

MOTIVATION & EMOTION

Unconscious motivation




Image source: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Why_books_are_fewer_better_than_movies.jpg

James Neill
Centre for Applied Psychology
University of Canberra
2020

1

1

Unconscious motivation

Reading:
Reeve (2018)
Ch 16
(pp. 397-422)


Image source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Alma-Tadema_Unconscious_Rivets_1893.jpg

2

2

Outline – Unconscious motivation

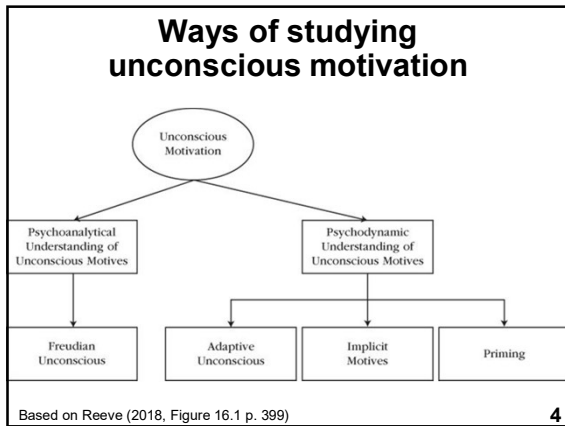
- Psychodynamic perspective
 - Psychoanalytic → psychodynamic
 - Dual-instinct theory
 - Do the Id and Ego exist?
 - Contemporary views
- The unconscious
 - Adaptive unconscious
 - Implicit motivation
 - Priming
- Psychodynamics
 - Repression
 - Suppression
 - Terror management theory
- Ego psychology
 - Ego development
 - Ego defense
 - Ego effectance
- Object relations theory
- Criticisms



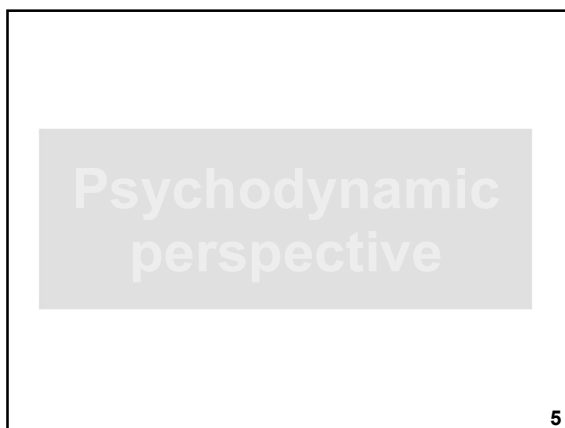
Based on Reeve (2018, p. 397) Image source: http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Autbroude_icons.svg

3

3



4



5

Psychoanalytic becomes psychodynamic

- **Psychoanalytic:** Freudian approach to psychology, psychotherapy, and the unconscious mind
- **Psychodynamic:** study of dynamic unconscious mental processes.
- Dynamic unconscious mental processes can be studied without being Freudian.
- This lecture focuses on **psychodynamic** approaches to **unconscious motivation**, but starts with a historical perspective.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 399-400) 6

6

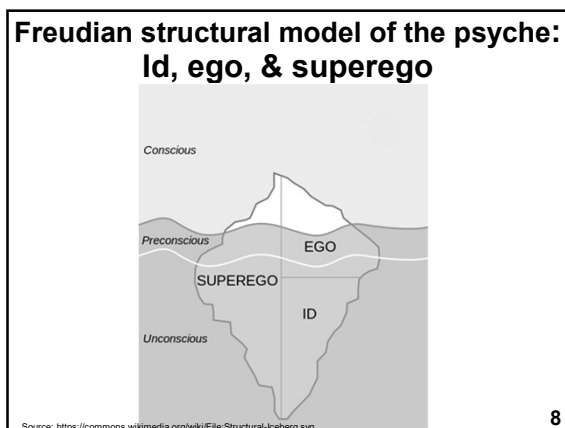
Freud's dual-instinct theory

Psychoanalysis c. 1930

<div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">Eros Instinct for life</div> <p>Instincts for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . sex . nurturance . affiliation . etc. 	<div style="background-color: #cccccc; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-bottom: 5px;">Thanatos Instincts for death</div> <p>Instincts for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> . aggression toward self (self-criticism, depression) . aggression toward others (anger, prejudice) etc.
--	---

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 400-401) 7

7



8

Do the Id and the Ego exist?

