Theories of Personality

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this chapter, you are expected to:

1. define personality;
2. identify the various perspectives on studying personality;
3. discuss some concepts in Psychoanalytic Theory such as instincts and libido, the id, ego and superego, and the defense mechanisms;
4. explain how personality develops;
5. distinguish the other psychoanalytic theory of Freud; and
6. know the current personality theories.

Personality

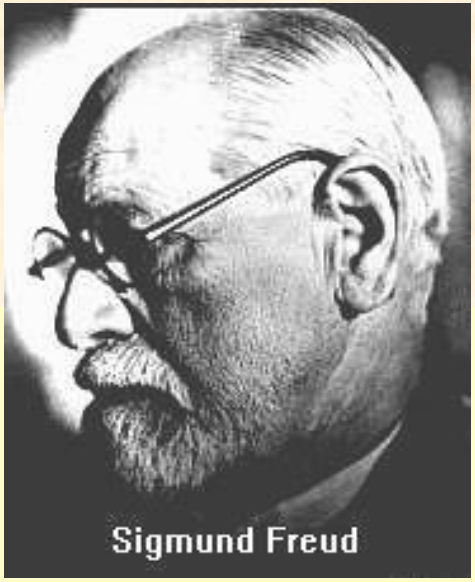
"Characteristic pattern of thinking, feeling and acting."

Four major perspectives on Personality

Psychoanalytic - unconscious motivations
Trait - specific dimensions of personality
Humanistic - inner capacity for growth
Social-Cognitive - influence of environment

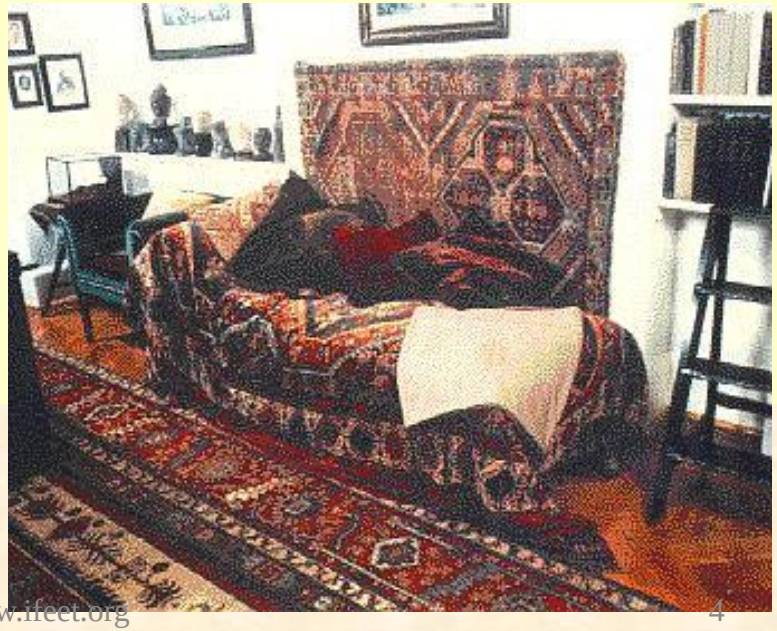
Psychoanalytic Perspective

"first comprehensive theory of personality"



(1856-1939)

University of Vienna 1873
Voracious Reader
Medical School Graduate

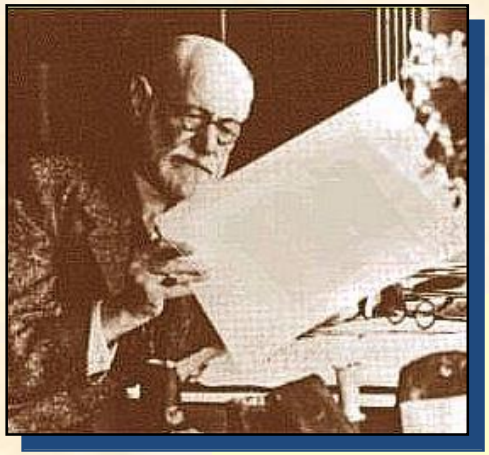


Specialized in Nervous Disorders

Some patients' disorders had no physical cause!

