The Religious and Philosophical Foundations of Freud's Tripartite Theory of Personality

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Abstract

In this paper, we examine similarities between Sigmund Freud's tripartite theory of personality to foundational works across various religious and philosophical movements. First, conceptual similarities to the id, ego, and superego are illustrated through scriptural verses and commentators of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Next, elements of the tripartite theory in the Eastern religions of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism are explored. Finally, this Freudian theory is viewed in relationship to various philosophical works from Ancient Greece to modern day. We suggest these earlier tripartite approaches emanating from diverse religious and philosophical movements emerge as a broader universal understanding of man from which Freud could have profited in developing one of his most seminal theories.
Keywords: Freud, tri-partite approach, religious thought, Western philosophy, personality theory

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Sigmund Freud is widely acknowledged as not only the father of psychoanalysis, but also as a critical figure in the development of psychology and a tremendously influence on 20th century thought (As part of his legacy, he has contributed to how psychologists view personality, psychotherapy, sexual development, dream analysis, gender differences, and hypnosis cannot be understated. Nonetheless, in Ecclesiastes it is written, "What has been, will be again; what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun."[256] In this paper, we reflect on the religious and philosophical foundations of Freud's *tripartite theory of personality*, which hypothesized the existence and dynamics of the *id, ego*, and *superego*. Upon examination, aspects of the tripartite view of personality can be found in a wide variety of religions and philosophical works throughout various historical time periods, which stated similar explanations of the personality, mind, or soul of man. This article should not be viewed as a criticism of Sigmund Freud; it highlights the universality of this approach and the possible unconscious or conscious influence of these previous human thought systems on Freudian theory.

In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud explained that human personality can be broken down into three parts: (a) the id, (b) superego, and (c) ego.[257] Together, these three aspects explain our character and decision-making. According to Freud, the id reflects the more irrational or impulsive side of humans and operates based on the *pleasure principle*, or instant gratification. The most base desires of

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[256] Ecc. 1:9. *New International Version*.

[257] S. Freud, "The ego and the id," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* Vol. 19, 13-19, trans. and ed. J. Strachey. (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1961).

humans comprise, and are governed by, the id. The second aspect of personality is the superego, which is tied to morality and one's ability to defer gratification. The superego operates antagonistically to the id due to its operating on the *ideal principle*. This is to say, the superego is the part of human personality providing feedback on whether we should or should not do something referenced by social norms or moral grounds. Due to the antagonistic nature of the id and superego, these personality components are in constant conflict. Fortunately, a third personality structure, or the ego, serves to resolve these conflicts. As a mediator, the ego balances desires of the id while being respectful of the values of the superego. The ego engages in decision-making and operates based on the *reality principle*, which is the drive to assess the reality of external world and act accordingly.

Before exploring similarities of this basic intrapersonal dynamic to religious and philosophical works, let us first elaborate how these components work together with an example. Reflect back to when you were six or seven years old and imagine yourself walking into the neighborhood corner store. Upon entry, you see your favorite candy bar. However, there is only one problem; you do not have any money. What does the id instruct you to do? It tells you to "steal it!" Immediately, the superego interjects and says, "you can't steal it, it's illegal," "it's immoral," or "you will get in trouble with your parents." In the classic cartoon fashion, you are pulled in opposite directions by the symbolic angel (i.e., superego) and devil (i.e., id) on your shoulder. What do you do? Fortunately, the ego offers you practical solutions: "ask your parents for money," "asks the storekeeper to give it to you for free," or "offer to help the storekeeper to earn the candy bar." In all three ego-based solutions, the drives of the id and the considerations of the superego are satisfied with a harmonious action.

Abrahamic Religious Foundations

Judaism

Prior to evaluating any verse, it is important to qualify that
adherents of the Jewish faith believe every word in the Bible to be
sacred and each verse carefully constructed to teach valuable
lessons. With this in mind, the first reference to the human soul in
the Bible can be found in Genesis, where it is written that "God
formed [*yetzer*] man of the dust of the ground, and **breathed into
his nostrils** [*ruach*] the **breath of life** [*neshamah*], and man became **a
living soul** [*nefesh*]."[258] Elaborations on these concepts are observed
in Deuterononomy, which states "However, be strong not to eat
the blood, for the blood is the ***soul*** [***nefesh***],"[259] and Eccelesiastes
3:21, "Who knows that the **spirit** [*rauch*] of the children of men is
that which ascends on high and the **spirit** [*rauch*] of the beast is that
which descends below to the earth."[260] Although several other
relevant verses were excluded here for brevity, these excerpts
nonetheless provide a framework for understanding the three part
soul in Judaism.

One might suggest the Genesis 2:7 verse to be both indirect and
redundant, which could have simply said, "And God created man."
However, scholars and commentators have attempted to

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[258] Gen. 2:7.
[259] Deut. 12:23.
[260] Ecc. 3:21.

understand the deeper meanings in each aspect of this verse.[261] The *Midrash Rabbah* explains that the term *yetzer* [formed] is used to suggest that Man is formed with two inclinations: (a) *yetzer tov* [good inclination] and an (b) evil inclination *yetzer hara* [evil inclination]. Rashi, a medieval commentator, suggested this distinction indicated man was made of both heavenly and earthly matter, and more specifically, possesses a heavenly soul and material body. Thus, man possesses two conflicting natures, one force which pushes a person towards materialism and physicality (i.e., *yetzer hara*), and another force pushes this person towards spirituality (i.e., *yetzer tov*).[262] On its face, this concept appears to be a close approximation to the id and superego, and scholars have noted that Freud's understanding of these psychic elements may have been influenced by this aspect of Jewish philosophy.[263]

As highlighted in the verses above, the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah* are the three primary parts of the human soul. The Kli Yakar, a 16th century commentator, noted that when the verse in Genesis 2:7 says "and man became a living soul," the Hebrew word used is *nefesh*. In Judaism, the *nefesh* reflects a general life force found in humans and other animals. The *nefesh* is also viewed as our life force because it is tied to the word blood as is implied in Deuteronomy, which says "blood is the soul."[264] Reflecting our most base desires and physical needs, the *nefesh* appears most analogous to Freud's concept of the id. The Kli Yakar notes that

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[261] J. Scofer, "The Redaction of Desire: Structure and Editing of Rabbinic Teachings Concerning Yeser ('Inclination')," *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy*, 12:1 (2003): 19-53.

