence of the superego is just a further advancement of the ego itself. Moreover, when asked, whether there is any lofty nature that comes out of man in the process of his growing up, Freud said, it is the superego. In his view, the superego is the higher nature of man in his psychological development. Freud's own words on the existence of the higher nature of man are:

... but now that we have embarked upon the analysis of the ego we can give an answer to all those whose moral sense has been shocked and who have complained that there must surely be a higher nature in man: 'Very true,' we can say, and here we have that higher nature, in this ego ideal or super-ego, the representative of our relation to our parents.²³

In further elaborating on the superego, Freud stated that the development of the superego within the psyche involves the process of integration of two aspects within the superego. The first aspect of the superego is called the conscience, while the other is called as ego ideal. The conscience which abides within the superego is actually the internalized punishments and

²¹ Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, (James Strachey Trans.), (London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1948), p.81.

²² David Stafford Clark, *What Freud Really Said* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), pp.110-112.

²³ Sigmund Freud, Op. Cit., 1989a, p.32.

warnings which an individual learns during the process of growing up, while the ego ideal refers to all the rewards and positive values which an individual derives from his or her parents and the society. The combined forces of these two aspects of the superego; conscience and ego ideal, will communicate to the ego feelings of pride, shame and guilt.²⁴

The formation of the superego marks the third and last component of the human psyche. While the id on its part strives for spontaneous self-gratification without considering the immediate social demands, in contrast to that the superego on its part induces an individual to act in a socially acceptable manner. Moreover, it helps individuals to fit well within the society one lives, by controlling their sense on what is right, wrong, evil, guilt, virtue, etc. The superego can also be described as the embodiment of the internalized traditional values, lofty ideals of the society, and also religious teachings passed on by parents, school and society. Due to its internalized moral values it works on the ideal principle and takes the judicial branch of the personality. For every good or moral/ethical behaviour of an individual, the superego presents psychological rewards like feeling proud of oneself, self-love, etc. On the contrary, for every bad action, one is punished with a sense of guilt and inferiority. Freud asserted that during its early days of formation, parents play a crucial role in transferring their values to the child. As a continuation to the role played by the parents, during the later part of a

child's development, the role will be shared by teachers and those who have authority over the child. In describing the precise timing of its formation, Freud said that it happens during the dissolution of the Oedipus complex and the superego is formed through the identification with and the internalization of the father figure in a boy. In the case of a girl, the identification happens by imitating the mother. Driven by the ideal principle the superego does not strive for pleasure but for perfection.²⁵

In comparing the nature of the superego with that of the id one might most aptly consider that the nature of the superego is directly opposite to that of the id. Though this is true in one way, by looking from another angle one can detect that there exists one striking similarity between the two. Unlike the ego, the demands of the id and the superego are unrealistic as both go to the extreme level in getting their wish fulfilled. In the case of the id, it is always in pursuit of gratifying its desires without taking into account the reality faced by an individual. Likewise, the superego too propels towards perfection in every moment of an individual's life. As explained earlier on, under such a situation when the id and the superego get to their extreme ends, it is the ego that comes in between the two demanding components of the psyche to rationalize things by explaining the presence of the real world that exists outside of the human psyche. Another interesting distinction made by Freud on the representation of the ego and the superego in the human psyche is this:

²⁴ Ibid., pp.30-35.

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of An Illusion* (James Strachey, Trans.) (London: W.W. Norton &

Company, 1989b), pp.12-17. See Sigmund Freud & Peter Gay, *The Ego and the Id* (London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc., 1989a).

By setting up this ego ideal, the ego has mastered the Oedipus complex and at the same time placed itself in subjection to the id. Whereas the ego is essentially the representative of the external world, of reality, the super-ego stands in contrast to it as the representative of the internal world, of the id. Conflicts between the ego and the ideal will, as we are now prepared to find, ultimately reflect the contrast between what is real and what is psychical, between the external and the internal world.²⁶

In realizing the various functions of the id, ego and superego in the human psyche, it can be generalized that the id forms the biological component of the human personality. Its place being in the unconscious, it is also the storehouse with unlimited libidinal and aggressive energy. Driven merely by instincts it is irrational and illogical in its demands. Its goal is the instant gratification of its instinctual drives which operate on the pleasure principle. This quality of the id causes it to rush in haste to get its demands gratified. On the other hand, the ego which forms the psychological component of the personality works on the reality principle that takes into consideration of the external world. In other words, the ego is the representation of the external world of reality. While the superego being the third component of the psyche forms the representation of the internalized cultural values. As such, it forms the social component of the personality which is propelled by the ideal principle.

In assessing the roles played by the three components of the human psyche it can be stated here that in the case of a well-adjusted individual, the ego is not a servant but the master who is in control of the psychic powerhouse. It only allows

the legitimate needs of the id and the superego, and thwarts the irrational and unrealistic demands. As a master who does not give in to the pressure that comes from the id and superego, the ego of a well-adjusted individual plays the vital role as a mediator or an arbitrator of the psyche. With such a role, the ego becomes the controlling apparatus of the psyche.

The investigation on Freud's ideas on the three entities of the human psyche also reveals that the existence of a strong ego provides an individual with the propensity to sail through smoothly all the turbulent situations in the form of crisis and conflict that go on in between the id and the superego. As a result of the ego's ability to resolve matters amicably that happen in the psyche, an individual will be able to enjoy a good state of mental health. On the contrary, if the ego becomes weak, the scene that takes place in an individual is the crumbling down of his or her personality. In such a situation, the individual is led to a state of psychosis.

