

PYSC 333: Psychology of Personality

Session 2– Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory of Personality-
Part 1

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Session Overview

- A most commonly known theory of Personality in Psychology is Freud's Psychoanalytic theory of personality
- Concepts in Freud's psychoanalysis theory, such as unconscious forces, instinctual drives, structure of personality, and unconscious conflicts in early childhood all contribute to the formation of a person's personality
- **Discuss how** elements of these concepts interact to determine a person's personality
- **Discuss how** anxiety is produced as a result of interactions among the structure of personality
- **introduces the concept of defense mechanisms, which individuals use to overcome anxieties**

Session Goals and Objectives

At the end of this session, you should be able to

- Outline the fundamentals of personality, according to Freud
- Distinguish between death and life instincts and their role in personality formation
- Describe the levels of consciousness
- Describe the structure of personality- Id, Ego and Superego
- Explain how anxiety is created as a consequence of an imbalance between the Id, Ego and Superego
- Outline and explain the three types of anxiety

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Assumptions of Freud's Psychoanalytic theory
- Instincts
- Levels of consciousness
- Structure of personality
- The nature and role of anxiety

Reading List

- Carducci, B. J. (2009). *The Psychology of personality* (2nd ed.). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd (Ch. 3)
- Larsen, R. J., & Buss, D. M. (2008). *Personality psychology: Domain of knowledge about human nature* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill. (Ch. 9)
- Schultz, D. P., & Schultz, S. E. (2005). *Theories of personality*. Belmont: Wadsworth. (Ch. 2)

Topic One

ASSUMPTIONS OF FREUD'S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

- Formal study of personality began with Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis theory in the late 1900s
- To date, it remains significant in the study of psychology and psychotherapy

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

- Psychoanalytic theory emphasizes
 - a) *unconscious forces*
 - b) *instinctual drives of sex and aggression*
and
 - c) *unconscious conflicts in early childhood*
(Schultz & Schultz, 2005)

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

- 1. Freud believed that nothing happened by chance or by accident
- Slip of tongue- calling someone by a wrong name, jokes, missing an appointment, dreams etc.. are expressions of *psychic determinism*
- Psychic determinism- all mental processes are determined by unconscious or pre-existing mental complexes- they are not spontaneous

Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

- 2. Behaviour to a large extent is determined by unconscious forces
- E.g. telling dirty jokes may be a way for a person to express his/ her sexual desires or sexual drive (Carducci, 2009)

Topic Two

INSTINCTS

Instincts

- Instincts are the basic elements of personality, a driving force for actions that people take
- *“They are a form of energy or driving force/ impulse that connects the body’s needs with the minds wishes”* (Schultz & Schultz, 2005, p. 52)
- Example- when a need such as hunger is aroused in the body, it creates a physiological excitation (bodily energy) which the mind transforms into wishes

Instincts

- Individuals are born with basic instincts such as desire for food, water, air and also sex and aggression
- Personality develops as a person tries to satisfy such needs (Berstein, Clark-Stewart, Penner, Roy & Wickens, 2000)

Instincts

- Different individuals may have the same needs (hunger, sex etc.), but the drive to satisfy such needs may vary
- This explains the diversity in human behaviour
- Freud categorised these instincts as
 - the life instincts and
 - the death instincts

Types of instincts

1. Life instincts or Eros

- The drive that ensures survival by satisfying the need for food, water, air and sex
- The driving force/energy behind this instinct is called the *libido*
- Sex was considered by Freud as the most important for personality

Types of instincts

2. Death instincts or Thanatos

- This represents an individual's desire to complete a life cycle (Freud, 1920, 1955)
- Every living thing decays and **die (dies)** and so individuals have an unconscious wish to die
- This instinct also produces aggression and destructive urges

Types of instincts

- It represents the drive to harm, destroy or aggress against others or oneself (Larsen & Buss, 2008)
- Aggressive instincts compels a person to destroy, conquer and kill
- Freud, compares this compulsion to sex drive
- Initially, Freud proposed the two instincts opposed one another but later thought they combine in many ways