Psychoanalytic Perspective

"first comprehensive theory of personality"



Q: What caused neurological symptoms in patients with no neurological problems?

Hypnosis → **Unconscious**

↑

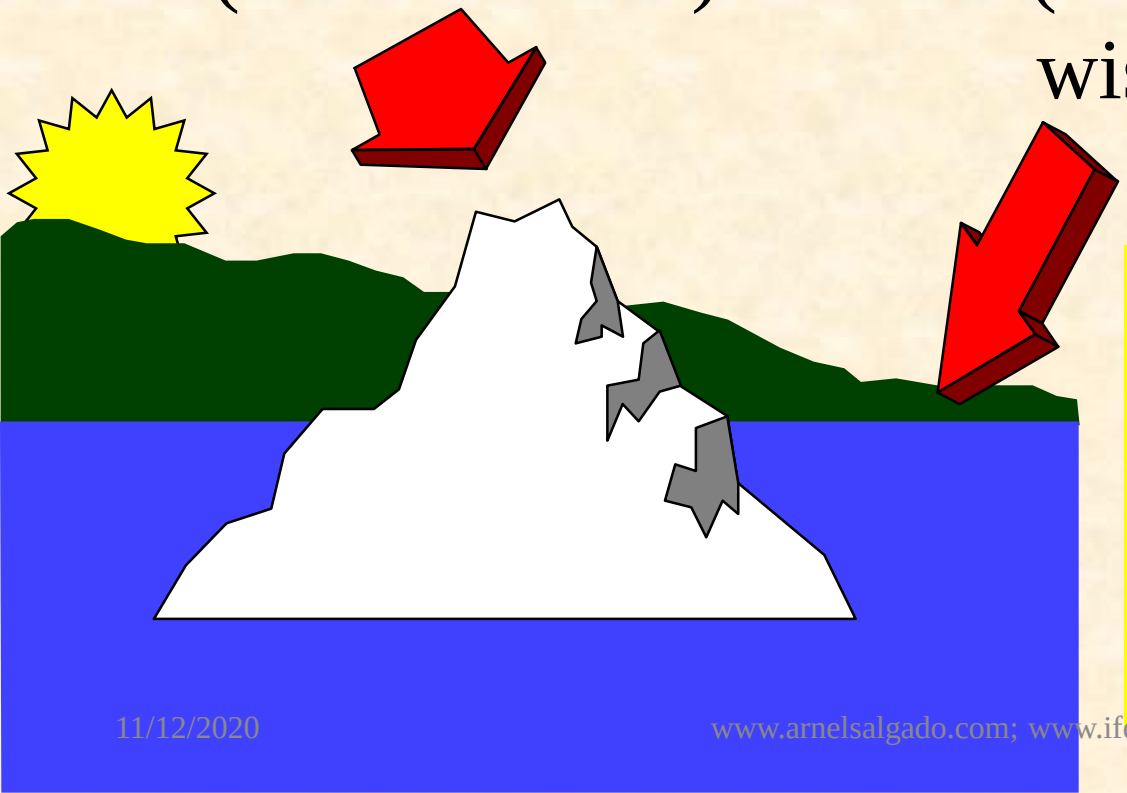
Free Association → **"Psychoanalysis"**

The Unconscious

"the mind is like an iceberg - mostly hidden"

Conscious Awareness
small part above surface
(Preconscious)

