

Lecture 18 – Freud Goes Global: From Little Red Riding Hood to the Roots of Civilization

The Abstract: In the last lecture, we considered the Freudian ideas of repression and defense. In this lecture (and the next, perhaps), we will talk about two other sets of terms that have entered our vocabulary. First is Freud's "Structural Psychology" of Id, Ego, and Superego. In talking about these, we will see how Freud saw the interaction of the person drama and the larger dramas of civilization. In a nutshell, Freud thought that repression, guilt, anxiety, and so forth were the price that had to be paid for civilization. In the second part of the lecture, we will turn to Freud's developmental theory of Oral, Anal, and Phallic (or Oedipal) stages. Each of these is, in reality, less about bits of the body and more about big issues facing a child (or adult). Is the world safe? Who controls me? What kind of person am I? We will discuss this in the context of fairy tales because, among other purposes, this will show how Freudian concepts can be used as a lens through which to see literary texts.

Lecture Notes

PART ONE: Freud's Structural Psychology

Ego, Id, & Superego were part of the attempt to explain
how amoral babies grow into moral adults

Begin with an newborn infant.

From Tennyson's poem, In Memoriam

*The baby new to earth and sky
What time his tender palm is pressed
Against the circle of the breast
Has never thought that "This is I?"
But as he grows he gathers much,
and learns the use of "I and me,"
And finds I am not what I see,
And other than the things I touch.*

Back to Freud

What does baby want?
pleasure NOW

The ID = a collection of unbridled desires

The initial state is of an infant is all ID.

Where does pleasure come from (a glance ahead)

Oral pleasures, oral issues

Anal issues: Who is in control here?

Phallic / oedipal issues Am I a boy or a girl?

The EGO grows out of the collision of little Mr. ID with reality.

The ego must thwart the id.

The start of repression

Morality gets more complex in the Oedipal stage of development.

The oedipal conflict

Stage 1: competition

Stage 2: capitulation

Stage 3: internalization

The SUPEREGO is (at first) the internalized voice of the father (mother)

Superego is not the same as your conscience

_____ is the weapon of the super-ego.

_____ is the warning system for the ego.

Freud's theory of civilization (see Civilization and its discontents (1930s))

The wacky bits

The important bits

To be civilized means that you will suffer from anxiety and guilt.

PART TWO: What shall we tell the children?

Bettelheim, Bruno (1975) The uses of enchantment : the meaning and importance of fairy tales. New York : Knopf

Freud's developmental psychology

ORAL----ANAL----PHALLIC----LATENCY----ADULT

What kind of a story is that for little kids?

What are fairy tales about?

What are fairy tales...period?

A *coded* language ... why?

What are the characteristics of fairy tales?

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

What do parents know about this?

The evolution of tales

How could crazy stories about giants and trolls etc. address real problems in kids?

Hansel and Gretel as an example of

Jack and the Beanstalk - an early oedipal tale

Classic male oedipal tales

Female oedipal stories are different....How and why?

Snow White

About those dwarves

Little Red Riding Hood – Jack and the Beanstalk for girls?

Animal groom stories

Kiss the frog

Beauty and the Beast