- Limbic system makes for a pretty fair Id:
 - Hypothalamus, thalamus, amygdala, medial forebrain bundle, etc.
 - Pleasure & unpleasure brain centers.
- Neocortex makes for a pretty fair Ego:
 - Learning, memory, decision-making, intellectual problem-solving.
 - Executive control center that perceives the world and learns to adapt to it.
- Interrelated neural pathways and structures of the neocortex and limbic systems:
 - One structure affects another

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 401) **9**

9

Contemporary psychodynamic perspective

- **The unconscious**
 - Much of mental life is unconscious
- **Psychodynamics**
 - Mental processes operate in parallel and conflict
- **Ego development**
 - Healthy development moves from an immature, socially dependent personality to one that is more mature and interdependent with others
- **Object relations theory**
 - Mental representations of “self” and “other” form in childhood that guide the person’s later social motivations and relationships.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 402) **10**

10

Contemporary views on the unconscious

- **Freudian unconscious**
 - Automatically appraises the environment
- **Adaptive unconscious**
 - Sets goals, makes judgements, and initiates action
- **Implicit motivation**
 - Automatically attends to emotionally-linked environmental events

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 402) **11**

11

The unconscious

12

12

Adaptive unconscious

- Automatic pilot that carries out computations and adjustments.
- Appraises environment, sets goals, makes judgments, and initiates action all while the person is thinking about something else.
- Judgments are experienced as intuition and “gut felt” rather than as conscious and deliberative.
- Overall: Adapt effectively, even while on “automatic pilot”.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 404-406) **13**

13

**Adaptive unconscious:
Examples**

- Riding a bike
- Driving a car
- Tying shoelaces
- Playing a musical instrument
- ?

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 402) **14**

14

Two mental systems

- System 1: Automatic unconscious
 - Fast, involuntary, effortless, emotional
- System 2: Conscious
 - Slow, voluntary, effortful, rational

Based on Reeve (2018, Table 16.1, p. 405) **15**

15

Implicit motivation

- Motives, emotions, attitudes, and judgments that operate outside conscious awareness
- Well-studied implicit motives: achievement, power, affiliation, intimacy, autonomy, prejudice

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 406-407) 16

16


Priming

- Exposure to one stimulus affects response to another stimulus without conscious awareness. e.g., when primed by handling money, people:
 - eat more chocolate
 - are less likely to help others
 - tolerate more pain
- Activates mental representation outside of awareness, preparing a person to behave consistent with that mental representation.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 407-408) 17

17

**Psychological priming –
Bang goes the theory**



Video: (6:17 mins)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HRAKt0GakJM> 18


18

How your unconscious mind rules your behaviour



Leonard Mlodinow at TEDxReset 2013
Video: (12:51 mins)
<https://www.youtube.com/embed/vcJm-y7UnLY?start=316&end=10849>

19



20

20

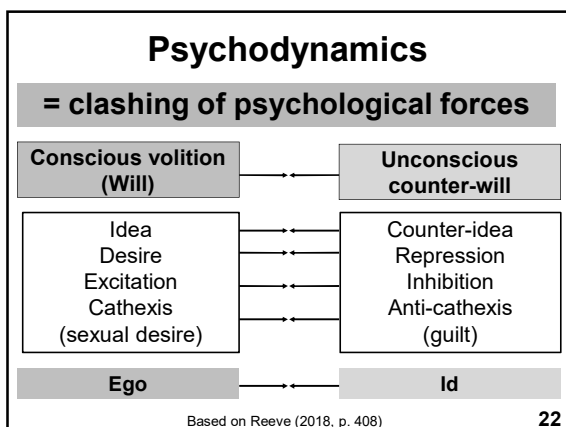
Psychodynamics
= clashing of psychological forces

“The mind is an arena, a sort of tumbling-ground for the struggle of antagonistic impulses.”
Freud (1917)

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 408)

21

21



22

Illustration of psychodynamics: Repression

- Central concept of psychodynamics.
- Unconscious is overcrowded with motivations that want to come into the public world.
- **Repression** is the security guard (or gate-keeper) turning down most motivations' requests to enter the public world.
- Repression is the process of forgetting by ways that are unconscious, unintentional, and automatic.
- Repression is Ego's counterforce to the Id's demanding desires.

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 409) 23

23

Illustration of psychodynamics: Suppression

- Thought can't be stopped per se, but it can be suppressed.
- **Suppression** is the conscious, intentional attempt to remove a thought from attention.
Tends to backfire, leading to even greater occurrence of the unwanted thought because unconscious processes tend to push the thought back into consciousness.
- Therefore, it makes more sense, as a suppression strategy, to accept the thought into consciousness.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409 - 411) 24

24

Thought suppression examples

- Food when on a diet
- Memories of lost lover
- Trying to keep a secret
- Not thinking about pink elephant
- ?