[262] Ibid.

[263] D. M. Snyder, "Judaism and Freud: The inclinations to do good and evil," *Psychoanalysis & Contemporary Thought*, 16:1 (1993): 103-122.

[264] Deut. 12:23.

the same verse in Genesis 2:7 includes the words "a living soul."
The Hebrew word *neshamah* is used in this context, because it is
viewed as eternal and is spark of the Divine. The *neshamah* is
viewed as the purest part of the soul and pushes a person towards
righteousness and moral behavior, which makes it analogous to
Freud's view of the superego.

Lastly, the verse in Genesis also uses the language of "breathed into
his nostrils."[265] In Hebrew, the word breath and soul is called *ruach*
[spirit], which is the part of the soul responsible for emotions and
thoughts and serves is a bridge between the *neshamah* and *nefesh*.
This bridge can be seen in Ecclesiastes 3:21, which highlights the
ascending (i.e., towards the *neshamah*) and descending nature (i.e.,
towards the *nefesh*) of the *ruach,* making it similar to Freud's view
of the ego as a mediator between the id and superego. Thus,
according to the Kli Yakar, the verse in Genesis 2:7 is not
redundant, but suggests that man has three part of the soul, each
with its drives and functions. In *Derech Hashem*, the 18th Century
Kabbalist Ramchal discusses a battle of the soul that parallels the
conflict of the id and superego when he states that the material
needs of the bodily soul (i.e., *nefesh*), and the spiritual needs of the
highest soul (i.e., *neshamah*) are in constant conflict with one
another. The Ramchal suggests that this battle is caused by the
antithetical nature of our bodily and spiritual needs, and if the
spiritual side of a person prevails it will elevate both body and soul.
However, if the bodily aspects of a person prevail, it debases both
body and soul. As is evident from these scriptures and their
interpretations from the Jewish tradition, the *nefesh*, *ruach*, and
neshamah seem parallel Freud's id, ego, and superego.

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[265] Gen. 2:7.

Christianity

Characteristics of Freud's id, ego, and superego are also evident in Christianity's *God-head*, comprised of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Spirit. While each aspect of the God-head is considered a manifestation of a singular deity, they serve unique purposes in the lives of devout Christians. God the Father, similar to the superego, reflects the purest of moral ideals. God the Son, in his bodily form, was designed to shed light on the base desires and physical side of human nature. The Holy Spirit, like the ego, serves as a mediator of these two, meant to operate as a force that helps us align with our divine purpose and not be governed exclusively by our base desires. In this section, we examine these parallels between Freud's tripartite theory and how it may relate, in some measure, to Christian thought.

God the Son and the id. According to Christian belief, Jesus was the one whom the apostle John was referring to when he said "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."[266] The apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians notes that Jesus "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in all human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!"[267] Why might this have been necessary? The reason is explained by an unnamed author in his letter to Jews beset by ambivalence about converting:

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the

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[266] John 1:14.
[267] Phil. 2:7-8.

power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason, he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.[268]

Delving deeper into scripture, one reads that Jesus revealed what temptations lay in the heart of man when saying "evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean.'"[269] The evils delineated by Jesus are akin to the compulsions Freud asserted were generated by the id; that is, those desires driven by the pleasure principle and arising from animalistic survival instincts.

God the Father and the superego. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed by Thy name" is the first verse of the Lord's prayer as found in two New Testament sections, Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4. Believers earnestly beseech the Supreme Father for guidance, protection, and comfort, which, much like the superego, is seen as the ultimate repository of wisdom and virtue. John testified during his last days in forced labor at the stony atoll of Patmos that "You [God] alone are holy."[270] Similarly, Jesus highlighted God's perfection when saying "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."[271] Embodying such parental

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[268] Heb. 2:14-18.
[269] Mark 7:20-23.
[270] Rev. 15:3-4.
[271] Matt. 5:48.

perfection is the superego, which Freud believed extols morality and is the source of reflection, self-restraint, and supreme regulation.[272] The role of the superego is to selflessly, yet ardently police affects and impulses, much as the apostle Paul instructed the Romans by writing "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up."[273] The apostle Peter admonished "Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing."[274] While Freud may have disavowed the beliefs of his Jewish ancestors in calling all religious concepts illusory and impervious to proof, it appeared he acknowledged the importance of religion to humanity.[275] Freud wondered whether criminality would obliterate civility in the absence of an all-knowing, all-seeing God whose celestial arsenal included eternal damnation. In an attempt to replace religion with reason, it can be said that the superego was erected to assume the pivotal role of moral oversight.

The Holy Spirit and the ego. The role of the Holy Spirit is to make manifest the path of the righteous amidst the chaos and selfishness of this world; thus, one is no longer bound in conflict with the two, but free to proceed benevolently in accordance with his or her divine purpose. Paul said in his letter to the Corinthians, "whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the

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[272] S. Freud, "A difficulty in the path of psycho-analysis," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* vol. 17, 135-144, trans. and ed. by J. Strachey, (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1955).

[273] Rom. 15:1.

[274] 1 Pet. 3:9.

[275] Freud, S. "The future of an illusion." In *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* Vol. 21, 1-56. Translated and edited by J. Strachey. London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1961.

Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."[276] Believers in Christ trust in the solace of the Holy Spirit and know that, even in the most confounding of times, they can turn to the Lord for "it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."[277] John 14:26 offered assurance, stating, "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you." Paul consoled the Romans, saying "the Spirit helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words."[278] Much in the same way, the ego, guided by the reality principle, strives to find balance between the insatiable desires of the id and the lofty ideals of the superego. Freud (1923/1961a) asserted "the ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions."[279] Thus, while the ego does not provide a pathway to eternal salvation, it indeed was created by Freud to operate similarly; in the theoretical realm between raucous reactions and reasoned responses.

