**Freud and Personality**

The psychoanalytical perspective in psychology examines personality traits and disorders in terms of sexual and/or aggressive drives or unfilled wishes and/or childhood trauma. This field of study was first introduced and subsequently heavily influenced by the Austrian Sigmund Freud.

Sigmund Freud is credited with creating psychoanalysis, which is essentially the study of a person's personality and the problems associated with the inner workings of a person's mind. Freud came to the conclusion that a person's personality is formulated more from a person's unconscious mind than their conscious mind. He broke down the mind and personality into 3 interacting systems, the Id, Super Ego and the Ego. It is this theory that he is most famous for.

Freud believed that a personality was similar to an iceberg. Where the majority of an iceberg is found underwater, hidden from sight, so was a person's personality. Freud believed that the Ego and a small part of the Super Ego was often presented to the world, however it was the most dominate system, the Id, that remained hidden in the unconscious mind of the individual.

The concept of the Id is based on the pleasure principle. The Id is driven by a person's basic needs. For example, if you were waiting at the grocery store checkout with your mother, your Id section of your mind will notice the candy shelf within easy reach and will basically say to itself, "I want that candy!" At this point your Super Ego may step into the conversation. Essentially the Super Ego can best be described as our personal "angel on our shoulder" or guilt. In response to the Id's demand of the candy, your Super Ego will answer with: "It is wrong to steal that candy." Often the Super Ego operates in conflict with your Id and it is that conflict which can sometimes cause psychological turmoil or even trauma. Confronted with this turmoil, your Ego will often step in. Your Ego is based on the reality principle and will basically try to satisfy both the Id and the Super Ego. To this end, your Ego might offer a compromise in your mind: "I'm hungry, I want candy, but maybe I'll wait until I get home."

Another example of your 3 interacting systems, is the classic example of the "Freudian Slip". The Freudian Slip is the term used to describe the moment when your Id momentarily slips by your Ego and Super Ego and you unconsciously states out loud what you are subconsciously thinking. For example, when confused by a silly worksheet handed out by your teacher Mr. Trickey, you put up your hand and say: "Mr. Turkey, this worksheet doesn't make sense." You may not notice that you just called your teacher a turkey, and you would not normally do that, but the opinion of your unconscious Id slips past your Super Ego and Ego and blurts out how you really feel about the silly worksheet.
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Directions: READ your notes and the excerpt from Psychology - An Introduction by Ben B. Lahey, to answer the following questions.

1. Define the following terms:

   - personality
   - conscious mind
   - preconscious mind
   - unconscious mind
   - pleasure principle

2. Answer the following questions using COMPLETE SENTENCES.

   a. In your own words, describe conversion disorder and give an example as to how it affects an individual. (5 marks for quality of response and inclusion of examples)

   b. Provide your own examples as to how our conscious and preconscious mind works. How did Freud explain where our dreams exist? (4 marks for quality of response and evidence of understanding)

   c. If Freud believes that our mind starts as birth solely as an id, then in your own words describe how that Id divides into the ego and superego. (4 marks for quality of response and evidence of thought and effort)

3. Personal Response: In your own words, describe how Freud would have explained the importance our parents play in helping us protect ourselves against ourselves.

   You will be marked out of 10 for your ability to provide a thoughtful, reflective answer that makes use of your knowledge of Freud's concept of Id, Ego, and Superego.

Total Marks: ____/ 28
Definition of Personality

Who is Ben Lahey anyway? What am I Like? You have read thousands of words that I have written by now, but you really don't know very much about me. What would I need to tell you so that you would feel that you knew me as a person? I would probably start out with a description of my physical appearance -- height, weight, eye color, hair color. I would tell you what I like to eat and about my job, but it's pretty superficial stuff. If you saw me eating at the student union, you would pick up most of that information in the first few seconds. But to really get to know me as a person, you would need to know something about my thoughts, my feelings and my actions. In other words, I would need to describe my personality to you.

But what do we mean when we use the term personality? It's no accident that the word Person is the word personality. Your personality defines you as a person, rather than just a biological conglomeration of organs. One's personality is the sum total of all of the ways of acting, thinking and feeling that are typical for that person and makes that person different from all other individuals.

Psychoanalytic Theory: Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud was a young physician, building a medical practice in Vienna in the late 1800's. He was particularly interested in treating patients with emotional problems but felt frustrated by the lack of knowledge that existed at that time. Although he had devoted many years of study, in Austria and France, to the disorders of the brain and nerves, Freud found that what he had learned was of little help to his patients. Thus, being a man of considerable confidence and intelligence, Sigmund Freud set out to develop his own methods of treatment. In the course of his development of treatment methods, Freud also developed a general theory of personality, an explanation for why people develop their unique patterns of typical behaviour. His view is known today as psychoanalytic theory.

Freud's theory of personality began with a very limited question. He wanted to understand the condition know today as conversion disorder. In this condition, the individual appears to have a serious medical problem such as paralysis or deafness for which there is no medical cause. Freud was interested in a woman named Anna O. who suffered from conversion disorder. Freud was fascinated by this case and wanted to know how and why the mind could create such discomfort for the individual.