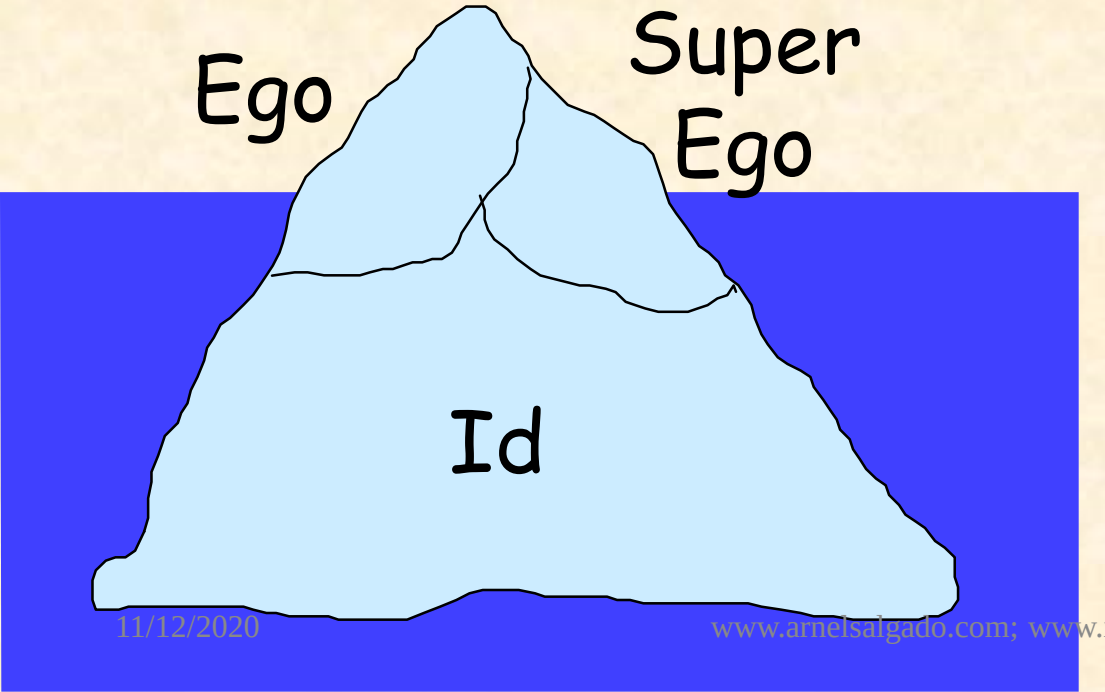
Unconscious
below the surface
(thoughts, feelings, wishes, memories)

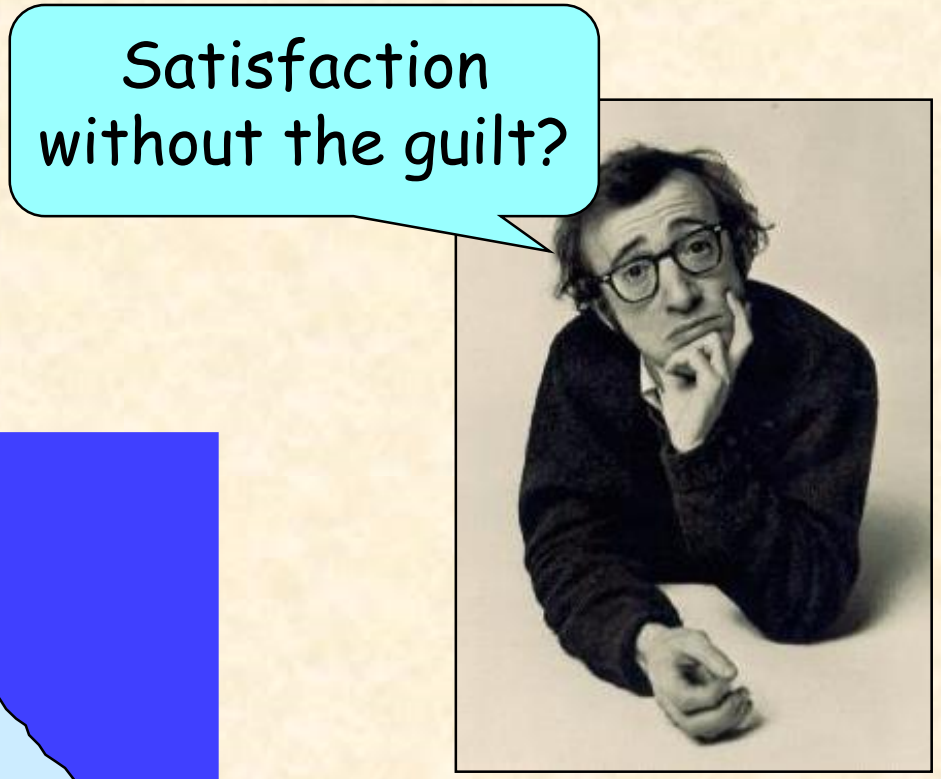


Repression
banishing unacceptable thoughts & passions to unconscious
Dreams & Slips

