

Psychology: Abnormality - Notes for 12/09/03

- Deterministic behaviour is out of the individual's conscious control.
- Young black males make up the majority of schizophrenics – see homework for reasons.
- In psychology, "affect" means emotion.

Cognitive Abnormality Model

Point of View: Behaviour is the result of thoughts and beliefs
Cause of Abnormality: These beliefs contribute to our decision making, which in turn affects behaviour. If there is something wrong with your thoughts or beliefs, you are abnormal - irrational beliefs. Major disorders include depression and other anxiety disorders.
Classes of Disorders: Anxiety (phobias, OCD etc.), Affective (depression, bi-polar), Schizophrenia
Treatment: Counselling – Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. It is the most effective treatment, and since it works quickly it is the cheapest.

Psychodynamic Abnormality Model

- Behaviour is a result of unconscious conflicts and desires.
- The personality is the root of mental disorders.
- Personality develops in stages throughout childhood.

The Nature of Personality

- Psychic energy makes up personality.
- Using the crystal ball analogy:
 - When you are born, the smoke in the crystal ball is red. This is the "Id". The Id is only concerned with the pleasure principle – instant gratification. There is a conflict in the Id between the Libido (survival/sexual instinct) and Thanatos (death instinct). Thanatos wishes to return to the state of the smoke in the womb, which is totally calm – ultimate goal is suicide. Libido ensures the survival of the mind and thus the body, and so translates Thanatos into aggression – displaced suicide.
 - At 3 months, blue smoke emerges together with the red smoke – the "Ego". The Ego is the rational part of personality, and is both master and servant to the Id:
 - Master: "No, you can't have this pleasure."
 - Servant: "Wait a little while and you can have it without anyone telling you no."
 - At age 5-7, the "Superego" develops – black smoke. It is split up into
 - Conscience > what is morally bad > guilt > symbolised by father
 - Ego-ideal > what is morally good > symbolised by mother
- Different proportions of the Id, Ego and Superego dictate personality traits

Psychosexual Stages of Development

- 0 – 18 months Oral stage – everything goes in mouth.
- 18 months – 2½ years Anal stage – potty training, learning control of muscles. Anally retentive and anally expulsive personality traits developed here.
- 5 years – 7 years Phallic stage – fix on sexuality, morals develop.
 - Boys develop the Oedipus Complex - wish to have sex with mother, resent father and fear castration.
 - They realise they need to identify with their father. Internalisation of attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviour occur.
 - Gender identity
 - Morality > Conscience < Superego
 - Girls go through the Electra Complex:
 - Want to have sex with father, and hate mother (though not fear)
 - They blame their mother because they have no penis – PENIS ENVY
 - The pressure on boys to be masculine is much greater than vice versa
 - Anaclytic identification occurs, where they identify with the mother
- 7 years – 13 years Latent stage – the libido goes quiet, and the intellectual side develops.
- 13+ years Genital stage – the final stage, maturation sexually, emotionally and socially.

Falsifiability

If a theory lacks falsifiability, it is not a "good theory". Falsifiability is being able to prove and/or test theories. Freud's theories are all non-falsifiable.

Ego Defence Mechanisms

A protection for the ego against the onslaught of the unconscious; the over use of ego-defence mechanisms will result in neurotic symptoms:

- Regression – going back to favourite developmental stage
- Repression
- Denial
- Displacement – an activity stopping you doing something else – "pretty revision timetables"
- Sublimation – releasing suppressed anxieties in a healthy way – physical exercise
- Reaction formation – acting differently

Neuroses

- Affective disorders
 - Uni-polar
 - Bi-polar
- Anxiety disorders
 - Phobias
 - OCD
 - Panic attacks
 - Eating disorders

Criticisms of the Psychosexual Model of Abnormality

- Very influential – Freud's theory was the first attempt to explain mental illness in psychological terms. It has had an enormous influence on our understanding of normal and abnormal behaviour as well as on literature and the world in general. Much of this understanding has been absorbed into our culture without us realising it.
- Too much emphasis on sex – Freud was over concerned with sexual factors and made little reference to the influence of social factors on development. This may be a reflection on the time during which he lived, when there was much repression of sexual feelings.
- Poor research evidence – Freud based his theory on his observations of behaviour, but there were largely of middle-class Viennese women suffering from mental disorders.
- Ignores the present – the fact that the treatment focuses on the past means that present conflicts may be overlooked.
- Only suitable for certain people – the therapy involves the ability to express oneself.
- Highly subjective and falsifiable – the treatment depends on the psychiatrist's interpretation of what the patient says.