

Sigmund Freud, an introduction



prepared by James Staub
for Ms. Monroe's Psychology class,
Chattanooga School for the Arts and Sciences
(Another lecture on Freud and Olivier's *Hamlet* is located [here](#) .)

Sections:

- [[Introduction](#)] [[The Psychosexual Stages of Development](#)] [[The Mind and its Components](#)]
- [[Defense Mechanisms](#)] [[Therapeutic Techniques](#)] [[Freudian Links](#)]

Introduction and random notes on Freud, his times, his theories

So, why should we study Freud?

- Freud's work lays the groundwork for all subsequent personality theories.
- Freud's theory is the most comprehensive. He tries to explain everything humans are and do, from the components of the individual to the components of society.
- Freud's theory is culturally influential. It changed, in certain ways, the ways we interact with one another ("Freud" belongs in a list with "Darwin" and "Marx"), and played a major role in the destruction of Victorian culture.

Our Stereotype of Victorians:

- Sexually uptight
 - Thought sex was inherently dirty
 - Covered the legs of tables lest the exposed furniture inspire untoward thoughts and actions.
- Freud's emphasis on sexuality leaves no room for a society that strives to hide sexuality.

Assumptions in Freud's work:

1. Development is driven by biology - we inherit drives and instincts that propel us to be who we are; human beings are hardwired to live and seek pleasure.
2. Early experiences engender adult psychology; the events of the first 5-6 years determine psychological development.
3. Early social life - how mom and dad responded to our desire toward pleasure - is also crucially important.
4. (The one you've been waiting for) ALL PLEASURE IS ULTIMATELY SEXUAL PLEASURE. From birth, infants seek sexual pleasure. (Freud's recognition of breastfeeding as a sexual act was quite a slap to Victorian Motherhood...) The drive toward sexual pleasure: LIBIDO.

[[TOP](#)]

Freud's Psychosexual Stages of Development

Psychological development is the history of our erotogenic zones (areas of the body capable of producing sexual pleasure when stimulated). On the broadest level, Freud thought of the whole body as one large erotogenic zone... but some areas, as we all know, are more sensitive than others. The stages of psychosexual development are each centered around the recognition and experience of the pleasure (and conflicts) that these zones generate.

SUMMARY OF FREUD'S STAGES OF PSYCHOSEXUAL DEVELOPMENT			
STAGE	APPROXIMATE AGES	EROTIC FOCUS	KEY TASKS AND EXPERIENCES
Oral	0-1	Mouth (sucking, biting)	Weaning (from breast or bottle)

<u>Anal</u>	1-3	Anus (expelling or retaining feces)	Toilet training
<u>Phallic</u>	3-6	Genitals (masturbating)	Identifying with adult role models; coping with Oedipal crisis/electra complex
<u>latency</u>	6-12	None (sexually repressed)	Expanding social contacts
<u>Genital</u>	Adulthood	Genitals (Adult sexuality)	Establishing family; Generation of new life

The Oral Stage

In the first year of life, the baby is pretty much a slave to its digestive system. The baby wants food, and the mouth, as the gateway to the stomach, becomes the primary focus of the experience of pleasure. Once pleasure organizes itself around the mouth, it doesn't really matter whether its stimulation actually involves nutrition (as with nipples) or not (as with fingers, car keys, and the host of other things that find their way into infants' mouths).

[[TABLE](#)]

The Anal Stage

Over the next couple of years, the baby finally gets the upper hand on its digestive system with the development and practice of control over its bowels. Holding in and expelling feces at will, the infant organizes its pleasure around the anus. This newfound internal control also has a social dimension: Mom (the one that has to wash the diapers) gets really excited about potty training, and pleasing Mom has definite rewards. Then again, if the baby gets angry with Mommy, it can always choose to not exercise its new technology, and punish her with the results...

The infant in the anal stage, in addition to having moderate control over its internal states, gains control over basic motor functions. The body, for the first time, begins effectively responding to the mind and its desires; toddlers, able to move around, can alter their own states by moving away from things they don't like and toward things they do.