Freud & Personality Structure

"Personality arises from conflict twixt agressive, pleasure-seeking impulses and social restraints"

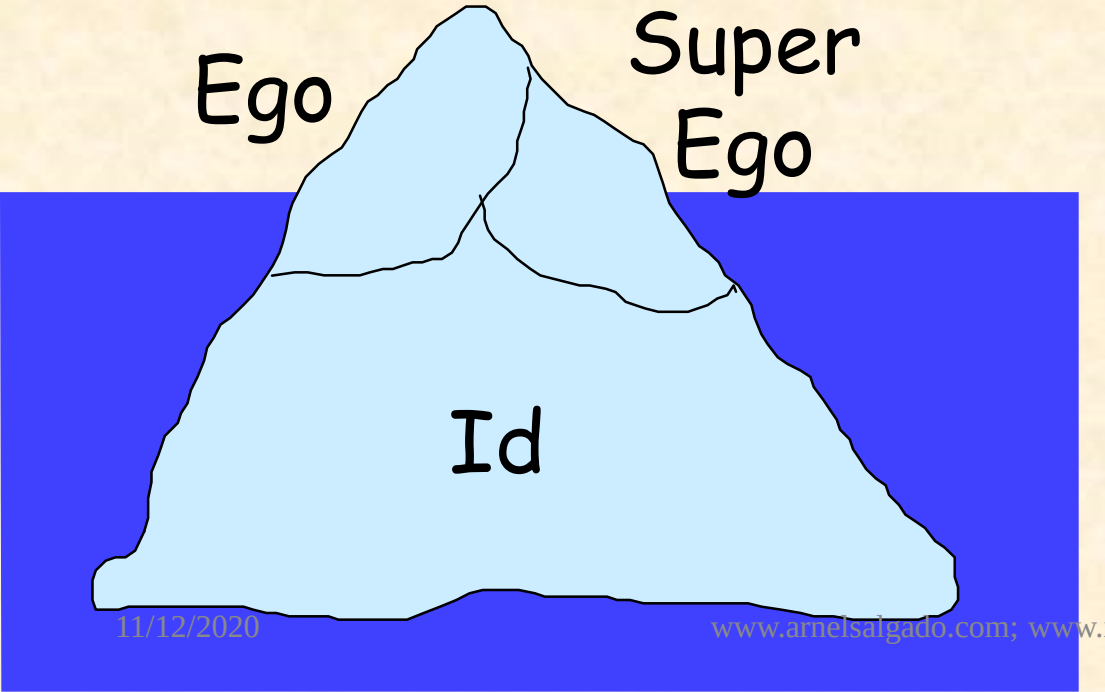




Freud & Personality Structure

Id - energy constantly striving to satisfy basic drives
Pleasure Principle

Ego - seeks to gratify the Id in realistic ways
Reality Principle



Super Ego
- voice of conscience that focuses on how we *ought* to behave

Freud & Personality Development

"personality forms during the first few years of life, rooted in unresolved conflicts of early childhood"

Psychosexual Stages

Oral (0-18 mos) - centered on the mouth

Anal (18-36 mos) - focus on bowel/bladder elim.

Phallic (3-6 yrs) - focus on genitals/"Oedipus Complex"
(Identification & Gender Identity)