Stages in Personality Development

According to Freud's theory on personality development, the human personality develops in stages over a period of time going through five stages in succession. In some cases, the progress is not a smooth one, but one with relapses to an earlier stage of development. In some individuals a fixation can cause an improper development leading to a psychological problem at a later stage in life. Under normal circumstances, personality development which starts at birth ends when an individual reaches his

²⁶ Sigmund Freud, Op. Cit., 1989a,p.32.

or her adolescence, and may continue on during adulthood. In Freud's psychoanalysis, the development through which the personality of an individual unfolds is called the psychosexual development. Freud preferred to use the term psychosexual because his whole theory of personality is pivoted on the human sexual life. He painted man's image as an intellectual animal who is enslaved to his psychosexual development, and said many unpleasant things about man.²⁷

Freud's theory explains that at a particular point during the developmental process of personality formation, certain body parts exclusively become sensitive to sexual and erotic stimulation. The erogenous parts stated by Freud in his theory are namely the mouth, anus and the genital regions. He further postulated that a child will not progress to the next stage without resolving the immediate stage he or she is in. In case, if the needs at a particular stage are not fulfilled, this may cause a state of frustration. Conversely, overindulgence can cause reluctance on the part of a child to progress on to the next stage. So, both scenarios (frustration and overindulgence) can cause fixation that can affect an individual's personality during adulthood.²⁸

An in-depth study of the psychosexual development explained by Freud in his theory will reveal the fact that most of what he said on the human behaviour during the formation of personality at times can be unpleasant and vulgar

for the morally and spiritually oriented individuals. Nevertheless, one cannot discard such information for the reason they are essentially important in understanding what he meant as personality, and also how it develops in human beings. With this principle, the researchers will advance further by carrying out an exposition in describing the five stages of the psychosexual development explained by Freud in his theory of personality.

Oral Stage

According to Freud, this stage marks the beginning of the psychosexual development. This period of development which starts with the birth of an infant will last for fifteen months. At the initial stage an infant finds pleasure and gratification in the region of the mouth in the form of sucking the mother's breast. Later the infant gains pleasure by eating and biting when food is being fed. As such, at this stage, the mouth, lips and tongue become the primary erogenous zones. Moreover, it is during this stage the id is dominant because neither the ego nor the superego is fully formed. This situation describes an id that needs, demands, and pushes for an immediate instinctual gratification. Since the baby's sense of the self is not yet developed, all its actions are driven by the pleasure principle. In Freud's view, an infant sucking the mother's breast not only attains nourishment, but also erotic pleasure:

Primarily, of course, (oral) satisfaction serves the purpose of self- preservation by means of nourishment; but physiology should not be confused with psychology. The baby's

²⁷ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Iqbal's Theory of Personality: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud* (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011), pp.195-206.

²⁸ See Peter L. Ashworth, *Psychology and Human Nature* (London: Psychology Press Ltd., 2000).

obstinate persistence in sucking gives evidence at an early stage of a need for satisfaction which.... strives to obtain pleasure independently of nourishment and for that reason may and should be termed sexual.... The most striking feature of this sexual activity is that the instinct is not directed towards other people, but obtains satisfaction from the subject's own body. It is autoerotic.... No one who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a blissful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life.²⁹

If an infant could speak, he would no doubt pronounce the act of sucking at his mother's breast by far the most important in his life. He is not far wrong in this, for in this single act he is satisfying at once the two great vital needs... Sucking at the mother's breast is the starting-point of the whole of sexual life, the unmatched prototype of every later sexual satisfaction, to which phantasy often enough recurs in times of need. This sucking involves making the mother's breast the first object of the sexual instinct.³⁰

A perusal of the above quotations gives a mental picture to any individual who reads them to think that the act of an infant sucking its mother's breast in getting pleasure by gratifying the id impulses is very similar to an adult who indulges in a sexual intercourse. Freud believed that in both of these acts, an individual is able to get rid of the catharsis. Through the release of the pent-up libidinal impulses of the id, the psyche attains a state of homeostasis. The quotations are also opposed to the popular theories that state sexual instinct only starts to show itself during and after puberty in the life of an individual. In contrast to such a claim, Freud who believed in the

polymorphous nature of sexuality in human beings stated that it even starts to manifest itself while the individual is still in the cradle of his or her infancy:

Popular opinion has quite definite ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual instinct. It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; while its aim is presumed to be sexual union, or at all events actions leading in that direction. We have every reason to believe, however, that these views give a very false picture of the true situation. If we look into them more closely, we shall find that they contain a number of errors, inaccuracies and hasty conclusions.³¹

The oral stage also initiates the formation of the ego for two reasons. The first one is the delayed gratification of the id's demands, and the other is when the baby realizes that its body is distinct from the outer world as and when it experiences bodily pain, etcetera. The main experience during this stage is weaning. When this happens, the child loses the good intimacy it has enjoyed since birth. As a result of weaning that takes place at the end of this stage, the child experiences the first feeling of loss. More precisely explained weaning gives the child a feeling of being detached from the mother. Besides that, during the oral stage too, the child learns that gratification is not always instant. On the other hand, only certain behaviour will lead

²⁹ Sigmund Freud, Anna Freud, James Strachey & Angela Richards, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol.23. (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), p.154.

³⁰ Sigmund Freud & James Strachey, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.,1977),p.389.

³¹ Sigmund Freud & James Strachey, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Perseus Books Group,1975),p.1.

to gratification, and this will make the child trust its own abilities if it can fulfill the necessary requirement.