[[TABLE](#)]

The Phallic Stage

Freud was very fond of ancient Greek culture, situated they were between civilization and barbarianism (that is, they were cultured enough to be able to write down the facts of their barbaric lives). Greek drama proper used a prop called the phallus, an anatomically correct representation of the penis. Little boys carry a similar symbol around--their actual genitals. At a basic level, there is the feeling that this part of the body can produce pleasure (not the adult version, but simply masturbatory). This recognition leads to:

The Oedipal Conflict . Little boys undergo the Oedipus drama. He seeks the love of his mother, but he perceives that Mom is already taken by his father. Deep down, he wants to kill his father and have sexual relations with his mother (and how the Victorians reeled at this insight!).

Daddy, however, has certain advantages over the little boy (size/strength/virility), and threatens something terrifying... For Daddy periodically finds junior touching himself. The typical Victorian-Daddy response (as was the case with Freud's "Little Hans" patient): If you don't stop doing that, I'll cut your little widdler off! And once junior sees the genitals of his mother or a little girl, he recognizes that the threat can be carried out. Thus he must concede the battle to his father.

The phallic stage is brought to an end when junior replaces the torment of castration anxiety with the more tolerable identification with his father. Identification is a psychological process of becoming one with someone or something more powerful than oneself. Identification with Daddy reempowers junior. He internalizes his father as a source of psychological strength. As he does this, he develops a conscience, a sense of right and wrong, a miniature Daddy in his very own head. So, later in life, when junior feels guilt, he's just been metaphorically spanked by Daddy.

The Electra Conflict is the female version of the little boys' Oedipal conflict. In it, just like for little boys, girls are doomed to fail in the Daddy-daughter-Mommy love triangle. And, under ideal circumstances, the conflict terminates with the little girl's identification with Mommy and the development of a conscience based on her internalization.

Unfortunately, there are some differences. Little girls, for obvious reasons, don't develop a castration anxiety (they get penis envy

instead), and thus there isn't a strong motivation to identify with Mommy. Hence women develop weaker consciences than men; they are more immoral and more likely to give into their emotions.

[[TABLE](#)]

Latency

As the conscience (superego) develops out of the Oedipal/Electra conflicts, sexual desires are repressed and lie dormant (hence "latency"). Children pour their repressed libidinal energy into non-sexual pursuits like sports, school, and same-sex friendships. And the repression works just fine... until the libidinal dynamo of puberty rears its ugly head.

[[TABLE](#)]

The Genital Stage

With the onset of puberty, pleasure once again organizes itself around the genitals, and sexual desire becomes directed toward heterosexual relationships. Puberty, as much as it is a transformation in body, is also a transformation of psychology: adolescents start THINKING about SEX.

If all the conflicts of the earlier stages were resolved appropriately, the adolescent will develop a Genital (read "healthy") Personality, one capable of Love and Work. Work? We've been talking about Love (in the form of sexual drives) throughout these psychosexual stages, but what does Work have to do with anything?

-Love is hard Work. Love without work doesn't meet the expectations of our (biologically inherited) fantasies. The world, cold cruel place that it is, doesn't spoonfeed us the realization of these fantasies; we have to work to achieve them.

-Ultimately, there is never any final sexual satisfaction. If we were to follow our desires to the end of the libidinal rainbow, we wouldn't find a pot of happiness, just more rainbow--and our behavior would be little more than a pawn of our sexual craving.

[[TABLE](#)]

Fixation

So now Freud would have us ask the question: How many people do we know that are both Lovers and Workers?

Answer: not many.

Psychosexual Development is usually halted at one of the first three stages when a child becomes fixated, gets stuck in one of the developmental conflicts. We become fixated when we receive too little or too much pleasure in any given stage. If we look at pleasure as psychological sustenance, fixations are either starvations or gluttonies. When these frustrations and overindulgences happen in early life, they lock away a certain amount of the libido in the stage in which they occur. When a fixated people encounter stress in their adult lives, they regress to the stage that they didn't resolve properly and respond to the stressor immaturely.

Conclusion: whereas we should all be Lovers and Workers, most of us are still babies.

[[TOP](#)]

Freud's Model of the Mind

There are two Freudian models of the mind: the topographical and structural models.

Topographical Model

The **conscious** mind contains information of which we are aware at any given moment: anything that is thought, perceived, or understood resides at this level.

One level down is the **pre-conscious**, which contains the memories and thoughts that are easily recalled, ready to break into consciousness at any moment.