Islam

In Arabic, the word *Islam* is classified as a verb referring to the action of submitting to the will of Allah.[280] Islamic teachings advocate for the molding of *nafs*, a complex concept representing

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[276] Cor. 3:16-18.
[277] Matt. 10:20.
[278] Rom. 8:26.
[279] S. Freud, "The ego and the id," 24.
[280] B. S. Nursi, *The word: the reconstruction of Islamic belief and thought*, trans, H. Akarsyu. (Somerset, NJ: The Light Inc., 2005).

the soul, through various stages toward the ideal spiritual state. In the *Qur'an,* Allah declares "I created *jinn* [angels] and mankind only to worship Me."[281] As submission to his will is the primary reason for creation, free will should be consciously employed towards being a faithful servant and recognizing the absolute divinity of Allah. However, humans are viewed as being born with basic tendencies that produce misguidance and destruction, creating a distance between themselves and the ideal state of all-encompassing love and servitude demanded by Allah. Achieving salvation requires a purification of *nafs*, with the concept *Jihad an Nafs* referring to the spiritual struggle with instincts, desires, and impulses that lead them astray. Through *Jihad an Nafs*, individuals can progress through the various stages of the self, bringing them closer to the ultimate servitude and love of God. This basic struggle between the desires and tendencies of man and the will of Allah as achieved and maintained through *Jihad an Nafs* draws parallels to the dynamics of the id, the superego, and the ego as conceptualized by Freud.

In the concept of *nafs*, the basic instincts of man such as those contained in the id are found, which are believed to be the source of evil and deviation from the will of Allah.[282] *Hawai nafs* [passions] is a term used to encompass the love for, and dependence on, the desire for the pleasures of the material world. In the Qu'ran, David is instructed, "Do not follow your **desires [*hawa*]**, less they divert you from Allah's path: those who wander from His path will have a painful torment."[283] *Hawai nafs* begets a material desire, described

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[281] Qur'an 51:56.
[282] H. Aydin, "Concepts of the self in Islamic tradition and western psychology: A comparative analysis," *Studies in Islam and the Middle East* 7:1 (2010): 1-30.
[283] Qur'an 38:30.

in the verse "The love of desirable things is made alluring for men—women, children, gold and silver treasures piled up high."[284] Allowing oneself to be guided by these aspects of *nafs* hinders the journey toward salvation and brings individuals to the lowest state of spiritual progression.[285] This state, *Nafsi Ammar* [Commanding Self], can be seen in Joseph's proclamation, "I do not pretend to be blameless, for man's **very soul [*nafs*] incites him [*ammar*]** to evil."[286] In addition to containing the sexual desires and material drives, a parallel to the id can be seen in desire stemming from *nafs* for power and immortality without regard for others or the will of Allah.[287] While Freud suggested indulging in the desires of the id can lead to maladaptive outcomes through the disregard of social norms of conduct, these aspects of *nafs* in Islam represent a satisfaction of instincts without regard to morality or mortality.[288]

While *hawai nafs* begets evil and distance from Allah, there also exists *nafs* with the tendency to recognize and push away evil.[289] This tendency, or *lawwam* [blaming], emerges from *nafs* through Allah's endowment of an awareness of wrong-doings and transgressions. Best exemplified in this description of creation, "[Allah] formed [the soul] and inspired it to know its own rebellion and piety! The one who purifies his soul succeeds and the one who corrupts it fails."[290] Through *lawwam*, a person deviating from servitude and love of Allah will come to feel guilt, shame, regret,

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[284] Qur'an 3:14.
[285] Aydin, "Concepts of self in the Islamic tradition and western psychology."
[286] Qur'an 12:53.
[287] Nursi, *The word: reconstruction of Islamic belief and thought.*"
[288] S. Freud, "The dissection of the psychical personality," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* Vol. 22, 57-80, trans. and ed. J. Strachey, (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1964).
[289] Aydin, "Concepts of the self in Islamic traditions and western psychology."
[290] Qur'an 91:7.

and embarrassment. Teachings of the prophets in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* serve as examples as to how *nafs* can be molded by divine values and good character.[291] For example, "And they have been commanded no more than this: to worship God, offering Him sincere devotion, being true (in faith); to establish regular prayer; and to practice regular charity; and that is the Religion Right and Straight."[292] Thus, *lawwam* serves the function in the individual of psychologically rewarding good action and punishing bad action in striving toward an ideal. Similar to *lawwam*, Freud suggested it is within the nature of the superego to aspire for perfection in this relation to conceptions of morality and ethics, with each failure theoretically results in feelings of guilt.[293]

Finally, the battle between the id and superego can be seen in Islam with the struggle of the *ana* [self or *I*-ness] to manage the conflicting aspects of *nafs* such as *hawa* and *lawwam*.[294] As with the different psychological outcomes due to various balances of the id and the superego, the *nafs* manifests in different forms based on this balance of *nafs*.

If one gives in to their desires and forgets Allah, they descend into impious states such as *Nafsi Ammar* [Commanding Self], characterized by evil and a lack of humanity. Thus, to achieve salvation and the ideal spiritual state, one must maintain a conscious awareness of the struggle against the self. In so doing, one must show good judgment, self-control and ultimately defend against the evil or impious desires of the *nafs*. The teachings of Islam aim to provide man, who begins with a raw and impure *nafs*,

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[291] Nursi, *The word: reconstruction of Islamic belief and thought*.
[292] Qur'an 98:5.
[293] Freud, "The dissection of the psychical personality."
[294] Aydin, "Concepts of the self in Islamic tradition and western psychology."

a path to salvation and unity with Allah. The internal war advocated by Islam and fought to suppress and mold their nature, *Jihad an Nafs* [War on the Soul], mirrors the struggle of the ego to balance the id, or lower sexual and material desires, with the superego, or a concern with higher ideals.

Eastern Religious Foundations

Upon reading the paper heretofore, one might argue that observed similarities of the Abrahamic religious perspectives to the id, ego, and superego are contrived due to shared scriptural foundations and geographic proximity. For example, one could say that these are all faiths that developed out of the same region of the world. Moreover, an alternative interjection could be that Christianity acknowledges the veracity of the Old Testament and Islam acknowledges the Jewish prophets. As such, one might reasonably expect variations of the Abrahamic religious tradition to hold theological similarities. However, we believe these foundations of the tripartite approach to be part of a greater universality emerging in human thought. Providing support for this suggestion, the battle between the aspects of personality, or the soul, can also be observed in Eastern religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism, which are less directly connected to the previously explored Abrahamic religious traditions.

