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ID:

an Animation with an Environment about the Ego and the Id

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Abstract

When people discover their inner worlds, they would feel different psyches inside. According to the human psyche conception of Sigmund Freud, there are three kinds of psyches in human minds. They are the id, ego, and super-ego, representing instinct, reality, and morality.

What is worth noticing is the relationship between the ego and id. While the ego is the part people know most because it is generally conscious, the id is the most mysterious, because it is enormous and completely subconscious. Also, they talk because the ego is a mediator between the id and the real world. However, while the role of the ego is widely appreciated, the id is always repressed and demonized, because it is considered as a collection of human darkness.

It has been found that the id, the dark side, can have more positive aspects. Being called “shadow” by Carl Jung, the id also shows vitality, creativity, spirit, and prodigious powers. When the id is profoundly repressed, it leads to tragedies such as neurosis, psychosis, and violence. Once people take the advantages of the id, it would provide humans with creativity, passion, and powerful intuition. Thus, the id and ego both conflict and rely on each other. Since they are influencing people’s inner world, it is crucial to gain a better understanding of the relationship between the id and the ego.

This project is an animation with the environment to talk about such a complementary relationship. In the short narrative animation, the two main characters are a girl and a mysterious creature representing the ego and the id. They might hide, meet, fight, and then integrate. Metaphors will be widely used in this story to show their relationship. Although other works show the id as a simple devil stereotype, this short animation indicates the complexity of the id and emphasizes its positive aspect. In order to impress audiences, an exhibition would be created to show the film.

Keywords:

psychology, ego, id, animation, collage
1. Situation Analysis

People not only live in the outer world, but also face their inner world. Often, it is not peaceful internally as typically we can find different psyches inside our mind. For example: “I am tired. I want to sleep;” “Do your work;” “Do part of your work, and then you can go sleep.” For this conflict, Sigmund Freud’s human psyche conception can be a widely accepted explanation\(^1\). Being a globally renowned psychoanalyst, Freud made an essential contribution to psychoanalysis by studying this theory. This conception indicates that three aspects construct human psyche\(^2\). They are the id, the ego, and the super-ego. Generally, instinct, reality, and morality are summed up to be what they represent.

![Image: Iceberg Chart of Human Psyche](image)

[Figure 1: Iceberg Chart of Human Psyche, (image by the author)]

Being the primary part, the id exists at birth and stands for the basic instinct drives such as breath, heart beating, impulse, hunger, and sex. It is a mysterious side that is deeply hiding in the dark and can roughly represent the subconscious. It is possible to explore the id only by dreams and hypnosis. Individuals can recognize their deep memory, secret desires, and pent-up emotions among the chaos in the id\(^3\). Despite the personal unconscious, the id is also a container of the collective unconscious, including ancient experiences in human evolution. That is what humankind share and inherit.

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Unlike the id, the super-ego is a product of the culture, the society, and the education. Knowing values, moralities, and taboos, the super-ego exists to help people fit into society. Pursuing spiritual goals, it always tries to act in the perfect and ideal way. Otherwise, the guilty feeling would occur as a punishment. When the id and the super-ego blindly stick to each ground, the ego is the only part facing the real world. Balancing the id, the superego, and the reality, the ego is a mediator. Considering the real situation, the ego is trying to meet the reasonable needs of the id while respecting the ideal of the super-ego. Since the ego considers all the situations and makes decisions for the actual behaviors, therefore, usually the ego is what we show to people around. Similar to the superego, the ego is also contributed by the environment and society.

Although those three are parts with the unique features, they heavily rely on each other and operate as a whole organism to affect how an individual behaves.

An interesting relationship is between the ego and the id. At the one hand, the id could be described as a contrast to the ego. While the ego is primarily in the consciousness, the id is entirely in the darkness of the subconscious. At the same time, we know the ego the most and know how to modify it, while the id is still like a myth for public. Also, the ego is rational and plays the role to balance everything for a long-term benefit, while the id is emotional and acts immediately by instinct. Moreover, the ego developed by the society is like a sophisticated grown up, and the id appears at birth and acts like a wild child. On the other hand, they are connecting instead of mutual suppression and exclusion as the ego is developed initially from the id by the external world. Also, they can collaborate and work by a mutually reinforcing way for the benefit of the whole organism.

2. Problem Statement

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However, there is a misunderstanding about the ego and the id. The id is always heavily demonized, while the role of the ego is highly praised. As the id is dark and knows no judgments of value, people have formed a stereotype - “the id is a devil.” Furthermore, the public simply believes that the ego is a cage and the id is a monster which must be prisoned by the cage forever. For a large portion of people, the id is too evil to be seen. Cruel, aggressive, greedy, and violent, the disadvantage of the id has been amplified. Therefore, the id has been considered as a complete drawback of human beings.