At the bottom level is the **unconscious**, which contains the personal information of which we are NOT aware: the drives, urges, wishes, and thoughts of all of our past experience, by far the largest receptacle of the psyche. All these threaten to destabilize the conscious mind if they surface.

Since the greatest component of our psyches is unknowable (and threatening if attempted to be known), we are Mostly Stupid About Ourselves.

Structural Model

There are three basic structures/functions in the structural model:

Id --Latin for "it," the id is little more than inherited biological drives, the ones that control many of our actions. There are two of these drives: Eros, the sex drive, and Thanatos, the death instinct.

-The id operates under the *Pleasure Principle* : "I want what I want and I want it now!" The id demands immediate gratification, and will settle for nothing less.

-And because the world doesn't always meet the desires of the infant, the id comes prepackaged with an operative process, the *Primary Process* . If the thirsty infant doesn't get mother's milk, he creates a fantasy in which he does receive it (an act of *wish-fulfillment*). Because the id is entirely irrational, there is no difference between the fantasy version and the "real" version.

-The id, in conventional morality, is immoral.

Ego --Latin for "I", the ego develops as the buffer between the Id and reality, often suppressing the id's urges until an appropriate situation arises. This repression of inappropriate desires and urges represents the greatest strain on, and the most important function of, the mind. The ego often utilizes defense mechanisms to achieve and aid this repression. Where the id may have an urge and form a picture which satisfies this urge, the ego engages in a strategy to actually fulfill the urge. The thirsty five-year-old now not only identifies water as the satisfaction of his urge, but forms a plan to obtain water, perhaps by finding a drinking fountain. While the ego is still in the service of the id, it borrows some of its psychic energy in an effort to control the urge until it is feasibly satisfied. The ego's efforts at pragmatic satisfaction of urges eventually builds a great number of skills and memories and becomes aware of itself as an entity. With the formation of the ego, the individual becomes a self, instead of an amalgamation of urges and needs.

-The ego operates under the *Reality Principle* , seeing the outside world as it actually is.

-The ego operates with the *Secondary Process* , the use of reason in an attempt to obtain pleasure.

-The ego, in conventional morality, is amoral (like a good businessman, the ego performs cost-benefit analyses, and thereby profits in pleasures).

Superego --Latin for "over-I", the superego is analagous to the conscience, the sense of right and wrong that develops with the internalization of parental figures at the close of the Phallic stage. While the ego may temporarily repress certain urges of the id in fear of punishment, eventually these external sources of punishment are internalized, and the child will not steal the chocolate, even unwatched, because he has taken punishment, right, and wrong into himself. The superego uses guilt and self-reproach as its primary means of enforcement for these rules. But if a person does something which is acceptable to the superego, he experiences pride and self-satisfaction.

-The superego, in conventional morality, is not only moral, it is morality itself.

A Chart of how things can go wrong between the mind's three structures .

Freudian Morality

This structural model of the mind has a moral implication: If this is an accurate portrait of the mind and its structures, what are we to do with it?

Freud, following the Socratic dictum "Know Thyself," sets for us the moral imperative "Where id is, ego should be." Your task in life is to develop insight, find out what's hidden in the id, and make rational decisions about what you find. Your goal: to develop a Big Ego. To become more and more rational (or, in Freudian terms, "healthy").

As a capitalist society, one whose members are businessmen continually engaging in rational cost-benefit analyses, we have in fact addressed this goal. Unfortunately, we've flipflopped the Freudian moral imperative, and have essentially placed ego in the place that properly belongs to the superego...

Anxiety

The healthy ego rationally meets the needs and constraints of the id, superego, and reality (the "three tyrants," Freud calls them). Most of us (we with unhealthy egos) can't do this, and therefore exist in a state of psychological dis-ease: *Anxiety* .

Three types of anxiety (each caused by one of the three tyrants):

-Reality anxiety: the dis-ease we experience in response to the challenges we face in the real world.

-Moral anxiety: guilt, delivered to the ego by an offended superego.

-Neurotic anxiety: what happens when the ego holds too tight leash on the id and the id (powerful and irrational) threatens to overwhelm the ego.

[[TOP](#)]

Defense Mechanisms

Since the ego is trapped between numerous anxieties which threaten its stability at any given moment, it utilizes defense mechanisms to overcome the sense of dread and get on with life.

