

A Comparison of Approaches to the Psychoanalytic Theory

Part A.

Read the following selections which provide further information about the psychoanalytic theorists. You will use the information from these readings to complete part B.

Freud

Sigmund Freud believed that we have a three-part personality structure: the *id*, an innate part that is selfish, contains our drives, operates under the pleasure principle, demands immediate gratification, and resides in our unconscious; an *ego*, which operates in conscious reality and mediates between the superego and the id; and the *superego*, which is learned and cautions us to do the right thing. The superego is in our unconscious and conscious existence. Freud also believed that we use *defense mechanisms*, which are devices used to protect us from a pressure-filled world. As we progress from birth through adolescence, Freud thought that we go through a series of conflicts called psychosexual stages. Because childhood is so important to Freud, he believed our personalities are formed by age five.

Horney

Although a student of Freud's, Karen Horney disagreed with him in many ways. Moving away from Freud's sexual orientation, Horney thought that most of us have a basic anxiety, something that disturbs our security especially in childhood. She thought that neurosis grows out of these conflicts in childhood. Horney also thought Freud was too male-biased in his approach and supplemented his theory to make women's problems consistent with their experiences.

Erikson

Erik Erikson altered the Freudian view by extending the psychological stages through adulthood and old age. He also thought that psychological development was not based on sexuality but on social relationships. One of Erikson's stages, identity vs. role confusion, became his trademark. He studied adolescence in great detail and pinpointed an identity crisis, a period when a people decide who they are and where they are going. Although the crisis may occur at any time, it frequently happens during adolescence. The teen needs to make important decisions but often feels unwilling to do so. Erikson felt that the crisis of each of his eight stages of psychosocial development must be resolved successfully for the person's identity to be clearly formed.

Adler

Alfred Adler also broke with Freud over his emphasis on sexuality. Adler thought that a person's basic complex is one of inferiority. Adler felt that all people have feelings of frailty and incompetence because as children they are small and cannot master many tasks; thus, they feel inferior. In order to overcome this inferiority, people develop a *style of life*, a unique set of motives, actions, values, and interests that help overcome inferiority. Adler also disagreed with Freud about the importance of a person's past. Adler thought people were also motivated by *fictional finalisms*, which are expectations about the future. Though these expectations may be unrealistic, they encourage people to accomplish feats that they normally could not do. Additionally, Adler stressed the importance of *birth order*, that is, the position one has among siblings. He felt that birth order often influences personality.

Jung

Carl Jung agreed with Freud about the concept of a personal unconscious but added a concept he called the *collective unconscious*. This a storehouse of all of humanity's common myths, memories, and urges. The individual ideas within the collective unconscious are called *archetypes*. Universal ideas such as stories of creation, the hero figure, and the reverence of motherhood are examples of archetypes. Jung felt that people strive toward *individuation*, the stabilizing of the personality. This is achieved by moderating the extremes of our personalities such as *extroversion*, a quality that makes us want to be very social or outgoing, and *introversion*, a quality that makes us want to be by ourselves. Jung thought that religion, mythology, and ancient cultures should be studied to help achieve wholeness.

Part B.

Use the readings to define each of the terms listed below. After the definition, identify the theorist who used the term.

1. Archetypes
2. Basic anxiety
3. Birth order
4. Collective unconscious
5. Defense mechanisms
6. Ego
7. Extroversion
8. Fictional finalisms
9. Id
10. Identity crisis
11. Individuation
12. Inferiority
13. Introversion
14. Psychosexual stages
15. Psychosocial stages
16. Style of life
17. Superego

Erik Erikson

Anything that grows has a ground plan, and . . . out of this ground plan the parts arise, each having its time of special ascendancy, until all parts have arisen to form a functioning whole.³

1. Define *ascendancy*.
2. To what is Erikson referring when he writes "anything that grows"? What is the "ground plan"?
4. What might be your time of special ascendancy?
5. What do you think Erikson means by a "functioning whole"?

Alfred Adler

The individual feels at home in life and feels his existence to be worthwhile just so far as he is useful to others and is overcoming feelings of inferiority.⁴

1. According to Adler, what is of primary importance to the individual?
2. How does Adler think a person achieves this goal?

³Erik Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968).

⁴Alfred Adler, *Problems of Neurosis* (1964).

Carl Jung

We can keep from a child all knowledge of earlier myths, but we cannot take from him the need for mythology.⁵

The object of therapy is not the neurosis but the man who has the neurosis. We have long known, for instance, that a cardiac neurosis comes not from the heart, as the old medical mythology would have it, but from the mind of the sufferer. Nor does it come from some obscure corner of the unconscious, as many psychotherapists still struggle to believe; it comes from the totality of a man's life and from all the experiences that have accumulated over the years and decades, and finally, not merely from his life as an individual but from his psychic experience within the family or even the social group.⁶

1. What myths do children believe in?
2. Why might Jung think these myths are important?
3. What is the object of therapy, according to Jung?
4. To what other psychotherapist might Jung be referring?
5. What two criticisms does he make of the other psychotherapists?

⁵Carl Jung, *Symbols of Transformation* (1912).

⁶Carl Jung, "The State of Psychotherapy Today," in *Collected Works 10: Civilization in Transition* (1934), 337.