

HENRY MURRAY: THE PERSON AND THEIR STRUCTURE

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Abstract

So far, there is no unified view or approach in psychology regarding the nature, structure, and regularities of personality development. This lack of consensus affects the use of diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic methods. Existing knowledge remains fragmented and unstructured; there is no consistent understanding of the structure and elements of personality, the stages and mechanisms of its development, or its systemic qualities and functions.

This article presents the views of Henry Murray, a representative of the neopsychoanalytic school, on personality and its structure.

Keywords. Personology, personality structure, psychoanalysis, id, superego, ego.

Introduction

The first principle in Murray's personology, his term for the study of personality, is that personality is rooted in the brain. The individual's cerebral physiology guides and governs every aspect of the personality. A simple example of this is that certain drugs can alter the functioning of the brain, and so the personality. Everything on which personality depends exists in the brain, including feeling states, conscious and unconscious memories, beliefs, attitudes, fears, and values.

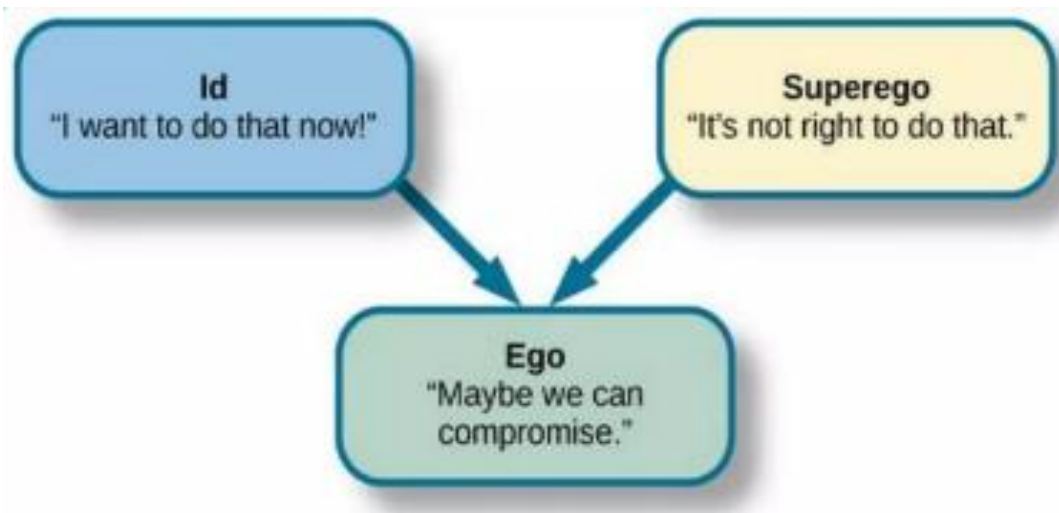
A second principle in Murray's system involves the idea of tension reduction. Murray agreed with Freud and other theorists in their view that people are driven to reduce physiological and psychological tension, and he supported this approach. However, he argued that this does not mean we strive for a state completely free of anxiety or tension. According to him, the feeling of satisfaction arises not from achieving a tension-free state, but from the process of striving to reduce or alleviate that tension. However, he argued that this does not mean we strive for a state completely free of anxiety or tension. According to him, the feeling of satisfaction arises not from achieving a tension-free state, but from the process of striving to reduce or alleviate that tension. We generate tension in order to have the satisfaction of reducing it. Murray believed the ideal state of human nature involves always having a certain level of tension to reduce.

A third principle of Murray's personology is that an individual's personality continues to develop over time and is constructed of all the events that occur during the course of that person's life. Therefore, the study of a person's past is of great importance.

Murray's fourth principle involves the idea that personality changes and progresses; it is not fixed or static.

Fifth, Murray emphasized the uniqueness of each person while recognizing similarities among all people. As he saw it, an individual human being is like no other person, like some other people, and like every other person.





The Structural Composition of Personality According to Henry Murray¹.

“Id”. G. Murray divided the personality into three parts and made effective use of Freud’s terms — Id, Superego, and Ego. However, his interpretation of these concepts did not align exactly with how Freud originally conceived or described them. Like Freud, Murray suggested that the id is the repository of all innate impulsive tendencies. As such, it provides energy and direction to behavior and is concerned with motivation. The id contains the primitive, amoral, and lustful impulses Freud described. However, in Murray’s personological system the id also encompasses innate impulses that society considers acceptable and desirable.

Here we see the influence of Jung’s shadow archetype, which has both good and bad aspects. The id contains the tendencies to empathy, imitation, and identification; forms of love other than lustful ones; and the tendency to master one’s environment.

The strength or intensity of the id varies among individuals. For example, one person may possess more intense appetites and emotions than another. Therefore, the problem of controlling and directing the id forces is not the same for all people because some of us have greater id energy with which we must cope.

“Superego”. G. Murray defined the Superego as the internalization of culturally-based values and norms; it is through these standards that a person evaluates and judges both their own behavior and that of others. The substance of the superego is imposed on children at an early age by their parents and other authority figures.

Other factors may shape the superego, including one’s peer group and the culture’s literature and mythology. Thus, Murray deviated from Freud’s ideas by allowing for influences beyond the parent–child interaction. According to Murray, the superego is not rigidly crystallized by age 5, as Freud believed, but continues to develop throughout life, reflecting the greater complexity and sophistication of our experiences as we grow older.

The superego is not in constant conflict with the id, as Freud proposed, because the id contains good forces as well as bad ones. Good forces do not have to be suppressed. The superego must try to thwart the socially unacceptable impulses, but it also functions to determine when, where,

¹ Citation: <https://www.slideshare.net/libersshake15/henry-murray-154478259>.



and how an acceptable need can be expressed and satisfied.

While the superego is developing, so is the ego-ideal, which provides us with long-range goals for which to strive. The ego-ideal represents what we could become at our best and is the sum of our ambitions and aspirations.

“Ego”. The Ego is the rational regulator of the human personality; it seeks to modify or delay the socially unacceptable impulses of the Id. The ego is the rational governor of the personality; it tries to modify or delay the id’s unacceptable impulses. Murray extended Freud’s formulation of the ego by proposing that the ego is the central organizer of behavior. It consciously reasons, decides, and wills the direction of behavior. Thus, the ego is more active in determining behavior than Freud believed. Not merely the servant of the id, the ego consciously plans courses of action. It functions not only to suppress id pleasure but also to foster pleasure by organizing and directing the expression of acceptable id impulses.

The ego is also the arbiter between the id and the superego and may favor one over the other. For example, if the ego favors the id, it may direct the personality toward a life of crime. The ego may also integrate these two aspects of the personality so that what we want to do (id) is in harmony with what society believes we should do (superego).

Opportunity exists in Murray’s system for conflict to arise between the id and the superego. A strong ego can mediate effectively between the two, but a weak ego leaves the personality a battleground. Unlike Freud, however, Murray did not believe that this conflict was inevitable.

In conclusion, while there are certain similarities between Freud and Murray in their explanations of personality and its structure, there are also notable differences. We believe that these differences serve to complement one another and contribute to a richer understanding of personality by broadening the range of theoretical approaches and perspectives.

References

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