The most common defense mechanism: **repression** , in which the ego sweeps anxiety under the rug of the id, forgets about the problem at hand. Repression plays some part in all of the other separate defense mechanisms.

(More on defense mechanisms is available from the [Freud Overview](#) .)

In short, when we can't rationally handle the truth, we lie to ourselves about reality. So, not only are we babies, not only are we mostly stupid about ourselves, but we are also liars. This is what Freud has taught us, a lesson which he himself compared in importance to human humility and intellectual revolution with the Copernican heliocentric model of the universe and the Darwinian theory of evolution.

[[TOP](#)]

Therapeutic Techniques of Psychoanalysis

So what can we do, we of sick souls, pathological egos? Pay a psychoanalyst to fix us over the course of several years to meet with us several times a week and use the following techniques to unearth psychological conflicts that have been repressed to the level of the unconscious. Remember, "Know Thyself" is the answer.

- [Free association](#) .
- [Hypnosis and catharsis](#) .

[[TOP](#)]

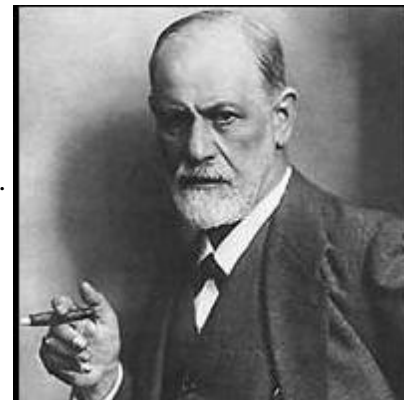
Freud on the Web:

The following I hope may serve as an internet guide for those students interested in researching Freud on their own (with the goal in mind to prove everything I've said in this lecture to be wrong).

[[The Basics](#)] [[Freud's Detractors](#)] [[Freud Link Sites](#)] [[Freud In Depth](#)] [[Fun with Freud](#)] [[TOP](#)]

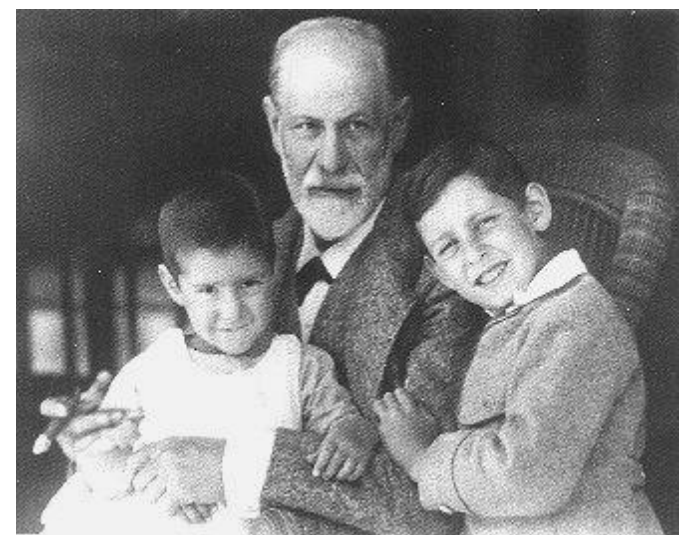
Web introductions, tutorials, and lesson plans on Freud and psychoanalysis:

- [Iceberg diagram](#) of Freud's model of the mind.
- [Encarta short article on Freud](#) .
- [Compton's short article on psychoanalysis](#) .
- [Freud vs. Jung: Freud](#) . A nice introductory summary of Freud's ideas with several useful links.
- [another Freud page \(bio and intellectual importance\)](#) , from Ohio State University's philosophy dept.
- [The Freud Page](#) , introductory material.
- [The Freud Web](#) . A web-lesson-plan on Freud, covering the basics (model of the mind, psychosexual development, and therapeutic techniques).
- [a high school lesson plan on Freud](#) , from Link2Learn.
- [a brief Internet assignment on Freud](#) , including links.
- [Outline of Freud's bio and ideas](#) .