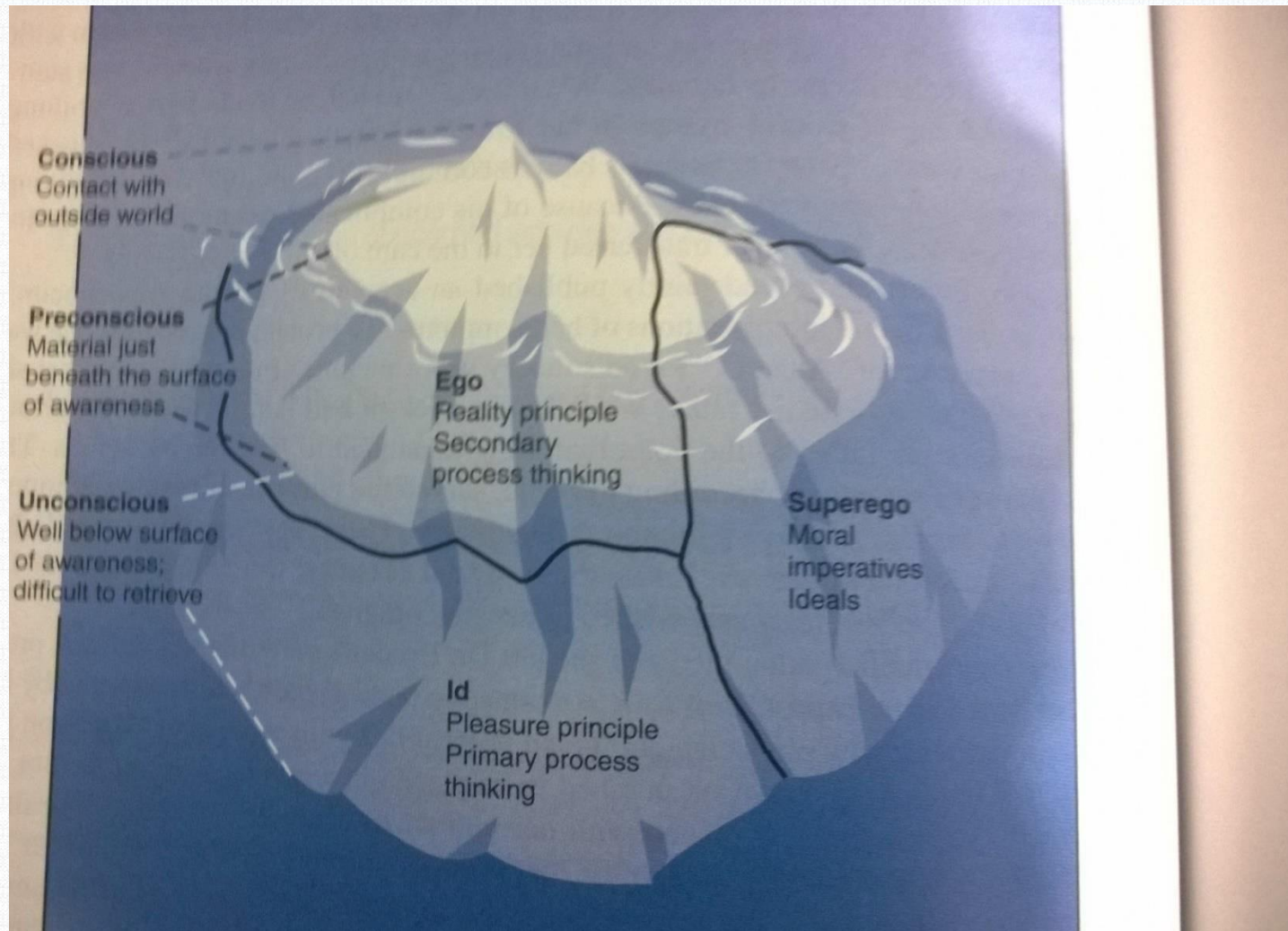
Topic Three

LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

Freud's Levels of Consciousness

- Freud compared the human mind to an iceberg in the sea and identified three levels of conscious awareness
- The *conscious mind*, the *preconscious mind* and the *unconscious mind*
- The unconscious forces determine a person's *personality* (Feldman, 1999)

