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Ego, Alter ego and Super ego

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Introduction

At different times, and by different authorities, attempts have been made to explain human behavior. In this paper too an attempt has been made to explain the human behavior by using existing terms with little modifications.

Freud's psychoanalysis

The terms *id*, *ego*, and *superego* are the three components of personality in Freud's structural model of the psyche which he

outlined in his essay 'The Ego and the Id' (1923). Here's a breakdown of each:

Id: The id is the primal, instinctual part of the mind. It operates entirely in the unconscious and is driven by the "pleasure principle," seeking immediate gratification of basic needs and desires (like hunger, thirst, and sexual impulses). The id is impulsive and irrational, not concerned with reality or morals—it only seeks satisfaction.

Ego: The ego is the rational, conscious part of the mind that mediates between the id and the external world. It operates on the "reality principle," trying to fulfil the id's desires in realistic and socially acceptable ways. The ego acts as the decision-maker, balancing the demands of the id, the constraints of reality, and the morals imposed by the superego.

Super ego: The super ego is the moral compass of the psyche, embodying internalized societal and parental standards. It is the source of feelings of guilt and pride, aiming for perfection rather than pleasure or practicality. The superego develops as a person internalizes cultural norms, and it pushes the ego to act in morally acceptable ways, sometimes in opposition to the id's desires.

Modification to Freud's term

The close association of the *id* with libido limits the broader significance of Freud's work, a point that has often been criticized. To address this, we use the term *ego* instead. In contemporary usage where *ego* is loosely linked to instinctive behaviour, it can safely replace *id*. *Ego* of Freud has been replaced with more rational term *alter ego* because it is the other self with which a human always keeps communicating and is

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better identified with reason. The concept of the *super ego* remains unchanged, and its original meaning is adopted without alteration.

Maslow's motivation

Maslow's motivation theory, known as *Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, is a psychological model that explains human motivation in terms of a hierarchy of needs. Developed by Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper 'A Theory of Human Motivation', the theory proposes that people are motivated by five levels of needs, often represented in a pyramid:

Physiological Needs: These are basic survival needs, including food, water, shelter, sleep, and warmth. According to Maslow, these must be met first.

Safety Needs: Once physiological needs are satisfied, people seek security, stability, and safety in various forms, such as physical safety, financial security, and health.

Social (or Love and Belonging) Needs: When safety is secured, individuals are motivated by social needs, including love, friendship, intimacy, and family. Social relationships become essential for well-being and happiness.

Esteem Needs: This level includes self-esteem, confidence, achievement, and respect from others. People feel motivated to build a positive self-image and to gain recognition from others.

Self-Actualization Needs: At the top of the hierarchy, self-actualization involves the desire to fulfil one's potential, engage in creative pursuits, and seek personal growth. It's the drive to be the best version of oneself.

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Maslow's theory suggests that people are primarily motivated to fulfil lower-level needs before they can pursue higher-level goals. However, Maslow later acknowledged that motivation can be flexible; some individuals may prioritize higher-level needs even if some lower ones are not fully met.

Modification to Maslow's term

The *physiological needs* and the *safety needs* may be grouped together and labelled as *ego*, being closer to instincts governed by physiological stimulations. The *social needs* and *esteem needs* may be grouped together and labelled as *alter ego* as these are reasons governed and guided by psychological stimulations. The self-actualisation needs may safely be labelled as super ego as it conveys the idea of morality and ethics.

Shaitan, Iblis and Adam

The concepts of *Shaitan*, *Iblis*, and *Adam* are central in Islamic theology and mythology, each representing distinct entities with unique roles in the cosmology of good and evil, temptation, and human nature.

Shaitan: *Shaitan* (plural: *Shayatin*) is a term commonly used in Islamic texts to refer to a devil, demon, or any malevolent force that seeks to mislead humans away from the path of righteousness. It is not a single entity but rather a category that includes both supernatural beings like jinn and any force of temptation or misguidance. The *Shayatin* are considered tempters, often trying to corrupt the moral and spiritual integrity of humans.