Buddhism

In Buddhism, the primary goals are to attain enlightenment, recognize the self, and cease suffering through the non-duality and balance between extreme austerity and indulgence (Braarvig, 1993).

The Buddha described the importance of this balance in saying "The mutual causation of the Way of dualities gives birth to the meaning of the Middle Way."[295] As will be shown in this section, this theme of the *Middle Way* is central to various Buddhist teachings and exhibit similarities to Freud's tripartite theory. Concepts mirroring the superego play the role of the ideal, or something accessible and universal to all beings. On the other hand, concepts that reflect indulgence, or the id, tend to be individualized to each being. These two sides are balanced out by representations of the self, or the ego, that provide access to both the universal ideal and the individual selves. This basic pattern is best exemplified in two main Buddhist teachings; (a) the *Trikaya*, or the three bodies comprising the Buddha-nature, and (b) the Buddhist refuge in *The Three Jewels*, or important aspects of Buddhism in the path to enlightenment.

The Trikaya. Within *Mahayana* Buddhist doctrine, there are three bodies that comprise the Buddha-nature: the *dharmakaya* (truth-body), *sambhogakaya* (bliss-body), and the *nirmanakaya* (physical body). Within each person, these three bodies contribute to the *trikaya*, or one entity that is an "eternally abiding and unchanging" Buddha-nature. [296] These three bodies can be understood as respectively representing concepts similar to the superego, the ego, and the id. Ultimately, one must recognize this Buddha-nature as the true self to attain enlightenment and free oneself from *samsara*, or the cycle of rebirth and suffering.[297] However, this task proves difficult, as the opposing forces of enlightenment and *maya* (illusion) cause the self to become capricious. Therefore, even upon

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[295] Platform Sutra 10.

[296] Mahaparinirvana Sutra 2

[297] J. C. Cleary, "Trikaya and trinity: The mediation of the absolute," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 6 (1986): 66-63.

realizing the full Buddha-nature, one must maintain a balance between the three bodies. The *trikaya*, in essence, has access to enlightenment and the physical world, synthesizing information from both in order to create teachings. Likewise, people have access to their moral compass and duties through their superego, and their empathy for suffering through the id - all of which is balanced out in the ego.

The *dharmakaya*, or the truth-body, is considered the ultimate self, which acts as the *Absolute*, a representation of an ultimate being similar to the Christian God.[298] The Absolute refers to one who has come to embody truth and the ultimate nature of the Buddha, transcending both physical and spiritual realms.[299] This truth-body correlates with the superego from Freud's tripartite theory and represents enlightenment itself. Enlightenment provides knowledge of the objective truth; the way the superego houses a moral compass. Along with the physical body, the truth-body is one of the causes for discriminative thinking within the Buddha-nature, affecting the balance of the bliss-body. The truth-body produces all the *dharmas* [truths], which are clouded by illusions. According to the Buddha, "whoever sees the *Dhamma* (commonly referred to as dharma) sees me; whoever sees me sees the *Dhamma.*"[300] When the illusions dissipate the truth appears, allowing one to attain enlightenment.

The mediator between the truth-body and the physical body is the *sambhogakaya*, or the bliss-body. The bliss-body is considered the communion of ultimate truth and the physical body, as it experiences the reward of enlightenment. It is associated with

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[298] Cleary, "Trikaya and trinity."
[299] Digha Kikaya 3:84
[300] Samyutta Nikaya 22:87

discipline and communication, bridging the gap between truth and the physical realm. This body is attained through practice and its purpose is to benefit oneself and others by constantly maintaining good thoughts. By nature, the bliss-body is non-dual and ideally remains "undefiled by good or evil."[301] The truth-body and the physical body govern the bliss-body, bridging the gap between enlightenment and the physical realm as the ego mediates the relationship between the superego and the id.

The *nirmanakaya*, or the physical-body, is the only aspect of the Buddha-nature susceptible to the experience of suffering, caused by earthly desires but kept at bay by the guidance of truth. The physical-body is affected by illusions and can do either good or evil, but without full understanding provided by the truth-body and mediation by the bliss-body, it shifts between natures with every thought, as "one evil thought...destroys ten thousand eons' worth of good *karma*," and "one good thought...ends evils as numerous as the sand-grains in the Ganges River."[302] Similarly, the id, which is comprised of desires and impulses, is incapable of making moral judgments and is theoretically the only part of the psyche that is present from childbirth. There are thousands of examples of the transformation-body, but the most prominent example of a physical and historical manifestation of a Buddha is Siddharta Gautama, whose physical body was created out of compassion in order to provide a vessel for Buddhist teachings from the *sambhogakaya*.[303]

The Three Jewels. A second tripartite concept found in Buddhism is the Three Jewels, a concept that Buddhist teachings suggest

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[301] Platform Sutra 6.
[302] Ibid.
[303] Cleary, "Trikaya and trinity."

individuals may take refuge in for enlightenment, consists of the *Buddha* [enlightened one], the *Dharma* [teachings], and the *Sangha* [community]. In the *Ratana Sutta* [Jewel Discourse], the Buddha delivers a series of teachings regarding Buddhist practitioners and other beings on the path to enlightenment. These teachings show how the Three Jewels guide one to enlightenment when we uphold Buddhahood as the ideal state of being, follow its teachings, and take refuge in the community of enlightened beings. This path to enlightenment through a balance of the Three Jewels can be shown to parallel the quest of the ego to balance action between the id and the superego to produce harmonious psychological states and adaptive functioning.

The *Buddha* is the First Jewel, representing the highest spiritual state of being, mirroring the *superego*'s role in maintaining ideals and principles. The Buddha himself stated, "whatever treasure there be either here or in the world beyond, whatever precious jewel there be in the heavenly worlds, there is not comparable to [the Buddha]."[304] However, there are various Buddhas, including the historical Siddharta Gautama, the Amitabha Buddha of the Pure Land, and the various *bodhisattvas* who stay on earth in order to help others achieve enlightenment. Thus, each person must take refuge within his or her own ideal Buddhahood instead of emulating the first Buddha.[305] Upholding the ideal self allows us to have reign over our own actions, providing us with a method to better ourselves. Similarly, the superego allows us to regulate our actions by providing us with a moral code, providing us with guidance as the Buddha does when we take refuge in him.