Latency (6-puberty) - sexuality is dormant

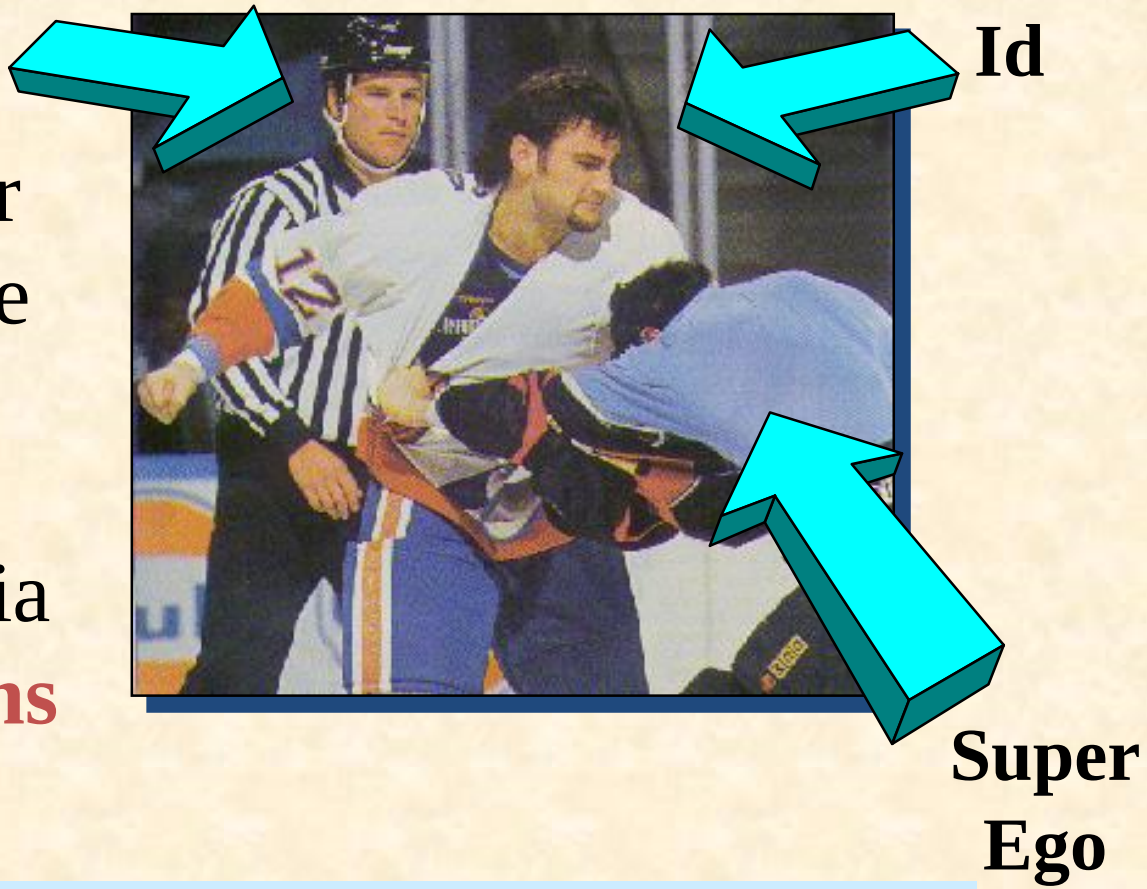
Genital (puberty on) - sexual feelings toward others

Strong conflict can **fixate** an individual at Stages 1,2 or 3

Defense Mechanisms

When the inner war gets out of hand, the result is **Anxiety**

Ego protects itself via **Defense Mechanisms**



Defense Mechanisms reduce/redirect anxiety by distorting reality

Defense Mechanisms

- **Repression** - banishes certain thoughts/feelings from consciousness (underlies all other defense mechanisms)
- **Regression** - retreating to earlier stage of fixated development
- **Reaction Formation** - ego makes unacceptable impulses appear as their opposites
- **Projection** - attributes threatening impulses to others
- **Rationalization** - generate self-justifying explanations to hide the real reasons for our actions
- **Displacement** - divert impulses toward a more acceptable object
- **Sublimation** - transform unacceptable impulse into something socially valued

The Unconscious & Assessment

How can we assess personality?
(i.e., the unconscious)

Objective Tests?

No - tap the conscious

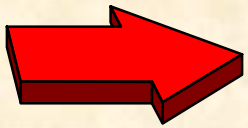
Projective Tests?

Yes - tap the unconscious

Thematic Apperceptions Test (TAT)
Rorschach Inkblot Test

Evaluating the Psychoanalytic Perspective

Were Freud's theories the "best of his time" or were they simply incorrect?