Besides the above, the oral stage can also be seen as a period for oral-incorporative behaviour and oral-aggressive behaviour. These two behaviours can later become part and parcel of an individual's personality traits. The oral-incorporative behaviour describes the start of pleasurable stimulation of the mouth during the early period of the oral stage. Together with the maturity of the body, other areas of the infant's body tend to seek gratification as well. Fixation of the oral-incorporative behaviour may lead someone later in adulthood to excessive oral needs such as excessive eating, chewing, talking, smoking and drinking. On the other hand, the oral-aggressive behaviour begins when the infant starts to teeth. A child being aggressive during teething will develop characteristics like sarcasm, hostility, aggressiveness, gossip, and having a 'sharp-tongue' during his or her adulthood.³²

According to Freud, during the oral stage, if the mother frustrates the child by refusing to nurse him upon demand, or shortens the nursing period, it will cause the child to develop pessimism, envy, mistrust of others, rejecting love shown by others, suspicion and sarcasm during adulthood. On the contrary, if the child is overly nursed and it becomes abundantly satisfied, it will develop to be a person who is optimistic, gullible, and admires other people around him or her later on.

Anal Stage

This is the second stage of the psychosexual development. During this stage the erogenous zone shifts from the region of the mouth to the tail end of the alimentary canal, which is the anus region. This period starts when the child is one-and-a-half years of age and ends roughly at the age of three. During this time, the ego of the child continues to develop. It should be stated here, that it is during the anal stage that most parents train their children in bowel movement. The major experience during the anal stage is that the child learns independence, personal power, autonomy, and also learns how to cope with negative feelings. Mainly the hostility or negative feeling endured by children during the anal stage is a form of reaction shown towards their parents during toilet training sessions.

The ideal situation in the toilet training is that a child learns to adjust to the modest demands of its parents. By doing so, the child learns the importance of cleanliness and orderliness in life. This situation also makes the child to be a self-controlled individual during adulthood. On the contrary, if the child goes through harsh treatment during toilet training sessions, it will experience anger that will lead it to defecate at inappropriate places and times. This situation can later on lead the child to become an individual who will be cruel, showing excessive anger and extremely unorganized. The term used by Freud to describe this situation is the 'Anal Aggressive Personality'.

In contrast to the above, a child may also fall under the category of 'Anal Retentive

³² Gerald Corey, Op. Cit., 1986, pp.19-20.

Personality', a condition which characterizes the child's refusal to move its bowels. It is expected that the child of this nature will later on become someone who likes extreme orderliness, hoarding, stubbornness and stinginess. Freud also called the anal stage as the anal-sadistic stage due to the fact that during this stage some children tend to control or bully their parents either by withholding their faeces or defecating at inappropriate places and times. Besides that, Freud also stated that the pleasure gained by the child which was at the region of the mouth during the first year of life had now been shifted to the region of the anus. According to Freud, during the anal stage the child gains erotic pleasure through retention and expulsion of faeces.

We conclude that infants have feelings of pleasure in the process of evacuating urine and faeces and that they soon contrive to arrange those actions in such a way as to bring them the greatest possible yield of pleasure through the corresponding excitations of the erotogenic zones of the mucous membrane.³³

As stated earlier on, during the anal stage parents normally face a tough time in disciplining children in getting into a routine of moving their bowels, and also to do it in a manner which is socially acceptable. This act of getting the child into a routine will be viewed by the child differently. The child might feel that it has no freedom in moving the bowel as and when it pleases it, instead the child will be told that what it deems pleasing and pleasurable is something disgusting and the act of bowel movement should be done in utter privacy.

An infant must not produce his excreta at whatever moment he chooses, but when

other people decide that he shall. In order to induce him to forego these sources of pleasure, he is told that everything that has to do with these functions is improper and must be kept a secret. This is where he is first obliged to exchange pleasure for social respectability. From the outset his [own] attitude to his excreta themselves is quite different. He feels no disgust at his faeces, values them as a portion of his own body with which he will not readily part, and makes use of them as his first 'gift'.³⁴

Phallic Stage

By the time children reach the phallic stage, they would have gone through the previous stages of the psychosexual development, namely the oral and anal stages. It is expected that through the oral and anal stages, children would have learned their motor, perceptual and interpersonal skills. The phallic stage also marks the beginning of the change in the children's attitude of learning. According to psychoanalysis, children who start as passive learners are expected to change into active learners when entering the phallic stage. Furthermore, it is during this juncture of the psychosexual development that children are seen to be individuals who are quite well developed in their capacity to walk, talk and think.

The phallic stage starts when the child reaches three years of age. During this stage of the psychosexual development, the genital area in boys and girls becomes the erogenous region. Although the id pushes for gratification, children are not ready for the sort of sexual relationship that happens in adults. Moreover, at this tender age they are physically immature for such a relationship. It is also during this stage the children come to recognize the differences

³³ Sigmund Freud & James Strachey, Op. Cit., 1977, p.390.

³⁴ Ibid., p.390.

between the sexes by exploring their own body parts, and by curiously observing other children.

According to Freud, as the phallic stage progresses children begin to experience the Oedipus complex in their psyche. The development of this complex in a boy makes him feel strongly attached to his mother. Besides this feeling of attachment, the boy also craves to possess her sexually. While having the incestuous feelings towards his mother, the boy also feels resentful towards his father for being a rival who also has the affection for his mother. The following words of Freud explain the lustful feelings of a boy towards his mother:

When a boy (from the age of two or three) has entered the phallic phase of his libidinal development, is feeling pleasurable sensations in his sexual organ and has learnt to procure these will by manual stimulation, he becomes his mother's lover. He wishes to possess her physically in such ways as he has divined from his observations and intuition about sexual life, and he tries to seduce her by showing her the male organ which he is proud to own. In a word, his early awakened masculinity seeks to take his father's place with her; his father has hitherto in any case been an envied model to the boy, owing to the physical strength he perceives in him and the authority with which he finds him clothed. His father now becomes a rival who stands in his way and whom he would like to push aside. If when his father is absent he is able to share his mother's bed and if when his father returns he is once more banished from it, his gratification when his father vanishes and his disappointment when he reappears are deeply felt experiences.³⁵