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[304] Ratana Sutta 3.
[305] C. Bielefeldt, "The one vehicle and the three jewels: On Japanese sectarianism and some ecumenical beliefs," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 10 (1990): 5-16.

The Second Jewel is the *Dharma*, which consists of teachings and the Buddha's path to enlightenment, is described as "The Supreme Buddha extolled a path of purity (the Noble Eightfold Path), calling it the path which unfailingly brings concentration."[306] The *Dharma* can be taught through chants and sutras, and acts as the guide individuals may utilize in order to reach Buddhahood. While the attainment of Buddhahood is individual to each person, the *Dharma* is invariable and standardized, providing us access to ideal state of being.[307] Like the ego, which plays a mediating role to satisfy the principles of the superego and the drives of the id, the Dharma balances and provides a path between the Buddha and the Sangha, or the community of Buddha's disciples.

This community of Buddhists, or the *Sangha*, is the Third Jewel, encompassing the various disciples of Buddha's teachings such as nuns, monks, and laypeople. It is a group of individuals who act as a harmonious refuge for those who have attained enlightenment and those who wish to do so.[308] "With a steadfast mind, and applying themselves well in the dispensation of the Buddha Gotama [the disciples of the Buddha] enjoy the peace of [Nirvana]."[309] The *Sangha* is universal; anyone can be a member of the Sangha no matter how far along the path of enlightenment they are. Likewise, the id is also a universal; as the only part of the tripartite theory that is present from infancy, the id is present in everyone no matter how old they are.

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[306] Ratana Sutta 5.
[307] W. W. Lai, "The predocetic 'finite Buddhakāya' in the 'lotus sutra:' In search of the illusive Dharmakaya therein," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49:3 (1981): 447-469.
[308] Bielefeldt, "The one vehicle and the three jewels."
[309] Ratana Sutta 7.

Hinduism

In Hinduism, human beings are believed to reach a form of self-actualization when they realize their physical bodies are merely vessels that house the soul; this soul pervades the entire body and is indestructible.[310] The idea of separation between body and soul is crucial in Hindu philosophy, and the view of the human body in and of itself is one that connotes a hindrance to gaining spiritual fulfillment.[311] The soul is on a journey to fulfill its *karmic* and *dharmic* duties before attaining *moksha*, or release from the cycle of rebirth. *Karma* refers to the universal principle of cause and effect (including consequence of action); whereas, *dharma* is an all-inclusive term used to mean righteousness, morality, religion, responsibility, and duty. Thus, the argument can be made that the physical self is a representation of the id, while the soul is the superego on its quest for moral fulfillment. Finally, the ego is designated as the whole individual, battling between the conflicting wants of the two primary components that comprise them.

This reflection of the id, ego, and superego can be found throughout Hindu literature depicting the dynamics of the *Devas*, or the Gods. The God Brahma is seen as the creator, Shiva is the destroyer, and Vishnu preserves and protects the universe (Brahma Purana). Vishnu acts as the ultimate representation of the ego in Hinduism by balancing the forces of good and evil on Earth: "Whenever the Sacred Law fails, and evil raises its head, I (Vishnu) take embodied birth. To guard the righteous, to root out sinners,

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[310] Bhagavad Gita 2:17.
[311] A. B. Creel, "The reexamination of 'dharma' in Hindu ethics," *Philosophy East and West* (1975): 161-173.

and to establish Sacred Law, I am born from age to age."[312] The good is often represented as the devas, while evil is represented as *asuras*, or men who have strayed from the path of good and have fallen victim to the power of their lesser natures, or the id.[313]

The *Mahabharata* is considered the quintessential fight between good, the superego, and evil, the id. One hundred Kaurava brothers and their allies, who exhibited malicious intent, waged the ultimate battle against the five Pandava brothers and their allies, who fought for justice. The Kauravas banished the Pandavas from their own kingdom through a game of dice that held unreasonable stakes. Eventually, the Kauravas refused to turn over the kingdom to their cousins after the period of exile had been served and war ensued Krishna sided with the Pandavas, providing them with divine support and wisdom.[314] The paradigmatic conflict between good and evil is portrayed in the pivotal scene of Arjuna's approach into battle:

Arjuna, the most skilled of the Pandava brothers at warfare, faltered at the sight of his relatives and teachers, now his sworn enemies. He broke down and refused to fight. "How can any good come from killing one's own relatives? What value is victory if all our friends and loved ones are killed? … We will be overcome by sin if we slay such aggressors. Our proper duty is surely to forgive them. Even if they have lost sight of *dharma* due to greed, we ourselves should not forget *dharma* in the same way."[315]

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[312] Bhagavad Gita 4:6-8.

[313] Srimad-Bhagavatam 3:3:6

[314] R. Thapar, "War in the Mahabharata," *PMLA* 124:5 (2009): 1830-1833.

[315] R. C. Katz, *Arjuna in the Mahabharata: Where Krishna is, there is victory*, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

This passage shows Arjuna attempting to mediate between what he perceived to be inherently right or wrong courses of action. The aforementioned questions were directed to Krishna, who was serving as Arjuna's charioteer. Krishna's response is compiled as the Bhagavad Gita, which, along with the Ramayana, Vedas, and Mahabharata, is considered a core Hindu text. The Gita offers resolute moral direction for Hindus—guiding them towards righteous conduct.

As we have seen, Hindus are encouraged to behave in accordance with their dharma, or to behave like a virtuous person would act (Kemerling, 2011). As the Vedas parse it, "According as one acts, so does he become. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action."[316] This idea implies that Hinduism holds valid the concept of human free will, to a partial level at the very least. One's actions will reap consequences, and these consequences will unfold and influence the karmic cycle. Punishment and redemption, which correspond to the id and superego, are thus mediated by the balancing act of moral decision-making and, in effect, karma as affected by dharma.