Current research contradicts many of Freud's specific ideas

Development does not stop in childhood

Slips of the tongue are likely competing "nodes" in memory network

Dreams may not be unconscious drives and wishes

Freud's Ideas as Scientific Theory

Theories must explain observations and offer testable hypotheses

Few Objective Observations

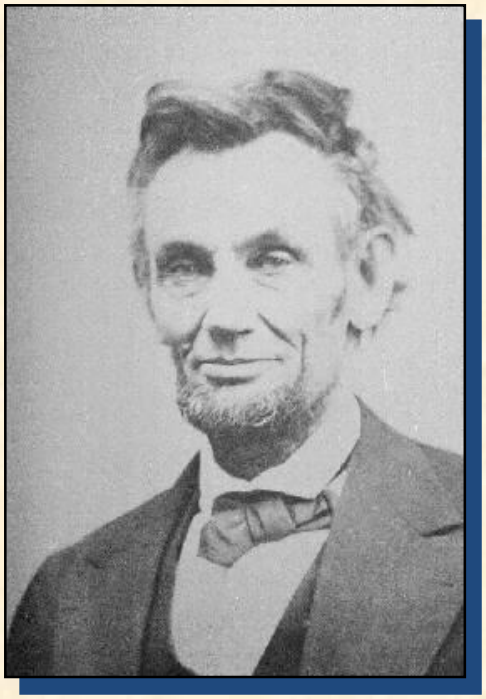
Few Hypotheses

(Freud's theories based on his recollections & interpretations of patients' free associations, dreams & slips o' the tongue)

Does Not PREDICT Behavior or Traits

Trait Perspective

No hidden personality dynamics…
just basic personality dimensions



Traits - people's characteristic behaviors & conscious motives

How do we describe & classify different personalities?
(*Type A vs Type B* or ***Depressed vs Cheerful***?)

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator - classify people based upon responses to 126 questions

Are There "Basic" Traits?

What trait "dimensions" describe personality?

Combination of 2 or 3 ***genetically determined*** dimensions

Extraversion/Introversion
Emotional Stability/Instability

Expanded set of factors "The Big 5"

The Big Five

Emotional Stability

- Calm/Anxious
- Secure/Insecure

Extraversion

- Sociable/Retiring
- Fun Loving/Sober

Openness

- Imaginative/Practical
- Independent/Conforming

Agreeableness

- Soft-Hearted/Ruthless
- Trusting/Suspicious

Conscientiousness

- Organized/Disorganized
- Careful/Careless

Assessing Traits

How can we assess traits?
(aim to simplify a person's behavior patterns)

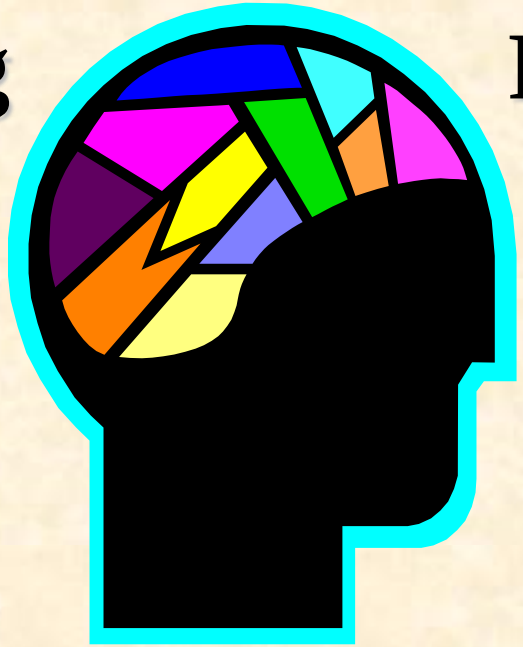
Personality Inventories

MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory)

- most widely used personality inventory
- assess psychological disorders (not normal traits)
- empirically derived - test items selected based upon how well they discriminate between groups of traits

