

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

Penilaian Kritikal Idea Freud Mengenai Manusia Dan Sifatnya

Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak*, and 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. Various concepts on man showcased by the scholars, quite often, complemented one another and, at times, their ideas 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 turned out to be a controversial one. His idea of man seems to have shaped the western culture and human psyche in general. What appears from the impact of Freud's concept of man and personality is that it has denigrated man. This paper represents an appraisal of his idea of man and personality from human angle.

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

Abstrak

Sejak dahulu kala, para cendekiawan di Barat menunjukkan minat dan kesungguhan untuk memahami subjek manusia dan sifatnya. Didorong semangat, telah muncul pelbagai teori yang membincang tentang manusia dan sifatnya. Pelbagai konsep manusia dipamerkan oleh para cendekiawan dan seringkali melengkapi satu sama lain dan ada juga masa dimana idea-idea mereka bercanggah dan mencemari satu sama lain. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) adalah bapa pengasas psikoanalisis yang mengemukakan kepada dunia satu konsep mengenai manusia dan sifatnya yang menjadi satu

* Assistant Professor, Department of General Studies, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia; Email: maarji2020@yahoo.com/maarji@iium.edu.my

** Professor, Institute of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia; Email: nikahmad@iium.edu.my

kontroversi. Ideanya tentang manusia kelihatan seperti telah membentuk budaya barat dan jiwa manusia secara umum. Apa yang kelihatan daripada kesan konsep Freud tentang manusia dan sifatnya adalah bahawa ia menghina manusia. Karya ini merupakan satu penilaian idea beliau terhadap manusia dan sifatnya dari sudut manusia.

Kata Kunci: Penilaian Kritikal, Freud, Idea-idea, Manusia Dan Sifatnya

Introduction

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) appears to have not only stirred the waters in the field of psychology but also has influenced, to a great extent, modern culture in general and western mind in particular. His psychoanalysis has turned out to be controversial in the academic world. His explanation of psychic forces, namely, *id*, *ego*, and *superego* has earned him accolades, on the one hand, and has also triggered criticism, on the other. Although much has been said and written on Freudian theory, there is still room to make further discussion on that from different perspectives. Such a discussion is still crucial in the proper understanding of his ideas. 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 Upon reading Freud, one would discover that his concept on man is pessimistic and deterministic at the same time.² His pessimistic views on man are based on his assumption that

¹ See 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.

man is evil and selfish by nature. Freud's concept is deterministic in the sense that he thought every individual was 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 was controlled by his libidinal impulses and therefore should be un-socialized and irrational in his behavior. As such, Freud believed that man had 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 his belief that 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, such as hunger, thirst and sex. The life instinct functions by using a form of energy called libido. As for the death instinct, Freud referred to it as the source of all acts of violence, aggression, war and destruction caused to human lives. Freud painted a mental picture for those immersed in 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

Freud explains 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

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.

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*. According to Freud, due to the amount of energy being limited, there happens to be a power strifes among the three components to gain control of the psychic energy.⁵

Freud's psychoanalytical school of psychology believes that 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 played 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. Freud is of the view that the answers to most important causative factors of an individual's behaviour can be found in the realm of the unconscious; and that the personality can only be studied by probing and exploring the contents of the unconscious.⁷

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.

Freud emphasizes 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. The three components as termed by Freud are not really words coined by him 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”.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. The entire energy of the mental life of an individual is stored in the id.⁹ Freud describes the nature of id in these words:

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 or-

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.

ganization, 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.¹⁰

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 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 contends that the contents of the id can be made available or manifest through dreaming, slip of the tongue, 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, and it resists what the superego does.¹¹

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 is always in the pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. 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

¹⁰ Sigmund Freud, James Strachey, Anna Freud, *The Essentials of Psycho Analysis* (London: Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1986), p. 498.

¹¹ 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.

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 throughout one's life. Its perpetual state of craving for pleasure makes it the seat of instincts.¹²

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.

Ego

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

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.¹³

The id which forms the beginning of the mental life of an individual due to the mounting pressure from the external world may cause

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

¹³ Sigmund Freud, *Freud: Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Nandor Fodar & Frank Gaynor eds.)(New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), p.65.

some part of its unconscious material to develop into a preconscious material. As a result, 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 is not blocked forever, as the ego allows them, at times, to manifest at some appropriate time and manner. Freud describes the nature of ego:

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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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 believes that the ego is partially formed from the part of the id but modifies itself to suit the needs of the external world. Propelled by the reality it functions to ward off the unacceptable and reckless impulses of the id that contravenes 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 with the id, on one hand, and with the superego and the external world on the other.¹⁶ A more precise explanation on the characteristics and

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud in William W. Meissner, *Freud and Psychoanalysis* (Indiana: University of Norte Dame Press, 2000), p.165.