Sikhism

Lastly, the fundamental components that form the basis of Freud's tripartite theory of personality may also be found in various tenets of Sikhism. The central religious scripture of Sikhism, the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (hereafter SGGS), contains the spiritual wisdom of the *Ten Sikh Gurus* (masters) and *Bhagats* (devotees) (Talib, 2011). While the ultimate purpose of life is to attain salvation through a

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[316] Yajur Veda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5

spiritual union with God, the central cause of all evil, *haumai*, or selfishness and ego, emerges out of the separation of the self from the divine. Haumai is divided into *The Five Theives,* which represent basic drives and motivations of the body and intellect. According to Guru Amar Das, the Third Guru of Sikhism, "Within [the] body dwell the five thieves: *Kaam* (sexual desire), *Krodh* (anger), *Lobh* (greed), *Moh* (emotional attachment), and *Ahankaar* (pride)."[317] While sexual desire is believed to supersede rational thinking, desecrate morality, and obstruct the union of self with God, anger is also condemned as an instinctual vice that drowns the voice of reason and steers the soul further apart from this union. Greed brings dissatisfaction with basic needs and a mounting desire to possess excessive amounts of food, power, and money, producing a state in which "the waves of greed rise within [man] and he does not remember God."[318] While emotional attachment, is encouraged in love for family, but excessive emotional attachments can develop into excessive attachment to wealth, property, and pleasure. The final evil of the five thieves is that of Ahankaar, which is hubristic pride, arrogance, narcissism, competitiveness, smugness, and self-conceit. Much like the id, these five vices are natural instincts striving for immediate gratification considered to be responsible for ensnaring the soul, or the self, in a labyrintyh of the life pursuit of *maya*, the grand illusion of materialism.

To combat these five thieves, it is advised that individuals should commonly remember and recite *Naam*, or the name of God, in meditation and in extension encourages to "not meet with, or even approach those people, whose hearts are filled with horrible

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[317] SGGS, trans. 1960: 600.
[318] SGGS, trans. 1960: 77.

anger."[319] It is also imperative that one remembers the ultimate goal of salvation and not become overly attached to objects that will be left behind after earth. This is reflected in the words of Guru Amar Das, who said "egotism and anger are wiped away when the Name of God dwells within the mind. In addition to meditation and reciting Naam, Sikh gurus taught the practice of the *Five Virtues* in order to combat haumai and the Five Thieves. These virtues are comprised of *Sat* (truth), *Santokh* (contentment), *Daya* (compassion), *Nimrata* (humility), and *Pyar* (love). Followers of Sikhism are taught that God is the only truth and that they must "practice truth, contentment, and kindness, this is an excellent way of life."[320] Additionally, they are told to live with Santokh, being satisfied and content with their circumstances and keeping any selfish desires for materialistic substances at bay.

In these representations of the Five Thieves and the Five Virtues, we can see the basic struggle between lower desires and higher moral principles that Freud represented with the id and the superego. The Five Thieves represent the most basic drives and motivations of the human being, which like the id, are guided by the pleasure principle and the pursuit of immediate gratification. As Freud conceptualized the effect of an unrestricted id on human behavior, the teachings of Sikhism suggest these Five Thieves left to their own devices lead to destructive outcomes for both the individual and society. Conversely, the emphasis placed by Sikhism on a continued awareness of God and an adherence to the Five Virtues can be said to parallel the superego. The Five Virtues and the superego represent an awareness of higher moral principles existing to restrict or reduce negative outcomes arising from an unabated indulgence in pleasure, greed, and pride. The Five

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[319] SGGS, trans. 1960: 40.
[320] SGGS, trans. 1960: 51.

Virtues exist to discharge tension generated by instinctive forces and hold Sikhs to their sense of right and wrong. These virtues provide guidelines for making judgments and decisions that are not governed by natural instincts, and hence develop the ego by facilitating a balance between the id, the five thieves, and the superego, the five virtues.

Philosophical Foundations

In light of this emergence of the tripartite approach to the self among different Abrahamic and Eastern religions, it occurs that the universality of this approach is likely not limited to the religious realm. To provide evidence for this suggestion, one can turn to an examination of non-religious thought systems such as Western philosophy. It is well documented that Freud, a student of philosophy himself in his early years at the University of Vienna, was taught and mentored by the philosopher and early psychologist Franz Brentano.[321] While ultimately departing from these philosophical studies to pursue medicine, scholars emphasize Freud's exposure to philosophy through this relationship with Brentano as a critical factor in his intellectual development. Thus, it is possible Freud became learned in various philosophies that provided a theoretical background for the development of psychoanalysis. Unsurprisingly, an analysis of works of Western philosophical tradition beginning in Ancient Greece and extending through to 19th century Denmark reveals these hypothesized similarities.

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[321] A. I. Tauber, "Freud's philosophical path: From a science of mind to a philosophy of human being," *The Scandinavian Psychoanalysis Review* 32 (2009): 32-43.

Ancient Philosophy

Plato. As a student of philosophy, Freud once listed a compilation detailing the Ancient Greek philosophers and their theories as one of his favorite pieces of literature.[322] Coincidentally, in one of the most renowned works from this period, *The Republic*, Plato posited a theory of the soul comprised of three interdependent components. Plato's theory suggested that the most basic and universal part of this soul was most aptly described as appetitive, concerning what he called the "most chief and powerful appetite [of man], because of the intensity of all the appetites connected with eating and drinking and sex and so on."[323] What could be likened to Freud's conception of the id, Plato's appetitive soul is driven by the pleasure principle, or is "gain loving" and focuses completely on satisfying desires.[324] The secondary aspect of the soul was what he called the 'spirited element', which "we think of as wholly bent upon winning power and victory and a good name. So we might call it honour-loving or ambitious."[325] Paralleling the 'ego', the 'spirited element' of the soul molds the basic desire for pleasure into more realistic aims based on the external world, such as winning power and victory. Finally, Plato speaks of a third aspect of the soul that is "loving [of] knowledge and philosophic."[326] While departing in certain ways from Freud's superego, it shares in

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[322] R. Askay, & J. Farquhar, "Apprehending the inaccessible: Freudian psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology" *Existential Analysis*, 24:2 (2006): 369-371.

[323] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. F. M. Cornford, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1955), 306.

[324] Plato, *The Republic*, 307.

[325] Ibid.

[326] Ibid.

common a concern with morals and ethics that influences the direction of desires and behavior.