The Humanistic Perspective

Maslow's Self-Actualizing Person



Roger's Person-Centered Perspective

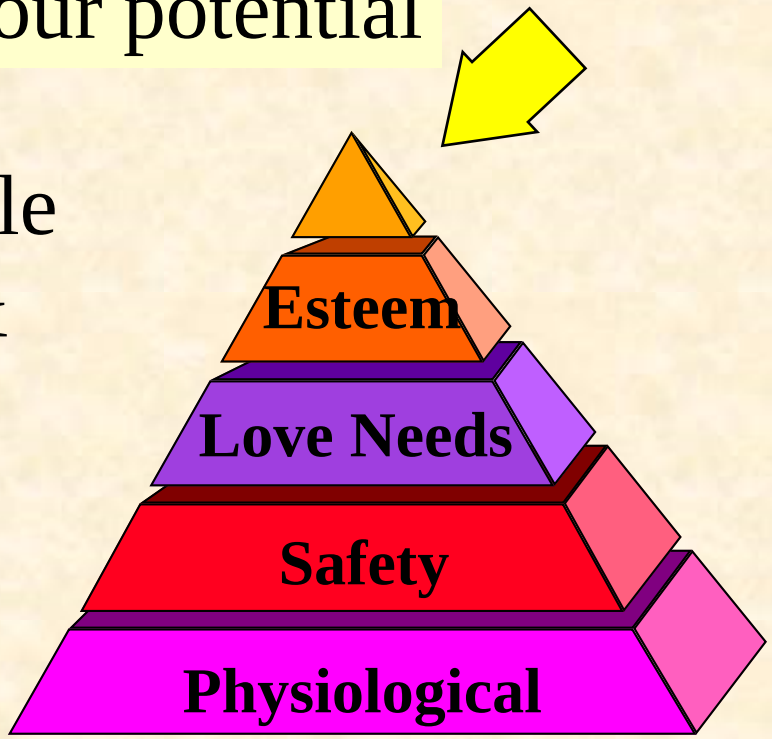
"Healthy" rather than "Sick"
Individual as greater than the sum of test scores