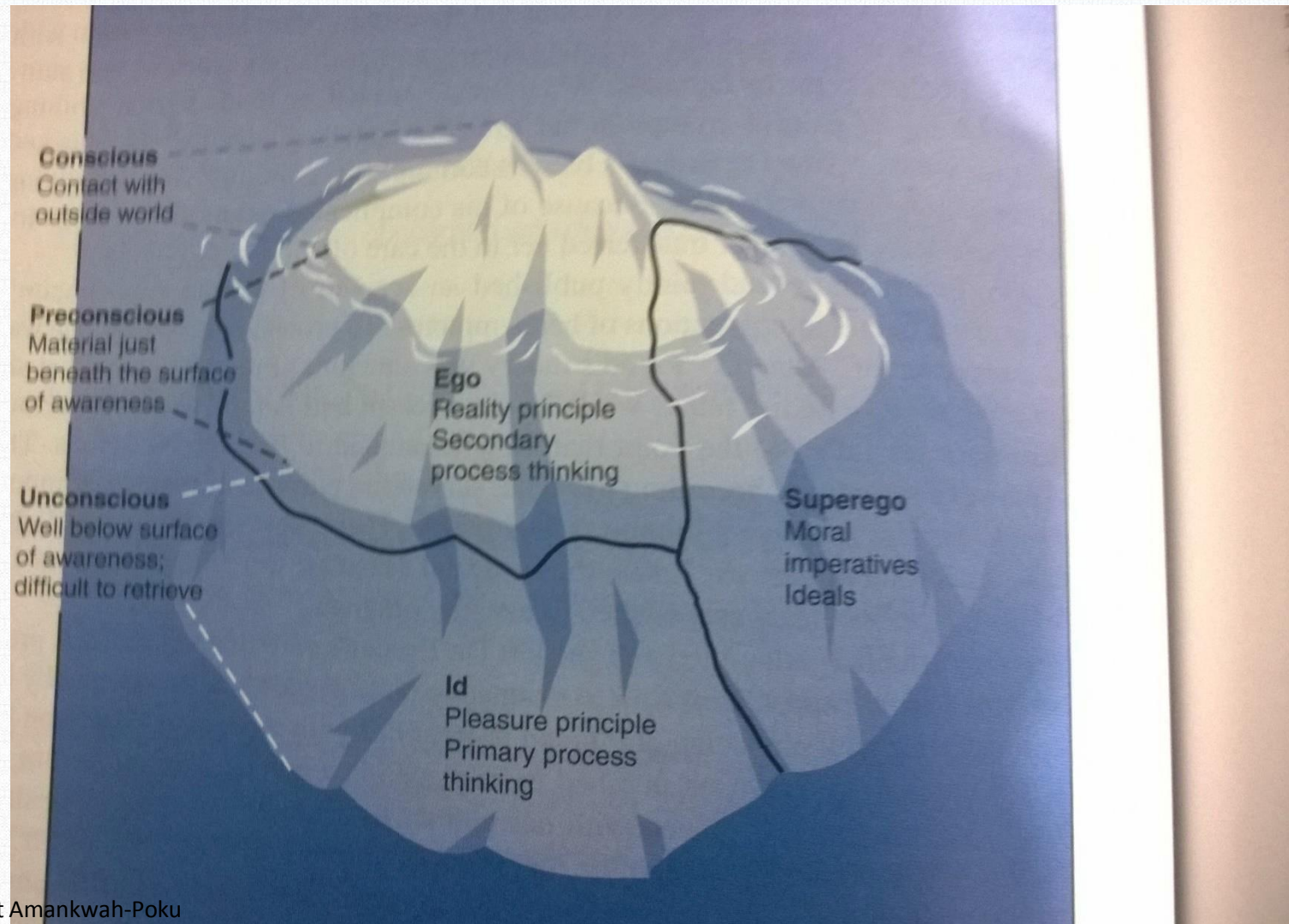
Levels of Consciousness



The Conscious Mind

- Tip of the iceberg- the part of the mind that one is presently aware of
- Contains thoughts, feelings and perceptions
- Limited to what one is seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting or thinking at a given moment (Carducci, 2009)
- Holds only a small fraction of information