Based on Reeve (2018, p. 409)

25

25

Illustration of psychodynamics: Suppression

- Therefore, it makes more sense, as a suppression strategy, to accept the thought into consciousness.
- e.g., Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409 - 411)

26

26

Terror management theory

- **Mortality salience:** Awareness that one's death is inevitable
- **Death anxiety:** Mortality salience can lead to paralysing anxiety.
- This "terror" needs to be managed to keep the paralysis at bay.
- To cope, people use defenses to think and behave in ways that enhance perceived immortality, such as through:
 - belief in afterlife
 - commitment to a protective cultural worldview

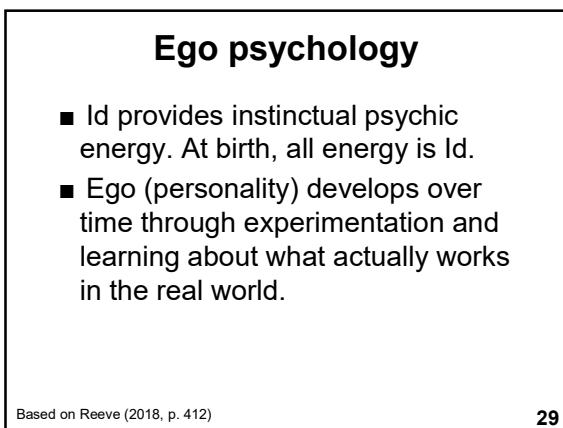
Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 409 - 411)

27

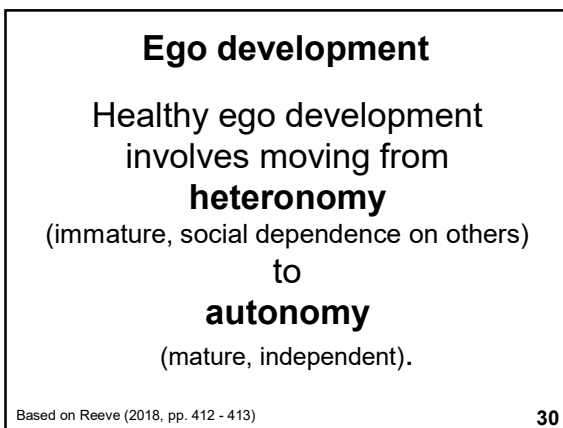
27



28



29



30

Ego development stages

Ego as a developmental process that moves through stages:

- Symbiotic: Infantile, other provides
- Impulsive: Selfish, weak ego
- Self-protective: Rule-based constraint
- Conformist: Identification with group
- Conscientious: Internalisation of rules
- Autonomous: Copes with inner conflicts

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 412-413, which is based on Loevinger, 1976) 31

31

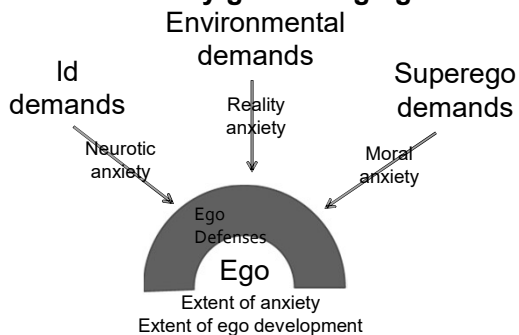
Motivational importance of ego development

- Ego defence: Ego develops to defend against anxiety
- Ego offence: Ego develops to empower the person to interact more effectively and more proactively with its surroundings.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 413-416) 32

32

Defense mechanisms buffer the ego from anxiety-generating agents



Based on Figure 16.2, Reeve (2018, p. 413) 33

33

Defense mechanism levels of maturity (Vaillant)

- I – **Pathological**
(psychotic denial, delusional projection)
- II – **Immature**
(fantasy, projection, passive aggression, acting out)
- III – **Neurotic**
(intellectualisation, reaction formation, dissociation, displacement, repression)
- IV – **Mature**
(humour, sublimation, suppression, altruism, anticipation)