Maslow & Self-Actualization

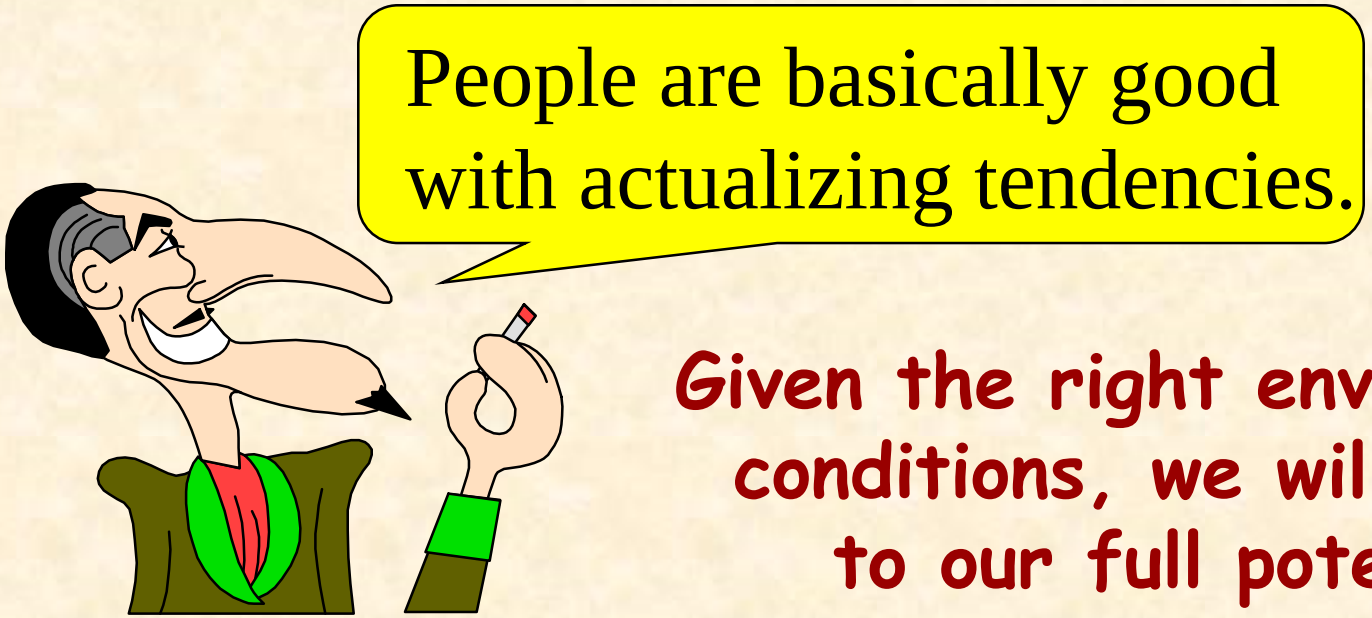
Self-Actualization

the process of fufilling our potential

- Studied healthy, creative people
- Abe Lincoln, Tom Jefferson & Eleanor Roosevelt
- Self-Aware & Self-Accepting
- Open & Spontaneous
- Loving & Caring
- Problem-Centered not Self-Centered



Roger's Person-Centered Perspective



Given the right environmental conditions, we will develop to our full potentials

Genuineness, Acceptance, Empathy

Self Concept - central feature of personality (+ or -)

Assessing & Evaluating the Self

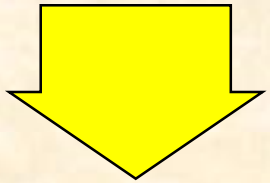
? Primarily through questionnaires in which people report their self-concept.

? Also by understanding others' subjective personal experiences during therapy

X Concepts are vague & subjective.
Assumptions are naïvely optimistic.

Social-Cognitive Perspective

Behavior learned through conditioning & observation

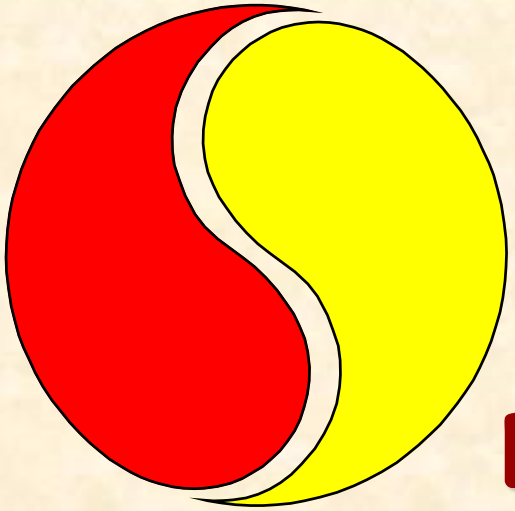


What we think about our situation affects our behavior

Interaction of Environment & Intellect

Reciprocal Determinism

Personal/ Cognitive Factors



Environment Factors

Behavior

Internal World + External World = Us

Personal Control

Internal Locus of Control

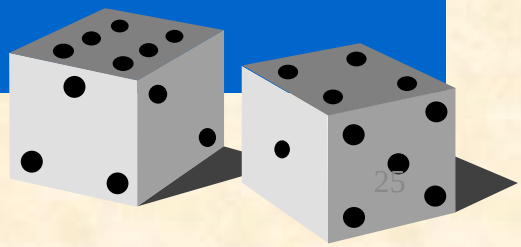
You pretty much control your own destiny

External Locus of Control

Luck, fate and/or powerful others control your destiny

Methods of Study

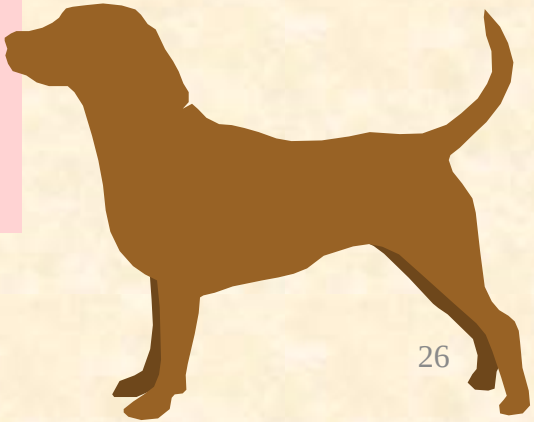
- Correlate feelings of control with behavior
- Experiment by raising/lowering people's sense of control and noting effects



Outcomes of Personal Control

Learned Helplessness

Uncontrollable bad events → Perceived lack of control → Generalized helpless behavior

Important Issue

- **Nursing Homes**
- **Prisons**
- **Colleges**