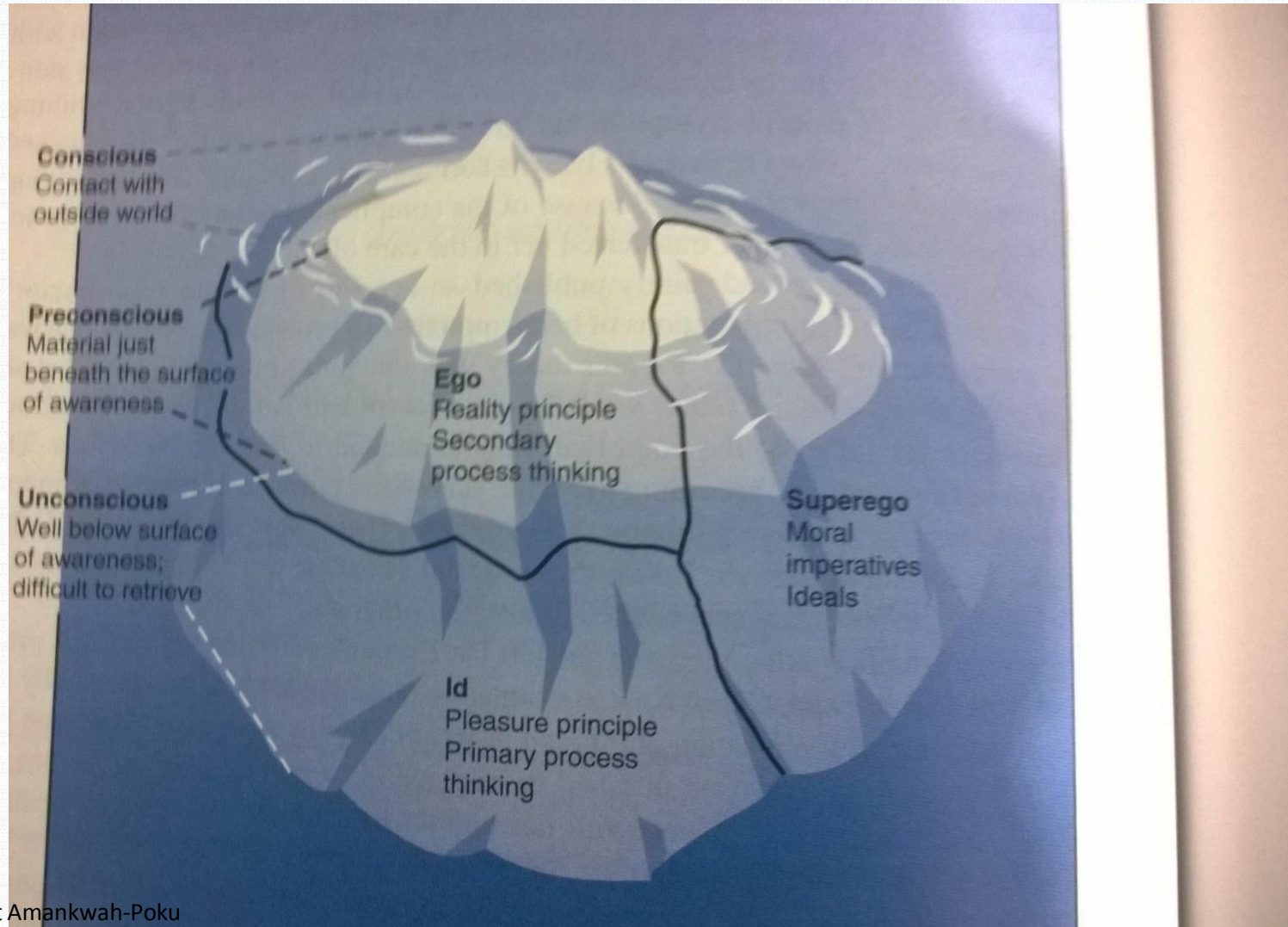
The Conscious Mind



Preconscious Mind

- The part of the iceberg that lies just beneath the conscious mind or below the surface
- Holds memories, thoughts, information etc.. not presently conscious to a person, but can easily be brought to consciousness (Freud, 1924)
- Contains easily accessible memories, that were once conscious (Lahey, 2001)
- Has very little influence on behaviour (Carducci, 2009)