Aristotle. Despite taking a more naturalistic approach than Plato, Aristotle maintains a tripartite theory of soul. A main distinction was Aristotle's suggestion of the soul being composed of different of different degrees, or parts, particular to different life forms. Common to all life forms, the function of the first and most universal degree, the 'nutritive soul', was to achieve "reproduction and the use of food; […] to produce another thing like themselves—in order that they may partake of the everlasting and the divine in so far as they can…"[327] The second degree of soul is the 'sensitive soul', comprised of sense-perception which "consists in being moved and affected, as has been said, for it is thought to be a kind of alteration."[328] Aristotle seems to suggest that learning through this 'sensitive' aspect of the soul can allow a person to be "altered through learning and frequent changes from an opposite disposition."[329]

Finally, the most unique part of the soul that makes us human is our faculty of reason, which in this theory was entitled the 'rational soul'. This 'rational soul' is characteristic of "men and anything else which is similar or superior to man, have that of thought and intellect."[330] A crucial aspect of the 'rational soul' was the understanding of ethics and morality, in which it was believed the acquisition of thought "makes a difference in action; and his state,

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[327] Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, trans., W. D. Ross, J. O. Urmson, & J. Barnes, in *A new Aristotle reader*, ed. J. L. Ackrill. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 171.

[328] Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, 175.

[329] Ibid.

[330] Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, 170.

while still like what it was, will then be excellence in the strict sense."[331] While less clearly resembling the Freudian division of the mind than Plato's theory of the human soul, at its most basic level this Aristotelian approach describes the intersection of three aspects of soul with separate functions converging to form the whole person.

Medieval Philosophy

Centuries after the time of Plato and Aristotle, the Christian theologian and early medieval philosopher Augustine of Hippo discussed the centrality of the internal conflicts man faces in experiencing life. In his *Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love,* Augustine stated, "the cause of evil is the defection of the will of a being who is mutably good from the Good which Immutable."[332] This excerpt seems to suggest that Augustine was of the opinion that humans, who have the potential for good but are not 'immutably' so, evil arises when they stray from the *Good*, or an objective morality and virtuosity. Elaborating further on this idea, Augustine followed with:

"This is the primal lapse of the rational creature, that is, his privation of the good. In train of this there crept in […] ignorance of the right things to do and also an appetite for noxious things. And these brought along with them […] error and misery."[333]

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[331] Aristotle, *Nicomachean ethics*, 429.
[332] Augustine, *Enchiridion on faith, hope, and love*, trans. A. C. Outler, (Grand
          Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1955), 19.
[333] Ibid.

Thus, when a man ignores or rejects morality and subsequently indulges their appetitive element, the individual becomes immoral and subject to suffering. Within the two excerpts above, an acknowledgement of three separate forces within the individual can be observed; the first two of which is the inherent capacity to desire *noxious things* and the second an awareness of the Good. Finally, there is volition within humans to align themselves with either of these two former elements. When they stray from the Good, a tendency toward indulging desires and pleasures occurs that brings about error and misery.

Freud and Augustine both acknowledge the struggle of man in managing the two separate forces within themselves, the first being concerned with seeking pleasure and the second with higher moral principles. Their views on the lower forces driving humans, what Augustine spoke of as "the desire for noxious things" and Freud as the "id," appear to be quite similar. Although Augustine framed the pursuit of these pleasures more negatively as one part of what produces evil, both encompass the human drive to pursue and experience pleasure. Alternatively, they both acknowledged the existence of a higher aspect of humans concerning itself with morality; for Augustine this was the Good, and for Freud the superego. While Augustine suggested man's struggle is being caught between this appetite of worldly things and the proclivity for a higher moral ruling, Freud's ego acts as this mediator between the superego (i.e., rationality, morality) and the id (i.e., the appetitive element). Both approaches placed well-being as dependent upon the proper harmony between these two conflicting forces. As Freud suggests, the function of the superego is to regulate behavior by punishing deviance with feelings of anxiety. Although Augustine's 'Good' differed in that it was not conceptualized as being a mental agent in itself, the departure of humans from their understanding

of the 'Good' and subsequent preoccupation with 'noxious things' lead to error, misery, and suffering.

Modern Philosophy

Arthur Schopenhauer. Further similarities in philosophy can be found in the work of Arthur Schopenhauer, a 19th century thinker noted for advancing an understanding of the unconscious mind.[334] In his seminal work, *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer expounded a theory of the world as entirely composed of, and explained by, a duality of elements he entitled *Will* and *Representation*. The first element, Will, is an essential life force pervasive in everything in the world, which Schopenhauer describes as "the inmost nature, the kernel, of every particular thing…"[335] This parallels Freud (1940/1989) in his belief that "the power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs."[336] Further, Schopenhauer (1818/1969) felt that "no possible satisfaction in the world could suffice to still [Will's] longings, set a goal to its infinite cravings."[337] This infinite craving seems to mirror the id as being driven by the pleasure principle, and similarities between the two even extend to how Schopenhauer and Freud believed these mental phenomena were directed.[338] While Freud believed the id contained a powerful drive that

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[334] R. Askay, & J. Farquhar, "Apprehending the inaccessible."

[335] A. Schopenhauer, *The world as will and representation*, trans., E. F. J. Payne, (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969), 143.

[336] S. Freud, *An outline of psycho-analysis*, trans by J. Strachey (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1989), 17.

[337] A. Schopenhauer, *The world as will and representation*, 382.

[338] R. Gupta, "Freud and Schopenhauer," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36:4 (1980): 721-728.

manifested in sexual impulses, Schopenhauer felt that "the will-to-live, expresses itself most strongly in the sexual impulse."[339] To claim this similarity as a novel observation would be disingenuous, as numerous philosophers and psychologists before us have alluded to similarities between the Schopenhauerian Will and the Freudian id since the advent of psychoanalysis.[340]

Drawing our attention to the other side of the duality, Schopenhauer claims that Representation is the collective knowledge attained about the world and causality. Schopenhauer stated "the motives […] determining conduct, influence the character through the medium of knowledge" and "Will can be affected only by motives […] Therefore instruction, improved knowledge and thus influence from without can teach the will that it erred in the means it employed."[341] He further noted "outside influence can bring it about that the Will pursues the goal […] in accordance with its inner nature, by quite a different path […] from what it did previously."[342] The dynamics of the id and ego can be observed within these three excerpts, in which the initial innate tendencies of a being that might be contextually inappropriate are sublimated into more effective or pragmatic expressions. These similarities between the Schopenhauerian duality and Freud's tripartite theory of personality are difficult to ignore, and Freud himself once alluded to the connection in one of his own writings.[343] In the essay "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-

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[339] A. Schopenhauer, *The world as will and representation*, 330.