Freud further explained, that a boy who realizes the fact that he cannot defeat his father for the reason that his father is physically strong, abandons the incestuous feelings towards his

mother. The fear that he entertains at that moment is the "castration anxiety". In Freud's view the castration anxiety is a horrible fear a boy develops by thinking that girls originally possessed a penis but was severed away as a punishment, and a similar thing might happen to his own sex organ if he is persistent with his Oedipal wishes. Due to castration anxiety the boy represses his sexual desire for his mother, and abandons the hostility towards his father. As a way out of the problem to resolve his oedipal wishes, and to get rid of his castration anxiety, the boy tries to be like his father through identification (one form of ego defense mechanism). In such a situation, the boy internalizes his father's standards and values as his own. It has also been highlighted by Freud, that at the final part of the male Oedipus complex with the fully grown superego at work, the boy internalizes all standards imposed by the parents and the society. With the development of the superego, the boy starts to form judgment of his own with regards to what is good and bad, and between what is right and wrong. With these inculcated values the boy abandons the incestuous feelings which he had developed towards his mother.³⁶

Alongside the male Oedipus complex, Freud also said something about the female Oedipus complex (Carl Jung calls it the Electra complex). In Freud's opinion, girls enter their Oedipus complex due to the fact that they do not possess the male sex organ. Penis envy in girls marks the beginning of the Oedipus complex in them. The

³⁵ Sigmund Freud, *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, Vol.21 (Ernest Jones ed.) (London: Institute of Psycho-Analytical Association & Bailliere Tindall, 1940), p.66.

³⁶ See Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study* (James Strachey Trans.) (London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1948).

fact that girls do not possess a penis creates a state of competition with their mothers to seduce and have their fathers on their side. More details on the female Oedipus complex that reflect their human nature as viewed by Freud can be understood from the quotation below:

In males.... the threat of castration brings the Oedipus complex to an end; in females we find that, on the contrary, it is their lack of a penis that forces them into their Oedipus complex..... Not until the emergence of the wish for a penis does the doll-baby [that the girl plays with] become a baby from the girl's father, and thereafter the aim of the most powerful feminine wish. Her happiness is great if later on this wish for a baby finds fulfillment in reality, and quite especially so if the baby is a little boy who brings the longed-for penis with him.³⁷

Freud's final remarks on the Oedipus complex experienced by the male child are that the complex is resolved successfully through the castration anxiety, and through the boy's identification with the father figure. While in the female child, it is quite the opposite as the complex persists in her for an indefinite period of time. Female rivalry and other forms of competition with the male gender during adulthood are attributed to the unresolved envy for the penis, during the girl's childhood.

Latency stage

The resolution of the Oedipus complex marks the onset of the latency period. This period explains the prevalence of a time of calmness after the storm and stress experienced during the turbulent times of the oral, anal and phallic stages. During the latency period the structure of personality (id, ego and superego) is almost well developed in

children. The latency period has been recognized as the middle-childhood years. This stage of the psychosexual development will last roughly from the age of six to twelve.

It has been said that during latency period, much of the child's sexual urges are repressed and submerged into the unconscious of the human psyche. What seemed to be forbidden sexual impulses will go into dormancy and lay asleep in the unconscious while waiting for a reemerge at an appropriate time. Latency is also seen as a transitional stage on the way towards the development of a loving relationship during adolescence.

At the time of the latency period, children develop new interests as a replacement for the infantile sexual feelings that were present during the earlier stages of the psychosexual development. Latency marks the beginning of a period for socialization that takes place in children. As such, children show great interest in relating themselves to the external world. They like to make friends with their own sex group. Much of their time and energy will be spent in school going, hobbies, sports and friendship.

Looking from the psychological perspective, one will agree that many of the characteristics shown by children during the latency period can be classified as narcissistically oriented, which describes an inward and self-centered preoccupation, though children like to relate to friends and others. Since the id impulses have been repressed and they could not find their way

³⁷ Sigmund Freud in R.B. Ewen, *An Introduction to Theories of Personality* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publications, 1993), p.42.

to the conscious level of the human psyche, this will cause a new form of pleasure to take place. The pleasure enjoyed by children during the latency period is mainly derived from the process of thinking.

Besides the ideal situation that takes place in the human psyche during the latency period, the possibilities for psychological problems to arise are there too. Problems may occur due to the inadequate repression done on the part of the ego to the infantile sexual impulses that occur during the Oedipus complex. Apart from this situation, other problems could arise due to the inability of the ego to use its defense mechanism to sublimate the infantile sexual energy to behaviors and activities that can be socially acceptable.

Genital Stage

This is the last stage of the psychosexual development stated by Freud in his theory of personality. It happens when children reach the age of twelve, and this stage will last all throughout their adolescence and adulthood. At this stage of the personality development, as young adolescent boys and girls will abandon their narcissistic self-love and move on towards an altruistic behaviour that shows care and concern for other individuals.

This period also marks the beginning for a more genuine love towards others, especially developing interest in the opposite sex. This happens as a result of the non-existence of the mixed and conflicting sexual feelings present during the earlier periods of the psychosexual development, namely during the oral, anal and phallic stages. As a matter of fact, the absence of

the mixed and conflicting feelings allows the reemergence of the earlier repressed forbidden incestuous feelings that were put to rest in the region of the unconscious of the human psyche.

It is interesting to note, that what reemerges from the unconscious during the genital stage is no longer incestuous in nature but it is something of a heterosexual nature which can be tolerated and acceptable by the society. As growing young adolescents, boys and girls during the genital stage become free from parental influence. Moreover, it is during this time they show signs of individuals who are prepared to take responsibility.