Preconscious Mind



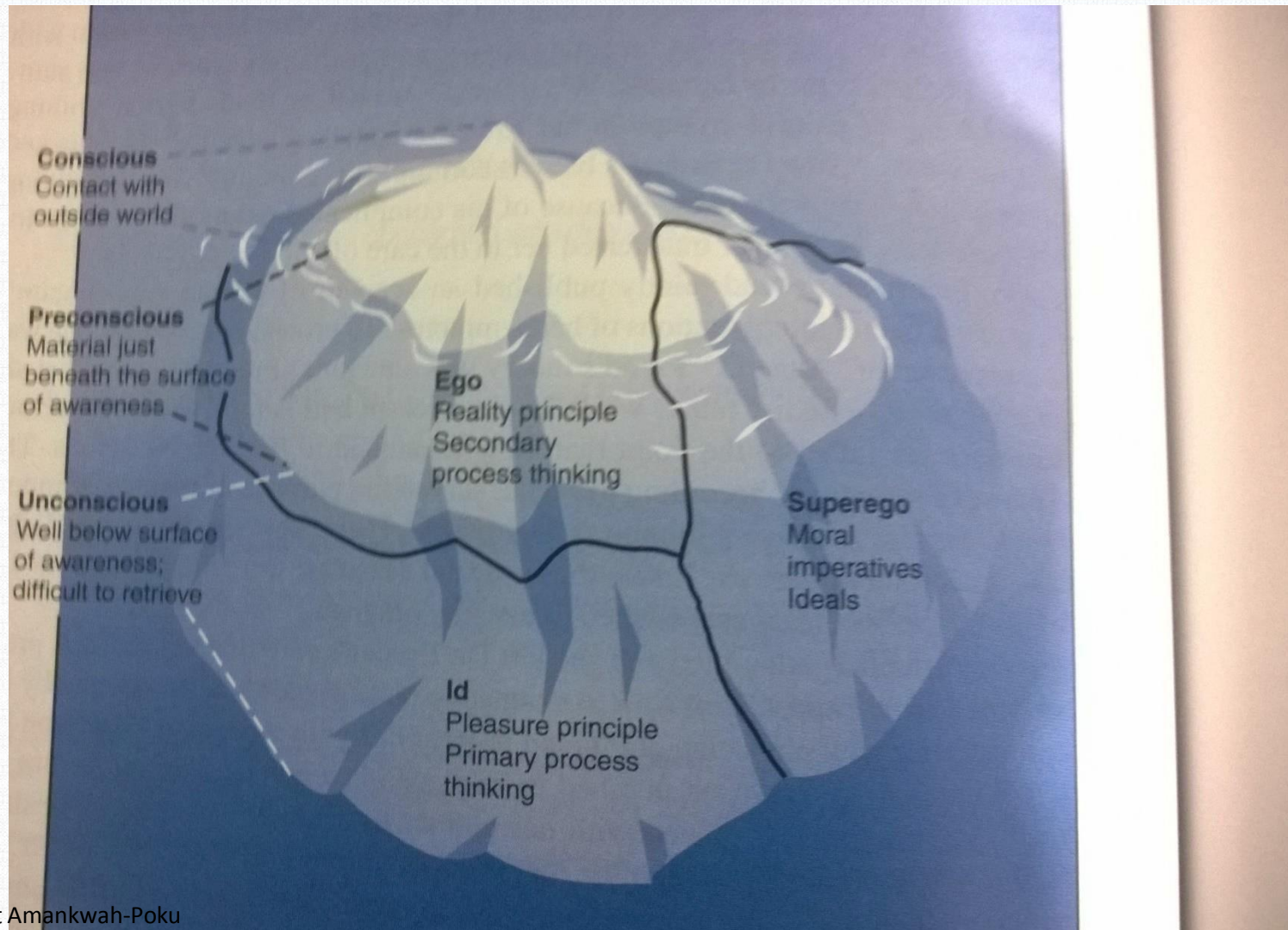
Unconscious Mind

- This lies beneath the preconscious mind, further down the iceberg
- The largest part of the mind and has an unlimited capacity of storing information
- The storehouse of primitive instinctive motives (Lahey, 2001), unacceptable information and memories, thoughts and feelings or repressed drives

Unconscious Mind

- These are hidden away because they are threatening to the conscious mind
- According to Freud, it harbours instinctual drives and uncomfortable memories
- Contents here can enter the conscious mind in disguised form- e.g. slip of tongue or through assisted memory such as hypnosis or free association, dream analysis