[340] R. Askay and J. Farquhar, "Apprehending the inaccessible." R. Gupta, "Freud and Schopenhauer."

[341] A. Schopenhauer, *The world as will and representation*.

[342] Ibid.

[343] A. Nicholls and M. Liebscher, *Thinking the unconscious: Nineteenth-century German thought* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

analysis," Freud explicitly acknowledges that there are "famous philosophers who may be cited as forerunners – above all the great thinker Schopenhauer, whose unconscious 'Will' is equivalent to the mental instincts of psycho-analysis."[344]

Søren Kierkegaard. Lastly, similarities can be found in the work of Søren Kierkegaard, a 19th century philosopher and theologian widely considered as the father of Existentialism.[345] In what commonly characterizes the existentialists, Kierkegaard had an overt interest in the dynamics of the self and its interaction with the world. For Kierkegaard, the self was "essentially dialectical in character" in that it was behaving and responding in relation to itself.[346] Although not as clearly elaborated, Kierkegaard's dialectical view of man has a striking resemblance to the structure of Freud's tripartite theory of personality. Kierkegaard believed that "man is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity."[347] Comprised of an *infinitizing impulse* and a *finitizing tendency*, the self is tasked with relating this infinitizing impulse to more realistic and finite ends.[348] This infinitizing impulse, which Kierkegaard refers to as the *immediate self*, contains an element called *spirit* that later develops from sexual impulses into the *mediate self*. The third structure in the dialectic of man was the *theological self*, which he describes as

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[344] S. Freud, "A difficulty in the path of psycho-analysis," in *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* Vol. 17, 135-144. trans. and ed. J. Strachey (London, UK: Hogarth Press, 1955), 143.

[345] J. P. Cole, *The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard and Freud* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971).

[346] S. Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto death,* trans. W. Lowrie (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1941), 60.

[347] S. Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto death*, 9.

[348] J. P. Cole, *The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard and Freud.*

"man in the sight of god."[349] This theological self provides an outside perspective or standard by which the mediate self may understand itself, and serves as the way the self may judge, direct, and censor itself.

In this development of the mediate self from the immediate self, there is a clear parallel to Freud's ego, suggested to be a mediator focusing on channeling impulses into acceptable action. As with the ego, the mediate self develops from sexual impulses of the immediate self as one matures. This parallel not only in exists in the development of the mediate self from the immediate self, but also in Kierkegaard's descriptions of external behaviors resulting from the corresponding balance between these two different selves. One such example would be when the immediate self or the infinitizing impulse, a function of which is imagination, was not in relation to the finitizing tendency. Through a lack of understanding of reality and possibility, man would ultimately become lost in fantasy. If the infinitizing impulse did not exist to be in relation to the self, then a man would be "lost in unimaginative immediacy."[350] With the first situation, we can relate this experience to a loss of contact with reality when the id and its libidinal impulses cannot be controlled by a weak-ego.

Final Thoughts on Freud's Denial

Through the examination of different religious systems and philosophical works, we have shown the tripartite approach to the person emerges across the history of man. From the times of Moses to the Guru Nanak and Plato to Kierkegaard, similarities in various

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[349] S. Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto death*, 89.
[350] J.P. Cole, *The Problematic Self in Kierkegaard in Freud*, 60.

philosophical and theological approaches illustrate Freud's tripartite theory of personality as a seemingly universal anthropological phenomenon. Although the theories and approaches we have reviewed contain important variation and nuances, it appears humans throughout history have consistently acknowledged the struggle to manage and integrate a duality of conflicting internal forces. Whether alternatively characterized as good versus evil, animalistic tendencies versus enlightened awareness, or physiological versus spiritual, man's centrality in synthesizing the balance between these conflicting forces remains the thematic commonality. Despite his early education in philosophy as well as his lifelong intellectual fascination with religion, it is curious that Freud often denied any connection of his approach to philosophy or theology.[351]

Why might Sigmund Freud, once a young and passionate student of philosophy turned neurologist, ignore his possible roots in the works of thinkers such as the ones that we have been examining? Freud consistently asserted that he was strictly pursuing empirical science and following the positivist framework of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, which suggests information derived from sensory experiences to be the only source of truth.[352] One hypothesis might be that, given the intellectual environment of his time and the possible desire for both legitimacy and respect, he sought to distance his views from any confusion with philosophical or theological approaches. Freud himself felt that philosophical methods erred by "over-estimating the epistemological value of our logical operations and by accepting other sources of knowledge

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[351] A. I. Tauber, "Freud's philosophical path."
[352] Ibid.

such as tuition."[353] However, despite his inclination to cast down philosophy and religion, later in life he admitted the fire and longing for philosophical knowledge from his youth never fully escaped him.[354] In light of the scholarly suggestion that philosophy influenced his development and admission of a continued passion for these subjects, it should not be altogether surprising that the basic elements of a core element of Freudian theory emerge in various thought systems in the history of man.

Although an emphasis was placed in this paper on specific religions and philosophers, it would be an injustice to ignore the plethora of others in history that have presented similar representations of the soul, the mind, and the self. Amongst others, scholars suggest that elements of the Freudian approach can also be found in the works of Empedocles of Agrigentum, Friedrich Nietzsche, Immanuel Kant, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, and Friedrich Schiller amongst others.[355] While a complete review of the possible philosophical and theological forerunners to the tripartite theory of personality go beyond the scope of this paper, we suspect that further investigation would reveal a wide range of examples such as those unearthed here. As this review of thought systems pre-dating psychoanalysis would suggest, it is our assertion that Sigmund Freud's tripartite approach should rather be viewed as an instantiation of a universal human experience. This universality, which we have illustrated as emergent throughout the history of

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[353] S. Freud, "The question of a Weltanschauung," n *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis*, trans. and ed. J. Strachey (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 197.

[354] A. I. Tauber, "Freud's philosophical path."

[355] R. Askay and J. Farqhuar, "Apprehending the inaccessible." A. I. Tauber, "Freud's philosophical path."

man, is the awareness of our own conflicting inner forces and the struggle to manage these forces to adapt to our own existence.

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