Appraisal

Europe at the time Freud was born was going through a dramatic change socially, politically and economically. It was a time Europe had cut loose itself from the hegemony of the church-rule, feudalism and conservatism. This development gave people the freedom of expression. The spirit of the European renaissance was still alive and could be seen in the lives of the people. Scholars expressed their freedom through artworks, paintings, literary works and scientific research. It was also a time in Europe, where old ideas of the Greek philosophers were revived and given fresh interpretation. In line with this spirit, Freud who was initially a medical doctor later propelled himself to become a renowned psychologist.

Among the many psychologists of the West, Freud was one of those who were successful in carving out a niche for himself. Modern psychology owes him a lot as all other theories on man and his behaviour are just extensions of what has been mentioned by Freud. The myriad

of theories that came after him were either in agreement or against his theory. In view of the great influence enjoyed by Freud and his theory it is not an exaggeration to state that the twentieth-century of the West was indeed a Freudian century. Freud's influence in the West is so immense that many people in the West are familiar to what has been suggested by him through his psychoanalytic theories. So powerful is the role of Freud's perspective in the understanding of human nature and human relationship that the masses in the West started to analyze human emotions and activities in life like; love, hate, childhood, sexuality, fantasy, religion, civilization, family relationship, etc. using his theories.

Apart from the above, the twentieth-century also witnessed how Freud's ideas on the unconscious, Oedipus complex, defense mechanisms, slip of the tongue, dream interpretation, etcetera, managed to capture the attention of the literary men, play-writers, movie-makers, poets, novelists. Although Freud became a household name in the West for his ideas on human nature and personality development theories, he was also a highly controversial figure during his lifetime. Criticisms on his ideas and theories on human nature and personality development are still going on even today in the dawn of the twenty-first century with the mushrooming of new theories challenging his.

According to the researchers, as the founding father of psychoanalysis, Freud has given to the world an ugly and distorted image of man. According to him, man is an intellectual beast doomed for destruction. Man, who is shackled to his sexual impulses, is deprived of his freedom of

choice. As a result of this, man's behaviour is determined by the contending components of the human psyche; namely the id, ego and superego. An exploration into Freud's ideas on the id, ego and superego has given a clear-cut understanding that man according to him is a social creature who undergoes endless tension, stress, conflict, crises, dilemma, chaos and a whole range of other psychopathological illnesses due to the turmoil caused by the hidden forces of his psyche, mainly the unconscious.

In addition to that, Freud's theory on personality development reveals the fact that the inner self of man is more dominant than his social environment. Besides that, man's personality development is very much attached to his childhood experiences known as the 'psychosexual development'. By over emphasizing the role of the id, ego and superego of the human psyche, Freud, due to the obsession he had for his theory, over-looked the significant impact caused by the environment, peer groups and the society on the personality development of man. Freud has also given the understanding for anyone who analyses his ideas on human nature that each and every individual person is devoid of the freedom to choose his or her own destiny in life rather than to be submissive to the psychosexual development in life.

The aforesaid overview of Freud on human nature is bound to kindle the curiosity of any researcher to venture deep into the roots of his pessimistic and deterministic views on man. As such, in line with that curiosity, the discussions following will be an endeavour that will unearth

the hidden reasons as to why Freud painted a bad image of man.

Darwinian Theory

One among the many ideas that influenced Freud to stigmatize man as an intellectual animal is the Darwinian theory of evolution. Having read extensively on the Darwinian concept of the human evolution, Freud was impressed with some aspects of what Darwin mentioned on the subject of human nature. The ideas that might have caught Freud's attention the most are those related to the origin of man and what his true nature is. A further elaboration on these aspects explains that man's status is the same when compared to other terrestrial beings. He is driven by the instinct for material well-being in his life. According to Darwin (1809-1882), man's origin goes back to the ape family, as such, the story that refers him to the biblical character of Adam is a fabrication. Much of man's instincts are those which he has inherited from his forefathers who belong to the ape family. Due to the many common aspects shared by man and animal, Darwin considered man to be equal to the rest of the animal kingdom. As such, man is not exalted in nobility, superiority and spirituality in comparison to animals.³⁸

Influence from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer

Apart from his admiration towards the works of Darwin and Goethe, Freud was also a great admirer of Nietzsche the German philosopher (1844-1900). Reading Nietzsche's philosophical

ideas in a way could have influenced Freud. By going back to the annals of history, one would come to realize that Nietzsche was the one who spoke about the development of the ego much, much earlier than Freud. Hence, there is a great possibility that Freud who came later might have taken great interest and consideration of the 'ego philosophy' spoken of by Nietzsche. It has been mentioned by many researchers on Freud that he accommodated what has been spoken of by Nietzsche on the human ego into his own theory on personality which gives the ego the pivotal role in the human psyche as the component that mediates between the id and the superego on one hand and the external world on the other. Surprisingly when Freud was confronted during his life time with the question as to whether he had assimilated some ideas of Nietzsche with regards to human nature and personality. The answer to such a claim was a refutation by Freud. He refuted the claim by saying the following:

Nietzsche, another philosopher whose guesses and intuitions often agree in the most astonishing way with the laborious findings of psycho-analysis, was for a long time avoided by me on that very account; I was less concerned with the question of priority than with keeping my mind unembarrassed.³⁹

By stating the above, Freud went on to say that Nietzsche's ideas on man were parallel to his own findings in some mysterious ways. Moreover, he also stated that his findings on human nature were an outcome of a tedious research and analysis done on his clients, while Nietzsche's was a philosophical one based on his intuitive and speculative thinking. Freud was also

³⁸ Muhammad Qutb, *Islam and the Modern Materialistic Thought* (Delhi: Hindustan Publications, 1985), pp. 29-30.

³⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Op. Cit.*, 1948, p. 110.

interested in Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) idea that stated sex to be the most dominant human instinct. Ideas put forward by Schopenhauer seemed to be parallel with his line of thought on how the human personality emanates from the chaotic condition of the human psyche. Thus, Freud's acquaintances with these controversial ideas provided him the impetus to come up with his own ideas on the human personality development. His theory on personality became controversial right from its inception till today.⁴⁰

Utilitarian Philosophy

By looking into Freud's theory on personality one would discover the fact that Freud could also have been influenced by the philosophical ideas of Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) who advocated the utilitarianism philosophy based on the hedonistic concept of life. The principle found in hedonism as well as in Epicureanism explains that man by nature loves pleasure, and at the same time, by all means likes to avoid pain and suffering in his life. This aspect explained in the utilitarian philosophy can be seen clearly in the nature and characteristics of the id impulses explained by Freud in his theory of human personality development. The id described by Freud is driven by the pleasure principle, is always blind, irrational and demands instant gratification without taking into account of the immediate moral and social environment.⁴¹

⁴⁰ See Robert M. Liebert & Micheal D. Spiegler, *Personality Strategies and Issues*(California: Brooks/Cole Publications Co.,1990).

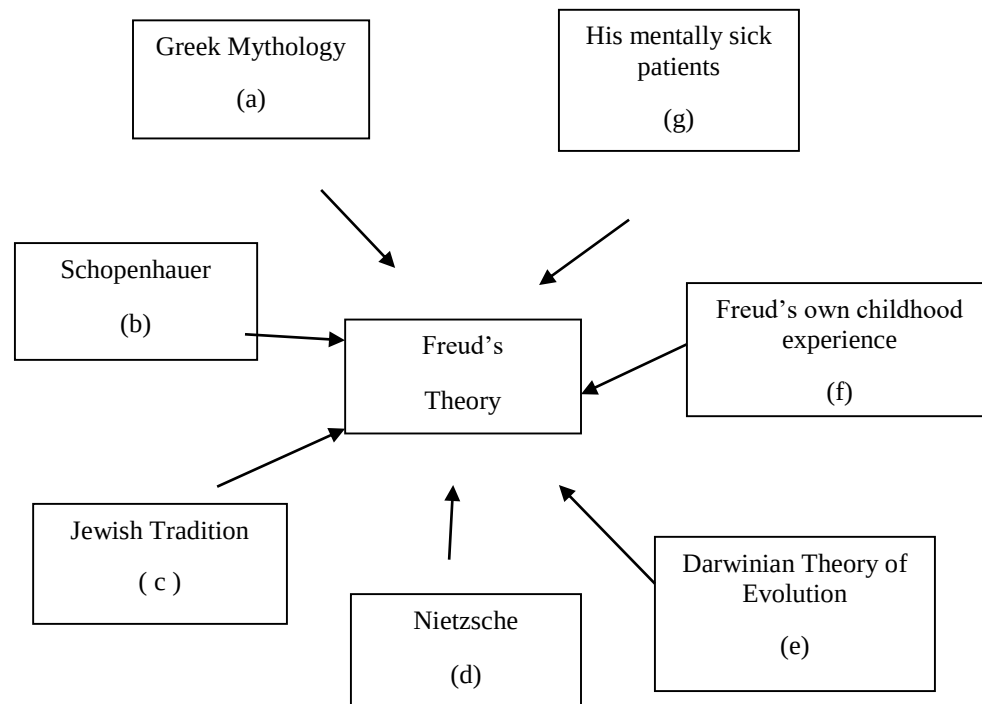
⁴¹ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, Op. Cit., 1997, pp.161-162

Jewish Tradition

Turning to the question on vulgarism and profanity that linger around his ideas on human nature, specifically on his theory of personality which describes the human psychosexual development, there could be more than one assumption made here to prove what really influenced his mind to write the most degrading things about man. With regard to the Oedipus and Electra complexes explained by Freud in psychosexual development, there could be more than one reason as to why he said such degrading things. One possible reason could be that Freud as a Jew who had read the Old Testament extensively during his younger days had been influenced by the many reported cases of incest committed by the holy personalities. Reading such information in a way might have influenced his mind to some degree. The incestuous stories found in the Old Testament might have given him the negative impression to think and generalize that if the nature of the holy personalities are perverted and corrupted in their actions, then the layman must be much, much more corrupted in his personality. This could have been the reason why he said many profane and ugly things about man and woman during the time they were experiencing their Oedipus and Electra complex, respectively.⁴² The diagram set out on the following page indicates the major influences shaping Freud's view of the human persona.

⁴² See Ben Edward Arkerley, *The X-rated Bible: An Irreverent survey of sex in the scriptures*(Los Angeles: Feral House,1999).See Ana-Maria Rizzuto, *Why did Freud Reject God?*(New Haven, CT: Yale University Press,1998).

What Influenced Freud's Mind



Notes:

- a) Ideas like Oedipus complex, Electra complex, catharsis and narcissism are taken from Greek mythology. While some ideas on the human psyche have been taken from Plato.
- b) He was influenced by Schopenhauer's idea that states sex is the most powerful among all human instincts.
- c) He was also well read in the stories mentioned in the Old Testament and Talmud. These stories also influenced him in the conceptualization of his theory.
- d) He had similar views with Nietzsche with regard to the power of the unconscious mind.
- e) Darwinian ideas on man and survival of the fittest linger around his own concept of human nature.
- f) During his childhood Freud was sexually attracted to his mother.
- g) Freud also relied on information gathered from his sick patients who came for psychotherapy.

