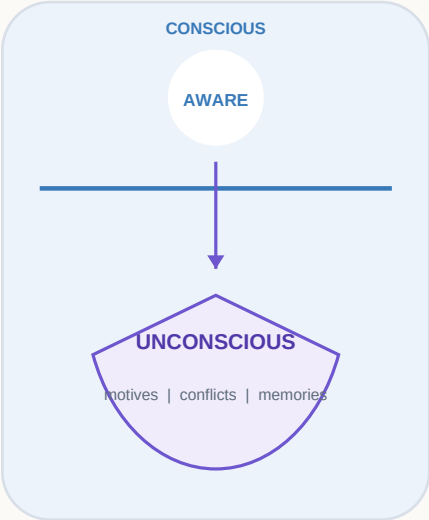
AP PSYCHOLOGY | UNIT 4

TOPIC 4.4

Psychodynamic and Humanistic Personality

Two perspectives ask different questions: What hidden processes shape us, and how do acceptance and choice support growth?



TWO LENSES ON PERSONALITY

PSYCHODYNAMIC

unconscious processes and ego protection

ASSESSMENT

ambiguous stimuli reveal possible themes

HUMANISTIC

choice, acceptance, potential, and growth

BY THE END, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO...

1. Explain the psychodynamic focus on unconscious personality processes.
2. Distinguish eight defense mechanisms and describe projective tests.
3. Explain unconditional regard, self-concept, and self-actualizing tendency.

BIG IDEA

Psychodynamic theory explains personality through hidden processes and defenses. Humanistic theory emphasizes conscious choice, acceptance, self-concept, and movement toward potential.

1 Psychodynamic personality

Unconscious processes can shape behavior, while defense mechanisms reduce threats to the ego without conscious awareness.

UNCONSCIOUS Mental processes outside awareness can influence personality and behavior.

EIGHT DEFENSE MECHANISMS

DENIAL

Refuse to accept a threatening reality.

DISPLACEMENT

Redirect emotion toward a safer target.

PROJECTION

Attribute one's own unacceptable feelings to others.

RATIONALIZATION

Create a reasonable-sounding excuse.

REACTION FORMATION

Act opposite to an unacceptable impulse.

REGRESSION

Return to earlier behavior under stress.

REPRESSION

Push distressing material out of awareness.

SUBLIMATION

Redirect an impulse into acceptable activity.

QUICK DISTINCTIONS

DISPLACEMENT

angry at a boss -> snaps at a friend

PROJECTION

feels jealous -> accuses another of jealousy

SUBLIMATION

channels anger into intense training

PROJECTIVE TEST A person responds to ambiguous stimuli so a psychologist can look for themes connected to preconscious or unconscious material.

LIMIT Interpretation can be subjective; a projective response is not a direct window into the mind.

2 Humanistic personality

Humanistic theory emphasizes conscious choice, personal potential, acceptance, and movement toward fuller functioning.

A GROWTH-FOCUSED CHAIN

ACCEPTANCE
less conditional worth

→

SELF-CONCEPT
a more secure view of self

→

CHOICE
authentic decisions

→

GROWTH
movement toward potential

REGARD AND SELF-WORTH

UNCONDITIONAL REGARD

Acceptance is communicated without making a person's worth depend on meeting conditions.

CONDITIONAL REGARD

Acceptance depends on meeting expectations, which can make self-worth rely heavily on approval.

COMPARE THE PERSPECTIVES

QUESTION	PSYCHODYNAMIC	HUMANISTIC
What drives personality?	unconscious processes	growth and potential
What limits the person?	threats and defenses	conditions of worth
How is personality explored?	themes in ambiguous material	self-concept and experience

SELF-ACTUALIZING TENDENCY

The motivation to grow, develop personal potential, and move toward fulfillment. It is a tendency, not a guarantee that every goal will be reached.