- [another Freud outline](#) , from Susan, Kristen and Ethan's Web Page: Personality 101.
- [another Freud outline](#) , this one with sections on cocaine and cigars.
- [Freud's Theory of Development](#) , from Classic Theories of Child Development.
- John Suler's exercises to elucidate the (not quite strictly Freudian) concepts of: (1) [defense mechanisms](#) , (2) [dreams](#) , and (3) [transference](#) .
- [The Freud Museum in Vienna](#) . Housed in Freud's old home/office in Vienna, this is a beautiful sight with a good deal of text on Freud's thought and pictures and videos from Freud's life. Definitely recommended.
- [About Psychoanalysis](#) , from the American Psychoanalytic Association.
- [Frequently Asked Questions about Psychoanalytic Therapy](#) , including "Why is the couch used?"

[[LINKS](#)] [[TOP](#)]



People with problems with Freud:

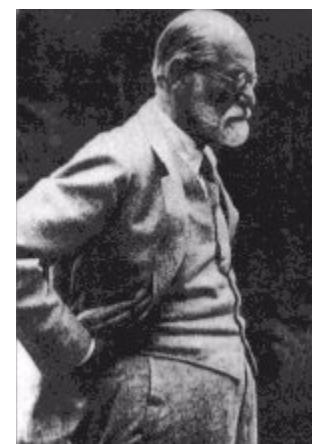
- [Some attacks on Freud](#) , from Susan, Kristen and Ethan's Web Page: Personality 101.
- [Burying Freud](#) , a site devoted to attacking Uncle Siggy.
- [Review of Crews, F. C. \(1998\). *Unauthorized Freud : doubters confront a legend*](#) , more Freud-crucifying. (This one from Burying Freud and the Online Dictionary of Mental Health.)
- [More Freud-bashing](#) , by G. Scott Acton, a personality psychologist at Northwestern University.

[[LINKS](#)] [[TOP](#)]

Links to more Freud links:

- a few [Freud links](#) from psychref.
- [psychoanalysis links](#) (mostly to journals and articles) from the Online Dictionary of Mental Health.
- [el web de freud](#) , a site with many links, photos, videos, etc. A great resource whether or not your Spanish is rusty. (Problems translating? try [babelfish](#) .)
- [The Psychoanalysts](#) , for the French students... (Problems translating? try [babelfish](#) .) More in depth, concentrating on contemporary interpretations of the discipline.

[[LINKS](#)] [[TOP](#)]



In Depth, for the Sado-masochist:

- [Marc Fonda's notes on Freud's writings.](#)
- [Doug Davis' notes on *The Interpretation of Dreams* .](#)
- [Freud and the Web: Culture and Personality in Cyberspace](#) a syllabus by Douglas A. Davis of Haverford College.
- [Freud's Unwritten Case: The Patient "E."](#) , by Douglas A. Davis of Haverford College.
- [Oedipus Redivivus: Freud, Jung and Psychoanalysis](#) , by Douglas A. Davis of Haverford College.
- [A Theory for the 90s: Traumatic Seduction in Historical Context](#) , by Douglas A. Davis of Haverford College.
- [Abortion and Its Discontents: Reproductive Psychodynamics in Freud's Psychology](#) , by Douglas A. Davis of Haverford College.

[[LINKS](#)] [[TOP](#)]

Fun with Freud

- [Freud photo archives](#) .
- [Freudian soundbites](#) .
- [Freudian slips](#) .
- [A Psychoanalysis of Beavis and Butthead](#) , from the Journal of Irreproducible Results (will not work until December 2, 1998).
- [A mock-Freudian interpretation of Dr. Seuss' *Cat in the Hat*](#) .
- [Felix From a Psychodynamic Viewpoint](#) , a psychoanalytic evaluation of Felix Ungar (from the *Odd Couple* , a play/movie/tv series from before your time).
- [Freudian gift ideas](#) .
- Order a pre-written term paper on Freud [here](#) , [here](#) , or [here](#) .

[[LINKS](#)] [[TOP](#)]



Acknowledgements

Most of this "lecture" is stolen directly from the Psychology 101 lectures on Freud by Dr. Paul Watson, The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Additional material (both text and images) has been plagiarized from a number of sources, most especially [The Freud Web](#) . Apologies for any offense I might have caused.

Copyright ©NOW James E. Staub, Jr. All rights reserved.
Please send your questions, comments, concerns to [James Staub](#) .