Unconscious Mind



Topic Four

STRUCTURE OF PERSONALITY

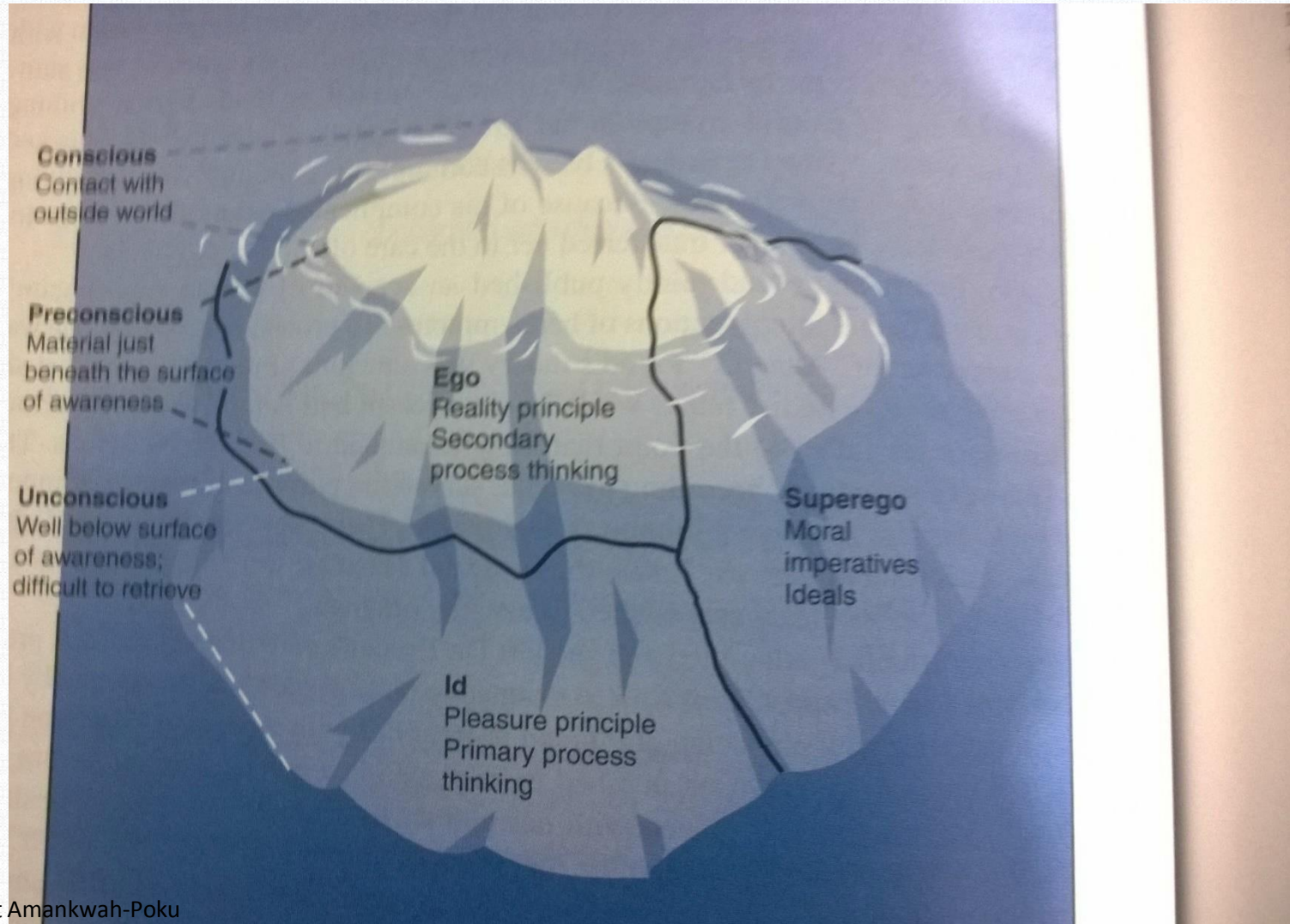
The Structure of Personality

- Freud described three components of personality: the *id*, *ego* and *superego*
- These interact to form personality

The Id- The core of personality

- The inborn, unconscious part of personality where instincts (life and death) resides
- Has the sole purpose to reduce tension created by primitive desires to satisfy hunger, sex, aggression and other irrational impulses
- Operates at the unconscious level, thus, one is not consciously aware of its motives

The Id- The core of personality



The Id- The core of personality

- Has no conception of reality and seeks to satisfy its needs in unrealistic ways
- It is selfish and seeks to obtain immediate pleasure and avoid pain (Lahey, 2001) irrespective of societal rules
- Operates on the pleasure principles- seeks immediate gratification through primary process thinking