In addition to the possible influences noted above, the most obvious influences seen by most scholars on Freud are the Greek mythologies⁴³. The Oedipus Rex story has a direct impact on his personality theory. Freud took the story of King Oedipus' unintentional killing of his father and his ignorance in marrying his own mother, as the basis for his supposed concept on the incestuous feelings that children have for the opposite parents during the phallic stage of their personality development.

Freud's Personal Experience

The other reason why Freud said many of the degrading things about man during his Oedipus complex is none other than the fact that he was generalizing many of his own childhood feelings which were incestuous in nature on all other human beings. His exact words on this matter are:

I have found in my case too (the phenomenon of) being in love with my mother and jealous of my father, and I now consider a universal event in early childhood.... Everyone in the audience was once a budding Oedipus in fantasy and each recoils in horror from the dream fulfillment here transplanted into reality.⁴⁴

Freud at another time, besides revealing the fact that he once had feelings of hatred towards his father during his Oedipus complex, also explained how he was sexually attracted to his mother Amalia and the maid who took care of him when he was a young boy. Freud's own

words on how he was attracted to them at a tender age are:

The "prime originator" [of my trouble] was a woman, ugly, elderly, but clever, who told me a great deal about God Almighty and Hell and who gave me a high opinion of my own capacities; and that later (between the ages two and two-and-a-half) my libido [sexual interest] was stirred up towards matren (mother), namely on the occasion of a journey with her from Leipzig to Vienna, during which we must have spent the night together and I must have had an opportunity of seeing her nudam (naked).⁴⁵

Freud's Sick Patients

Despite being affected by his own Oedipus complex, Freud as a psychologist could also have been convinced by the information he had gathered from his emotionally sick patients. By using hypnosis and later 'talking therapy' he psychoanalyzed his patients to study what was lurking from their unconscious. Through the information he had gathered from his patients, Freud arrived at the assumption that their mental maladies were deeply rooted in their Oedipus and Electra complexes. Convinced by his analysis, Freud asserted in his theory that his patients repressed or rather unfulfilled sexual feelings, which were incestuous in nature during their Oedipus and Electra complexes had caused them many psychological problems in their lives.⁴⁶

The many reported psychopathological cases of his patients and an analysis of his own mind, especially the unconscious, made Freud to

⁴³ See G.M. Karim, *The Islamisation of Psychology*, paper presented at the Third International Seminar on Islamic Thought, Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islam, 26-31th July, 1984. See Morton Hunt, *The Story of Psychology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).

⁴⁴ Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p.xii.

⁴⁵ Sigmund Freud & Peter Gay, *The Freud Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p.113.

⁴⁶ See Richard Webster, *Freud* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

generalize that no individual is exempted from the phenomenon of the perverted sexual feelings that happens during childhood. In drawing out a conclusion to his investigation on the unconscious part of the human psyche and its relationship to the Oedipus complex, Freud equated man's behaviour and characteristics to that present in animals. As such, he painted the image of man to be an untamed and uncivilized creature, living behind his human mask.

It is believed widely that a true exposition on Freud's theory on personality can only be well understood when one explores his biography: in particular, the factors that give birth to the emergence of his psychoanalysis movement, and his notions on the human psyche. Whether right or wrong, Freud provided one of the systematic explanations on how personality develops in an individual from the Western perspective. He explained through his theory that the psychosexual development starts with the birth of a child and goes on till an individual attains adolescence and adulthood.

In building his theories on the human mind and personality, Freud based his theories on much of the information collected from his clients- mostly those who were faced with psychiatric problems. In addition to that, he also relied on his personal experiences, especially those which he experienced during his childhood. In deducing ideas on how the human mind works and how personality develops he used several approaches like dream interpretations, psychotherapy, slips of tongue and jokes analysis, to analyze events that happened in the human civilization and finally also the unfolding of events during his own time. Like no other researcher of his time, Freud daringly allowed himself to be psychoanalyzed by members of his own psychoanalysis movement

to probe and explore what lurks from within his unconscious mind and to interpret the hidden message of his dreams.

In the beginning, Freud showcased his research on the human psyche to the world by using the 'topographical model' which is made up of three levels; the unconscious, preconscious and conscious. Later he employed the 'structural model' to explain how personality develops in an individual. Through his structural model he explained that three components exist in the human psyche which perform different functions. The three components of the psyche are id, ego and superego. Freud also explained that the three components of the psyche are not regions of the human mind but they are mere mental constructs used by him to describe the hidden forces that reside within the human psyche which are responsible in producing the human behaviour and personality. Through the structural model Freud propounded that the unconscious forms the important part of the human psyche as it gives the impetus and driving force for all of man's activities. Moreover, his theory also states that the development of personality in an individual, his state of mental health, creativity, motivation in life and in psychotherapy are all related to the interplay of the id, ego and superego which forms the hidden forces of his psyche. Freud's theory on personality states that an individual develops a strong personality when the ego is strong and dominant when compared to the other two components of the psyche; the id and the superego. On the contrary, the development of a weak personality is attributed to the ego's weak position in the human psyche. In Freud's opinion, a weak ego gives in to the demands of the id and superego. A stable

condition in the human psyche is sustained when the ego is able to balance between the moderate demands of the id and the superego.