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 413-415) **34**

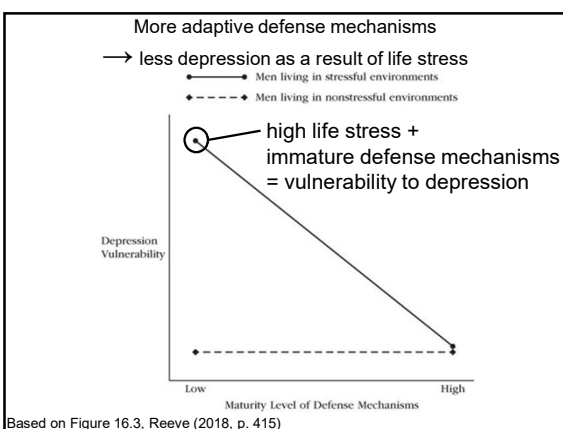
34

Mature defense mechanisms → better life adjustment

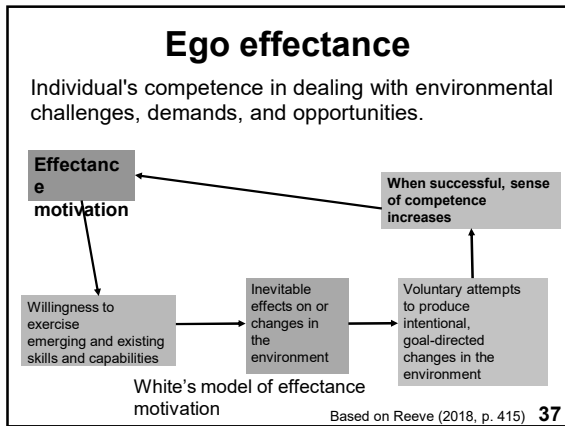
	Mature (N = 25)	Immature (N = 31)
Overall adjustment		
1) Top third in adult adjustment	62%	6%
2) Bottom third in adult adjustment	4%	65%
3) "Happiness" (top third)	68%	16%
Career adjustment		
1) Income over \$20,000/year	88%	48%
2) Job meets ambition for self	92%	58%
3) Active public service outside job	56%	29%
Social adjustment		
1) Rich friendship pattern	64%	6%
2) Marriage in least harmonious quartile or divorced	28%	61%
3) Barren friendship pattern	4%	52%
4) No competitive sports (age 40-50)	24%	77%
Psychological adjustment		
1) 10+ psychiatric visits	0%	45%
2) Ever diagnosed mentally ill	0%	55%
3) Emotional problems in childhood	20%	45%
4) Worst childhood environment (bottom fourth)	12%	39%
5) Fails to take full vacation	28%	61%
6) Able to be aggressive with others (top fourth)	36%	6%
Medical adjustment		
1) 4+ adult hospitalizations	8%	26%
2) 5+ days sick leave/year	0%	23%
3) Recent health poor by objective exam	0%	36%
4) Subjective health consistently judged excellent since college	68%	48%

Based on Reeve (2015, Figure 16.3, p. 487). Source: From Adaptation to Life (p. 87, by Vaillant, 1977: Little, Brown & Company. Copyright 1977 by George E. Vaillant.

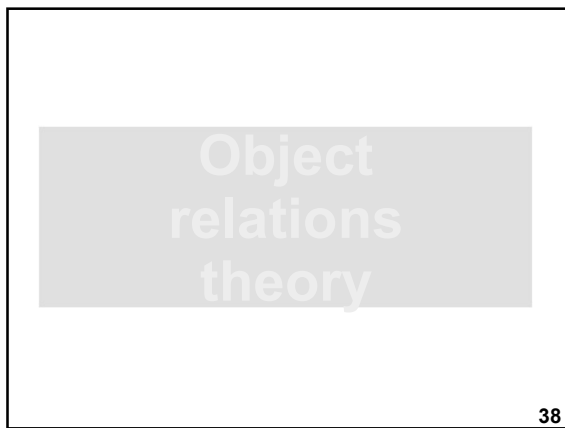
35



36



37



38

Object relations theory

- People relate to objects (others) to satisfy their emotional and psychological need for relatedness.
- Early representations of relations with caregivers influence subsequent relations with others.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 416-417) 39

39

Object relations theory

- How people develop their psyche in relation to others (objects).
- Early experiences with caregivers become internally represented; shape future relations.
- Characterised by:
 - **Unconscious tone:**
Benevolent vs malevolent
 - **Capacity for emotional involvement:**
Mutual concern vs. selfishness/narcissism
 - **Mutuality of autonomy with others:**
Objects perceived as autonomous present no risk to the integrity of perceiver

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 416-417) 40

40

Criticisms

41

41

Criticisms of the psychodynamic perspective

- Freudian concepts arose from case studies of disturbed individuals.
- Many Freudian concepts are not scientifically testable.
- Many aspects of Freudian theory were wrong (e.g., theory of superego formation).
- Psychoanalytic theory is poor at prediction.

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 419-420) 42


42

Summary

- Ways of studying the unconscious:
 - Freudian unconscious
 - Adaptive unconscious
 - Implicit motives
 - Priming
- Postulates:
 - Much of mental life is unconscious
 - Mental processes operate in parallel
 - Ego development → ego maturity
 - Mental representations in childhood → guide adult social motivations

Based on Reeve (2018, pp. 420-421) 43

43

Upcoming lectures 

- 11a: **How to make a multimedia recording and publish it online**
- 11b: **Growth psychology (Ch 15)**
- **Summary & conclusion (Ch 17)**

44

44

References

- Freud, S. (1917). [Original work published 1905]. *Wit and its relation to the unconscious*. <http://www.bartleby.com/279/>
- Reeve, J. (2015). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (6th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Reeve, J. (2018). *Understanding motivation and emotion* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

45

45