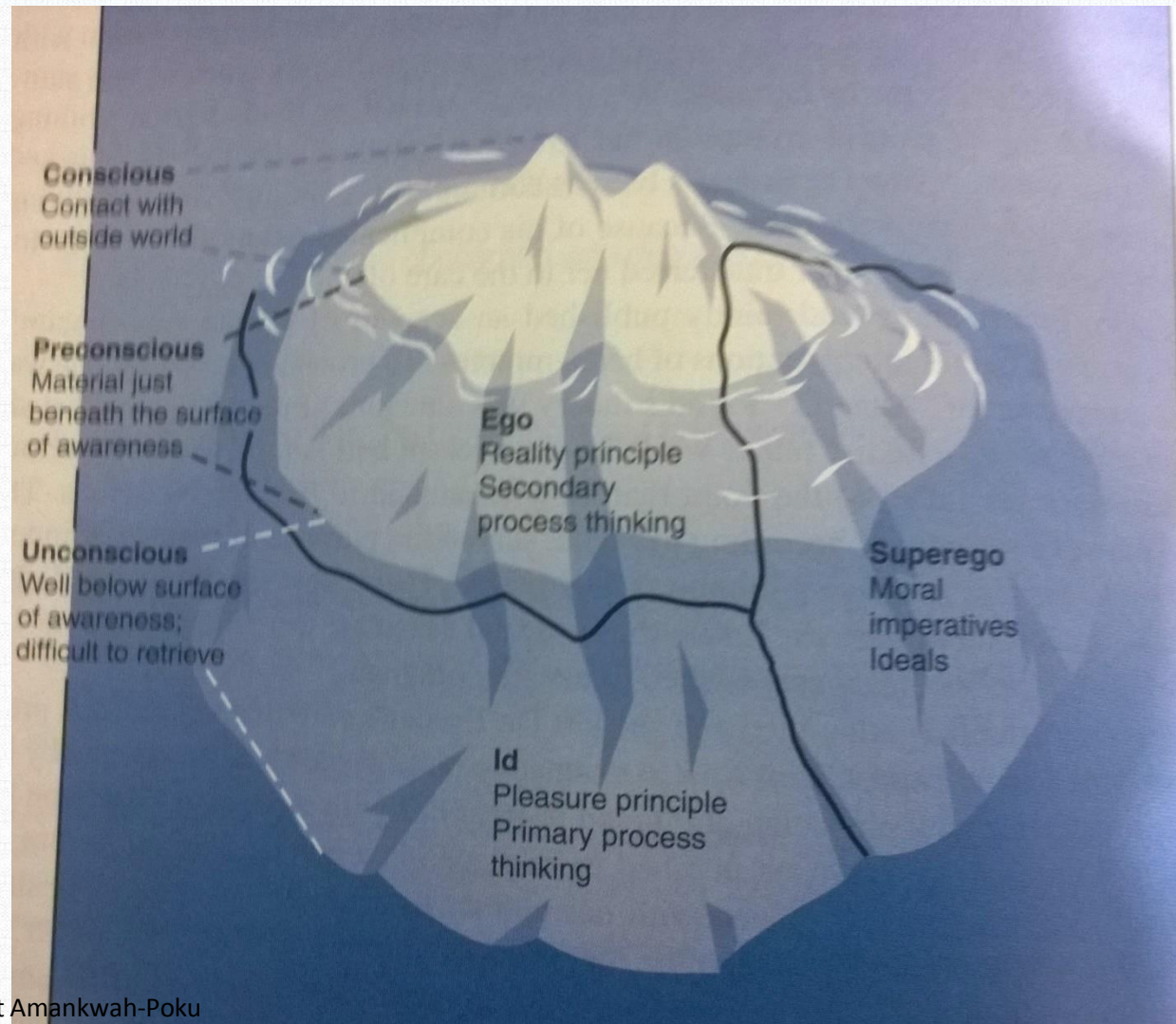
The Id- The core of personality

- It dominates during infancy- E.g. crying
- The child ~~have~~ (has) no values or morals and does not reason or follow logic (Larsen & Buss, 2008)
- Part of the id is converted into two parts, the ego and superego

The ego—The master of reality

- The seat of thinking, planning, and problem solving in a more realistic manner (Coon, 2001)
- As a child grows up and teachers, parents etc.. place restrictions on them, the ego develops
- Formed as a way of the id finding realistic ways of satisfying its need

The ego—The master of reality



The ego- The master of reality

- Finds a balance between unreasonable demands of the id and the practical restrictions in the real world
- Operates according to the reality principle,
- Engages in secondary process thinking as it develops strategies for realistic problem solving

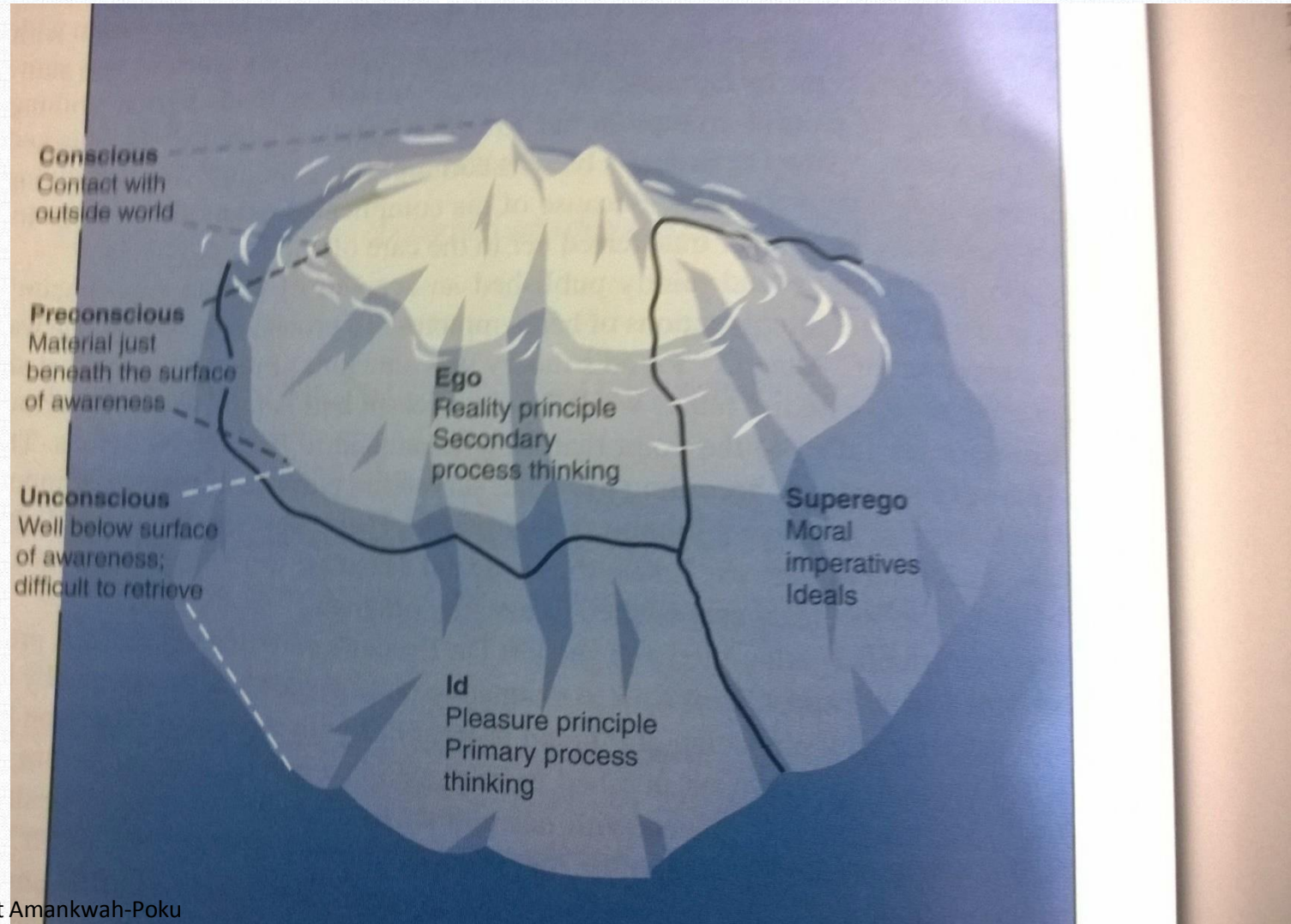
The ego- The master of reality

- Serves as a mediator between the id and the real world
- Spans all three levels of consciousness
- Thus, has contact with the id (unconscious mind) and the real/ external world (conscious mind)
- The ego is *like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse'* (Freud, 1923, p.15)