Iblis: *Iblis* is the specific name of the being who becomes *Shaitan* and is often regarded as the Islamic counterpart to the figure of Satan. According to the Quranic story, Iblis was a jinn,

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not an angel, who refused to bow to Adam, the first human, out of pride and disobedience to God's command. This defiance led to his expulsion from divine grace, and he was condemned to be the primary tempter and adversary to humanity. Iblis swore to lead humans astray as an act of vengeance and rebellion, vowing to prove that humans are unworthy of God's favor.

Adam: Adam, the first human created by God from clay, holds a unique position in Islamic theology as the father of humanity. Endowed with free will, reason, and a soul, Adam embodies both the potential for great virtue and the vulnerability to error. The Quran illustrates this dual nature through the story of *Iblis*, who defied God by refusing to bow to Adam and later sought to mislead him and his descendants. This narrative reflects the universal human struggle to follow divine guidance while resisting temptation. It underscores the moral responsibility of humans to resist the temptations of *Shaitan*, highlighting the importance of faith and ethical choices in navigating life's challenges.

Modification to *Shaitan*, *Iblis* and Adam

Shaitan is closer to instincts or physiological stimulation and may be termed as *ego*. *Iblis* portrays reason as it is the first being who gave reason for not bowing before Adam, for it has been created out of fire whereas Adam was created out of clay, and so may be termed as *alter ego*. Adam refers to humanity in general and can be likened to the *super ego*, the part of the human psyche that represents moral conscience and ethical standards.

Dil, Dimagh, and Dharma

Dil, *Dimagh*, and *Dharma* are terms rooted in the cultural and philosophical traditions of South Asia, particularly in languages

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like Hindi, Urdu, and Sanskrit. They symbolize the interplay between the heart, the mind, and a sense of duty or moral order, respectively.

Dil (Heart): *Dil* is the term for "heart" in Hindi and Urdu, but it goes beyond the physical organ to embody emotions, intuition, and feelings. The *dil* is often associated with love, compassion, and the deeply personal, emotional aspects of human experience. It symbolizes the part of a person that feels joy, sorrow, affection, and empathy. In South Asian literature and poetry, *dil* is often seen as the center of passion and emotional truth, even when it contradicts logic.

Dimagh (Mind): *Dimagh* is the word for "mind" or "brain" in Hindi and Urdu. It represents rationality, intellect, and reason. The *dimagh* is associated with cognitive functions, decision-making, problem-solving, and logical analysis. When making a choice, the *dimagh* is the voice of practicality and thoughtfulness, often seen as balancing or even contradicting the impulses of the *dil*. The dynamic between *dil* and *dimagh* reflects the classic human conflict between emotion and logic.

Dharma (Moral Duty or Righteousness): *Dharma* is a Sanskrit term with deep philosophical and spiritual significance in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It is commonly translated as "duty," "righteousness," "moral order," or "cosmic law." *Dharma* is not just about individual ethics but also about one's role in maintaining harmony in the universe. It reflects a broader sense of purpose or moral obligation, encompassing both personal duty and universal principles. Acting in accordance with *dharma* means living in harmony with one's ethical responsibilities, which can sometimes mean balancing the inclinations of both *dil* and *dimagh*.

Together, they suggest that a fulfilling life balances emotion (*dil*), intellect (*dimagh*), and a sense of moral or spiritual duty (*dharma*).

Modification to Dil, Dimagh, and Dharma

Dil being occupied with emotions and instincts may be termed as *ego*. Dimagh being the centre of thoughts and reasons always advising with logic may be termed as *alter ego*. Dharma being the law or moral values are nothing but *super ego*.

Intermixing and crystalisation

The proposed modifications to existing terms may initially seem inappropriate, but upon deeper analysis, one may find that all these varied terms are nothing but the characterisation of human behaviour. Human being is a bundle of *ego* (physiological stimulations), *alter ego* (psychological stimulations) and *super ego* (ethics and moral values). These driving forces collectively shape humans into a *chef d'oeuvre* (masterpiece) or *ashraful makhluqat* (the noblest of creatures).