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, Op.Cit., 1989a, p.8

¹⁶ Micheal Jacobs, Op. Cit., 1991, pp. 57-60.

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 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.¹⁷

Ego 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:

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.¹⁸

According to Freud's theory of personality, the other functions of the ego are to be in charge of the defence, perceptual, intellectual, cognitive and executive duties of the human mind; 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 indi-

¹⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Op. Cit.*, 1989a, p.19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.19.

vidual, 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.¹⁹

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 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 carry-out 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. 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*.²⁰

Further reading of Freud's structural model of the human psyche reveals another interesting point on the characteristic of the ego. The id

¹⁹ Gerald Corey, Op.Cit., 1986,pp.14-16. Wikipedia, Id, Ego and Super-ego(Retrieved: 5th March 2009, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/superego>.

²⁰ Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*, (James Strachey Trans.),(London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1948), p. 81.

and superego do not have a will of their own. 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.²¹

Superego

According to Freud, the development of the superego in the human psyche comes later than the id and ego. 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.²²

The development of the superego within the psyche involves the process of integration of two aspects within the superego—the conscience and the ego ideal. The conscience internalizes meaning of punishments and warnings 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 will communicate to the ego feelings of pride, shame and guilt.²³

The formation of the superego marks the third and the 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 what the superego on its part induces an individual to act in a socially acceptable manner. Moreover it helps individuals to fit

²¹ David Stafford Clark, *What Freud Really Said* (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), pp. 110-112.

²² Sigmund Freud, *Op. Cit.*, 1989a, p. 32.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30-35.

well within the society 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. To every good/moral behavior of an individual, the superego presents psychological rewards like feeling proud of oneself, self-love, etc. On the contrary, for every bad action, it generates 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 is shared by teachers and those who have authority over the child. Freud says 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.²⁴

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, 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. 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

²⁴ Sigmund Freud, *The Future of An Illusion* (James Strachey, Trans.) (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989b), pp.12-17.

Freud on the representation of the ego and the superego in the human psyche is this:

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 psychological, between the external and the internal world.²⁵

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 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.

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Op. Cit.*, 1989a, p. 32.

Stages in Personality Development

According to Freud, the human personality undergoes five stages of development. In some cases the progress is not a smooth one, and 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 or her adolescence, and may continue 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 development²⁶

Freud claims that at a particular point of 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 the mouth, anus and the genital regions. He postulates that a child will not progress to the next stage without resolving the immediate stage he or she is in; and non-fulfillment of needs at a particular stage may cause 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.²⁷

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 around 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

²⁶ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Iqbal's Theory of Personality: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud* (Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011), pp.195-206.

²⁷ See for detail: Peter L. Ashworth, *Psychology and Human Nature* (London: Psychology Press Ltd., 2000).

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 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.²⁸

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.²⁹

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

²⁸ 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.

²⁹ Sigmund Freud & James Strachey, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (London: W.W. Norton & Company Inc.,1977),p. 389.

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.³⁰

The oral stage also initiates the formation of the ego for two reasons: (1) the delayed gratification of the id's demands, and (2) the baby's realization that its body is distinct from the outer world, and its experiences of bodily pain. The main experience during this stage is weaning. When this happens the child loses the good intimacy it enjoyed ever since birth. 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 to gratification, and this makes the child trust its own abilities to fulfill the necessary requirement.

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 teethe. A child being aggressive during teething develops characteristics like sarcasm, hostility, aggressiveness, gossip, and 'sharp-tongue' during his or her adulthood.³¹

According to Freud, during the oral stage, if the mother frustrates the child by refusing to nurse him upon demand, or shortens the nursing

³⁰ Sigmund Freud & James Strachey, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1975), p.1.

³¹ Gerald Corey, Op. Cit., 1986, pp.19-20.

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 the bowel removal. 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. 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 might lead it to defecate at inappropriate places and times. This situation can later on lead the child to become cruel, excessively angry, and extremely unorganized individual. The term used by Freud to describe this situation is the 'Anal Aggressive Personality'.