Superego – Moral authority of personality

- As a child ~~internalize~~ (internalizes) the rules, regulations, morals and values of society, the superego forms
- Superego acts as a sensor for the thoughts and actions of the ego
- Ensures a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours are within society's moral standards

Super ego– the moral authority of personality



Superego- the moral authority of personality

- It helps to control the impulsive desires of the id and makes behaviour less selfish and more virtuous (Fieldman, 1999)
- It is our conscience, and its main tool for enforcing right and wrong is “guilt”
- Parents are the main agents in creating the superego
- The superego thus, acts as an internal parent that controls behaviour (Coon, 2001)

Superego the moral authority of personality

- The superego is formed of two parts
 1. The ego conscience
- This reflects actions for which a person has been punished
- When standards of the conscience is not met, a person is punished internally with the feeling of guilt (Coon, 2001)

Superego- the moral authority of personality

The ego ideal

- The source of goals and aspirations
- When we achieve such standards, we feel proud
- Rewards all right behaviours, e.g. when you return lost money, the super ego rewards the ego in the form of pride

Superego- the moral authority of personality

- Shares an important feature with the id:
- As unreasonable and unrealistic as the id and demand to be obeyed
- Does not consider the practical realities of society/ the real world
- It seeks perfectionism and pushes a person towards greater virtue

Superego- the moral authority of personality

- If left unchecked, will create perfectionists who are not able to make compromises in life
- Thus, the ego keeps both the unrealistic id and the moralistic superego in check

Interaction between the id, ego and superego

- A balance results in an adjusted personality
- An imbalance results in a dysfunctional or maladaptive personality
- E.g.- an overpowering id could result in a person becoming
 - impulsive and uncontrollable, seeking immediate gratification e.g. a criminal, a rapist, ruthless person etc..

Interaction between the id, ego and superego

- An overpowering ego could result in a person who is
 1. Unable to be spontaneous or act on impulse
 2. Extremely rigid with rules and regulations or
 3. One with no sense of right and wrong

Interaction between the id, ego and superego

- An overpowering superego in an individual could result in
 - ❑ An extremely moralistic person,
 - ❑ A perfectionist or
 - ❑ A righteous person (Carducci, 2009)
 - ❑ e.g. Rev. minister, political zealot etc.

Topic Five

THE NATURE AND ROLE OF ANXIETY

The Nature and Role of Anxiety

- If the ego is unable to use the reality principle then anxiety is experienced
- Anxiety is an important part of Freud's theory of personality
- Anxiety is key in the development of dysfunctional behaviours
- A form of warning to a person that the ego is being threatened

The Nature and Role of Anxiety

- Three types of anxiety: Reality anxiety, Neurotic anxiety and Moral anxiety (Quintar, Lane and Goeltz, 1998)
- 1. Reality/ Objective Anxiety – signal for danger
- The fear of tangible/ actual dangers or real external threat
- The signal the ego receives when there is danger in the real world

The nature and role of anxiety

- This anxiety goes away when that danger is no longer present
- Reality anxiety which is extreme comes in the form of phobia. E.g. fear of suffocating in a large crowd
- This may eventually prevent a person from going out

The nature and role of anxiety

2. Neurotic Anxiety – Losing Control

- A direct conflict between the id and the ego produces neurotic anxiety
- Triggered by the superego when it believes that the ego is losing control over inhibiting id impulses
- The individual feels an unconscious fear of being punished for exhibiting id impulses

The nature and role of anxiety

Moral Anxiety

- A conflict between the id and the superego
- A signal given by the superego when the id is contemplating an action that violates the superego's moral standards
- Comes in the form of feelings of guilt, shame or embarrassment that prevents the id from carrying out the unacceptable thoughts, feelings or behaviours

The nature and role of anxiety

Conclusion

- The ego take actions to try and deal with these types of anxiety to minimize the unpleasant feeling
- The rational ways to deal with these threats is
to
 - a) run from the "actual danger"
 - b) inhibit the id impulses or
 - c) obey the conscience

The Nature and Role of Anxiety

- Sometimes the ego becomes overwhelmed by these anxieties and take actions that are irrational
- Freud called these actions *ego defence mechanisms*
- Unconscious defence mechanisms are employed, to help ward off the unpleasant feelings resulting from anxiety

END OF SESSION 2.1

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