Why, then did they have the symptoms? To explain this paradox, Freud turned to a concept that was at least as old as the writings of Plato. Freud suggested that part of the human mind exists in such a way that the individual is not aware of it. In other words, part of the
mind is unconscious. While the concept of the unconscious mind did not originate with Freud, we associate it with him because he gave it such importance in his theory of personality. To Freud, our lives are dominated not by our conscious minds, but by the forces that operate in the unconscious. Freud believed that unconscious sexual motives were at the heart of Anna O.’s problems. As he worked with other patients with conversion disorder, Freud became convinced that all such cases were caused by unexpressed sexual motives. And, in time, unconscious sexual urges became the cornerstone of Freud’s general theory of personality.

Freud’s Mind: Three levels of consciousness.

Freud distinguished three levels of conscious awareness - the conscious mind, the preconscious mind and the unconscious mind. As we walk around, we are presently aware of the contents of the first level of the mind, but temporarily unaware of the contents of the second level and permanently unaware of the contents of the third.

To Freud, the mind is like an iceberg; the conscious mind is merely the tip visible above the surface, whereas the bulk of the important workings of the mind lurk mysteriously beneath the surface. Just below the surface is what Freud called the preconscious mind. It consists of memories that are not presently conscious, but can easily brought into consciousness. For example, you are not thinking right now about your last meal, or the name of your teacher, or the taste of your favourite drink, but you could quickly bring those items into conscious awareness if you wanted to. The preconscious mind is the vast storehouse of easily accessible memories. The contents of the preconscious were once conscious and can be returned to consciousness when needed.

Further down from the conscious mind lies the unconscious mind. It’s the storehouse for primitive instinctual motives plus memories and emotions that are so threatening to the conscious mind that they have been repressed, or unconsciously pushed into the unconscious mind. These contents of the unconscious mind are normally not accessible to consciousness. They can rarely be made fully conscious, and then only with great difficulty.

Freud’s Mind: Id, Ego, and Superego
Freud also divided the mind into three parts in a different, but related way. The best known aspect of Freud's theory of personality is his view that the mind is composed of three parts, each with a very different function: the id, the ego and the superego.

**Id: The selfish Beast**

When the infant is born, the mind has only one part, the id. The id is composed primarily of two sets of instincts, life instincts and death instincts. Freud wrote relatively little about the death instincts, but he believed that aggression and even suicidal urges arose from these instincts. The life instincts give rise to motives that sustain and promote life, such as hunger, self-protections, and sexual desire. To Freud, the sexual and aggressive urges are by far the most important of these motives. As strange as it may seem, sex and aggression are used by Freud to explain a vast range of personality characteristics, from kindness to shyness to cruelty.

Freud's view of the dark side of the human mind is not an easy one for most of us to accept. Freud tells us that there lives within each of us a selfish, cruel beast. The beast—the id—operates according to the pleasure principle. The id wants to obtain immediate pleasure and avoid pain regardless of how harmful it might be to others.

But a person could not actually survive for long living by the pleasure principle (eventually you would get hurt if you fulfilled every selfish desire without regard for the feelings of others). Fortunately, during infancy, the period of time when we have only an id, we have adults around who see to it that our needs are realistically and safely met. As we grow up, our interactions with out parents and other parts of the real world lead us to convert part of the id into two other parts of the mind—the ego and the superego—that help us cope more effectively with the world.

**Ego: The Executive of Personality**

The ego is formed because the id has to find realistic ways of meeting its needs and avoiding trouble caused by selfish and aggressive behaviour. The ego operates according to the reality principle. This means that it holds the id in check until a safe and realistic way has been found to satisfy its motives. The id would be happy to form a mental image of a sex object, and when that was not wholly satisfying, it would want to immediately rape the object. The ego, on the other hand, holds the id in check long enough to charm and seduce the sex object. The ego's goal is to help the id fulfill its needs. It only opposes the id's
wishes long enough to find a realistic way to satisfy them. The ego can be thought of as the executive of the personality because it uses its cognitive abilities to manage and control the id and balance its desires against the restriction of reality and the superego.

**Superego: The Conscience and Ego Ideal**

The id and ego have no morals. They seek to satisfy the id's selfish motives without regard for the good of others. The ego tries to be realistic about how those motives are satisfied. But as long as the needs are safely met, it does not care if rules, lies are told, or other people are wronged. While each of us wants our desires to be satisfied immediately, if everyone acted in this manner simultaneously, society would fall into chaos.

Society places restrictions on the actions of the id and ego by creating the superego, the part of the mind that opposes the desires of the id by enforcing moral restrictions and by striving to attain a goal of “ideal” perfection. Parents are the main agents of society in creating the superego. They teach moral principles to their children by punishing transgressions and rewarding proper behaviour. These experiences become incorporated into the child's mind as the two parts of the superego. According to Freud, parental punishment creates the set of moral inhibitions known as the conscience, while their rewards set up a stand of perfect conduct in the superego called the ego ideal. These two parts of the superego work together by punishing behaviour that breaks the moral code through guilt and rewarding good behaviour through pride. As the superego develops strength, children are able to control themselves and behave in ways that allow society to function smoothly. According to Freud's view, most of us do not steal, murder, and rape not because we do not want to, or because our egos could not find relatively safe ways to do so, but because our superegos hold these desires in check.