Phallic Stage

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 that the children come to recognize the differences 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.³²

Freud further explains that a boy who realizes the fact that he cannot defeat his father due to his father being 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

³² Sigmund Freud, *The International Journal of Psycho-analysis*, Vol.21 (Ernest Jones ed.) (London: Institute of Psycho-Analytical Association & Bailliere Tindall, 1940), p. 66.

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 defence 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 regard to what is good and bad, and what is right and wrong. With these inculcated values the boy abandons the incestuous feelings which he had developed towards his mother.³³

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 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] becomes 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.³⁴

Latency stage

³³ See for detail: Sigmund Freud, *An Autobiographical Study*(James Strachey Trans.) (London: The Hogarth Press & The Institute of Psycho-Analysis,1948).

³⁴ Sigmund Freud in R.B. Ewen, *An Introduction to Theories of Personality* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publications,1993), p. 42.

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 of 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 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 are spent in school going, hobbies, sports and friendship.

From the psychological perspective, 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 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 to the infantile sexual impulses that occur during the Oedipus complex. Apart from this situation, other problems could arise due to the ina-

bility 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 covers both adolescence and adulthood. At this stage of the personality development, young adolescents boys and girls 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 that they show signs of individuals who are prepared to take responsibility.

Appraisal

Europe at the time of Freud's birth was going through dramatic changes, social, political and economic. It 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 interpreta-

tion. 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 themselves. Modern psychology owes him much as all other theories on man and his behaviour is just an extension 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 such as love, hate, childhood, sexuality, fantasy, religion, civilization, family relationship etc. using his theories.

The twentieth-century also witnessed how Freud's ideas on the unconscious, Oedipus complex, defence mechanism, slip of the tongue, dream interpretation etc. managed to capture the attention of the literary men, play-writers, movie-makers, poets, novelists etc. Though 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.

It seems 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: 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.

Freud's theory on personality development claims that the inner self of man is more dominant than his social environment; and 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.

Here one may become curious to know what made Freud to investigate so deeply into the psyche of man and come up with his psychosexual theory. He was influenced by various philosophies and theories developed by European scholars. Following is a brief introduction to the theories Freud seems to have concurred with and developed further.

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; and man 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.³⁵

Nietzsche and Schopenhauer

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. Nietzsche was the one who spoke about the development of the ego 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 the 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 on 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.³⁶

Freud, however, agrees that Nietzsche's ideas on man were parallel to his own findings in some mysterious ways. 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 interested in Arthur Schopenhauer's (1788-1860) idea that stated sex to be the most

³⁵ Muhammad Qutb, *Islam and the Modern Materialistic Thought* (Delhi: Hindustan Publications, 1985), pp. 29-30.

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, Op. Cit., 1948, p.110.

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.³⁷

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.³⁸

Jewish Tradition

Vulgarism and profanity that linger around Freud's ideas on human nature and human personality which describes the human psychosexual development, suggest that there could be Jewish thoughts and traditions which influenced his mind to write the most degrading things about man. With regard to the Oedipus and Electra complexes explained by Freud in the psychosexual development, he seems to have been influ-

³⁷ See for detail: Robert M. Liebert & Micheal D. Spiegler, *Personality Strategies and Issues* (California: Brooks/Cole Publications Co.,1990).

³⁸ Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, Op. Cit., 1997, pp.161-162

enced by the Old Testament which he must have studied as a Jew at his younger age, and also 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 experience their Oedipus and Electra complex, respectively.³⁹

Greek Mythologies

Besides the above possible influence from the stories of the Old Testament, the more obvious influence seen by most scholars on Freud are the Greek mythologies⁴⁰. 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 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 generalized many of his own childhood feelings which were incestuous in nature on all other human beings. His exact words on this matter are:

³⁹ See for detail: 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).

⁴⁰ See for detail: 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).

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.⁴¹

Freud, 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).⁴²

Freud's Sick Patients

Freud as a psychologist might 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, and their Oedipus and Electra complexes had caused them so many psychological problems in their lives.⁴³

⁴¹ Sigmund Freud, *Writings on Art and Literature* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. xii.

⁴² Sigmund Freud & Peter Gay, *The Freud Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995), p. 113.

⁴³ See for detail: Richard Webster, *Freud* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

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

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. It seems that the sexual revolution 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 described as the person who brought down the dam of libido through his revolutionary ideas on sexuality. This revolution which manifested in the form of homosexuality, lesbianism, pornography, nudism etc. is no longer confined to the Western countries. During this modern age of multimedia and telecommunica-

tion, 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. It means Freud is still alive with his psychoanalytic ideas.