In describing the nature of the three components of the human psyche Freud said that the id works on the pleasure principle, the ego on the reality principle, while the superego works on the ideal or moral principle. With regards to how personality develops in an individual, Freud divided the development into five phases or stages, namely the oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stages. Freud's theory of personality gives much importance to the psychic forces than to the social environment. As such, man's personality development is very closely linked to his childhood experiences of his psychosexual development. By placing too much importance to the roles of the id, ego and superego of the human psyche, Freud overlooked the significant roles played by the environment, peer groups and the society during an individual's process of growing up with regards to personality development. The researchers feel that Freud's theory on personality has smeared the innocence of childhood and learning at a very tender age, with immoral stories, rivalry of children against their parents and forbidden sexual wishes. Like many others who have conducted research on Freud, the researchers of this study also think that the reason for Freud arriving at such a conclusion on childhood was mainly because he relied much on the data provided to him by his mentally sick patients, and, to a certain degree, his own thoughts during his childhood. Besides this, the researchers feel that the sexual revolution that has taken place in modern times in the world, particularly in the West, reflects much of the ideas on sexuality that Freud had

championed through his speeches and writings. In the field of education, the researchers feel that Freud's ideas on personality are most unlikely to produce any good result if education is seen as a process of producing a good personality in a student. It is the contention of the researchers that if Freud had thought that man is not more than an intellectual animal, the least his theory on personality could do is to civilize the uncivilized animal that is behind the human mask.

Scientific Revolution

Living and witnessing the new scientific inventions during the Industrial Revolution had inspired Freud in many ways. The concept of heat, steam and energy mainly discussed in thermodynamics caught Freud's attention. It seems that his strong inclination towards thermodynamics had made him assimilate this idea into his theory of personality. By incorporating the idea of thermodynamics, Freud came up with the idea of explaining the human psyche as an energy system that needs an outlet for it to discharge the energy which is in the form of 'Eros' and 'Thanatos'. Freud also believed that it is only through the release of this psychic energy that the human mind can return to a state of stability and calmness which he called as a state of homeostasis. In addition to that, his acquaintanceship and working experience with Ernest Brucke and other learned men of the Vienna University turned him into a positivist. As a positivist, Freud relied much on scientific research which deals with tangible hard facts. Being scientifically oriented in his research, Freud severed all affiliations with religion. This attitude also made him an avowed atheist.

Reference to Greek Philosophy

In the area of ancient philosophy, Greece which seemed to be the 'cradle of Western civilization and philosophy' had attracted the attention of Freud. His biography and writings provide evidential proof to state that he was well read in the ideas of the Greek philosophers. It seems that Freud had benefited from reading Greek philosophy and even used some of the ideas in formulating his theory of personality. Freud used ideas and analogy taken from Plato when he described about the functioning of the human psychic using elements like; id, ego and superego. Freud in describing the tussle that goes among the psychic forces used the analogy of the charioteer and the horses, an idea spoken of by Plato (427-347BC). In addition to that, words like narcissism, catharsis, Oedipus, etcetera, had a Greek origin. The researchers are of the opinion that Freud might have felt indebted to the Greek philosophers as he had benefitted reading their ideas. Also, much of their ideas were in line with what he was developing with regards to the understanding of personality. As such, one would not find him criticizing their ideas in the vast encyclopedia of his writings on the psychoanalysis movement.

Struggle in Life

Freud had a mission in life. Living in the European environment which had a lot of hatred for the Jews in a way posed him a great challenge. The Jews living in the midst of the Europeans were deprived of many opportunities enjoyed by the other races of Europe. With the air filled with anti-Semitism, the Jews were treated with discrimination in terms of education and job opportunities. This feeling of anti-Semitism reached its peak during

and after the Nazi's took over Germany and other neighbouring countries. Freud, who was born and bred under the hostility and discrimination shown towards the Jews, positioned himself later in life to produce something great through literary works to show the Jewish supremacy. His controversial theories and ideas in a way can be seen as a crusade in fighting and competing with the European scholars of his time.

Conclusion

Freud's ideas on human nature and personality, either right or wrong have their relevance and impact on the development of modern psychology in the West. Even to this day, his ideas are taught and debated in the higher institutions of learning all over the world. In the West, Freud's ideas have passed beyond the borders of psychology into other disciplines of knowledge. Professionals and researchers in the areas of archeology, sociology, politics, literature, education, anthropology, etc. have employed his ideas in trying to understand man and his behaviour from the Freudian perspective. The one possible reason as to why the Western scholars and professionals are still interested in his ideas is due to the dichotomous way of their thinking which separates between what is sacred and secular. Due to this philosophy and the belief that knowledge is value-free, many Western scholars venture to analyze human character and behaviour from the Freudian perspective regardless of the fact that it sounds vulgar and profane.

Besides the above, it has been highlighted by many researchers on Freud that the sexual revolution that happened in the last fifty years in the West has been largely attributed to the

idea of polymorphous sexuality advocated by Freud. If the coming of Christianity to the West is seen as a force that blocked the free flow of libido in all forms of sexual perversion that were prevalent ever since the time of the Greeks, Freud should be rightly attributed as the person who brought down the dam of libido through his revolutionary ideas on sexuality. This revolution which was manifested in the form of homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, nudism, etcetera, is no longer confined to the Western countries. During this modern age of multimedia and telecommunication, much of Freud's perverted ideas on human nature and sexuality have been transported to many parts of the world through the idea of globalization aided by the use of internet and other computer guided electronic gadgets. As a result of this sexual revolution, the world suffers an increase in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases.⁴⁷

The researchers believe that the claim made by some that Freud's ideas have been rejected wholly by the modern West is not true. It is the contention of the researchers that 'Freud is not dead'. In their view, Freud lives, lives beyond the pages of history and psychology. The evidential proof of this can be seen in the above stated sexual revolution that has taken place all over the world, particularly in the West.

Reference List

This paper is a reprint, provided with the author's permission. His decision to provide complete reference information via the footnoting system in the published version has been retained.

⁴⁷ Malik Babikar Badri, The AIDS Dilemma: A Progeny of Modernity in Sharifah Shifah(ed). *Islam and Challenges of Modernity* (pp.123-210) (Kuala

Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization,1996).