Carl Jung, the famous psychiatrist, and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology argues that the id can show something positive by further studies. In Jung’s conception, the id is just a shadow instead of a devil. First of all, the id is the shadow of the ego, representing the mask we are wearing and the persona we have formed for the society. Therefore, the id is just a part out of the society, and not something repulsive and inhumane. Second, the id is full of the primary energy of nature. Once emergencies occur, it can show significant survival capability. Also, the id contains positive elements such as vitality and creativity. Without the energy of the id, the ego would make the human a rigid body. Hence, the id is needed for its true spirit of life to fight against the borings. Although most people choose to evade the shadow, in fact, the shadow always stays in the minds of every human being. Also, it is essential to be aware of when the ego profoundly hides the id as it would be incredibly destructive, leading to tragedies such as neurosis, psychosis, and violence.

In conclusion, when the ego properly relaxes the constraints to the id, it can be beneficial. Therefore, if people know more about the id and the ego, they can learn how to get along with the id. By gaining a better understanding, they can take advantage of the id and use its power to make their lives better.

3. Methodology

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Ideation
I aim at helping the audiences feel and think the relationship between the id and the ego. Therefore, I have decided to make a short animation to show how a person becomes dominated by the two psyches, and how he or she balances those two. When such psychological knowledge is too academic for some people, an animation can easily make them think that they are telling a story themselves. Also, the public would have a more impressive watch experience as an exhibition helps show the film.

Research
For the psychology topic, the books of Freud and Jung have been read, for example, *The Ego and the Id,* *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis,* *Man and His Symbols,* and *Modern Man in Search of a Soul.* During the reading, I have summarized the feature of the ego and the id, and I have begun to set up the rough storyboards. Besides, I have recorded my dreams as inspiration, because the id always shows by dreams. In those dreams, I have found specific symbols that relate to the id and contribute to the plots in my film.

Storyboard
When the explanation videos are overwhelming and superficial, I aim at creating a metaphor narrative to show the complexity of the ego and the id especially the positive points of the id. A girl (same gender with the maker) and a vast underwater environment would be in the short film. Three parts including the ego-dominated life, the id’s fantastic world, and the id’s awaking would form a story breaking the stereotype of the id.

Visual Style
At the early stage, I have insisted on an abstract collage style. Two reasons result in the choice of the abstract style. First, since psychology is something abstract, especially the id is inenarrable and inaccessible, an abstract visual style is an excellent choice in this movie. Second, when the id represents the imagination, emotion, myth, and abstract shapes would describe it better. Three reasons lead to the choice of the collage style. First, as we know, the id is always studied by dreamwork, because dreams are what the id talks to the ego. Deconstructing and reforming the daily life memory, dreams work similarly with collage which means cutting into pieces and assembling. Second, based on my experience on making collage, I suggest collage is an art stand for the id. Personally, when doing
collage, I search elements among hundreds of pieces by the intuition, particularly the id. Also, as collage encourages different interpretations, representing what the id considers, including imagination and freedom. Third, since collage emphasizes interpretations, when collage pulses motion in this project, it could be shifting interpretation which is worth to explore further. This project focuses on shifting interpretation experiments.

I have viewed collaged animations made by Lawrence Jordan, who is remarkable by his dream-like cut-out styles and the surrealism assembling art created by Joseph Cornell, once I have made the decision to use a collage style.

4. Implementation

Inspired by the id and the ego, I made an experimental animation with an environment to show the relationship between them. The whole project named “ID” is talking about a person and a huge undersea environment. The name “ID” means both identity (ego, who we are in the society) and the id. Since the ego acts as a society people, it is represented by a person in this film. When the id is incredibly vast, and below the ocean in the ice-burg chart for its subconscious, a boundaryless undersea world could be a good metaphor for the id.

Animation

Three parts are created in this three-minute animation. Part one shows the ego’s domination by a black and white routine life in a form-like room which is the cage for the person. It suggests that when the ego represses heavily, life could be monotonous like that. After the person comes down to the downstairs world, the second part begins and opens a colorful, fantastic undersea, representing the beautiful and mysterious world of the id. During this part, colors go crazy, the camera starts to move, and a wave distorting filter is used to create a jerky underwater view. The third part indicates ‘awaking.’ After the self-discovering process, the person backs to the black and white life, then releasing the colorful id to make where she the life is better. However, the colorful real life only shows a little in the credits, because I believe with the little happy hints, the audience would imagine more and desire more.
Visual

To make an abstract collage style, I have collected hundreds of image elements from my photos and magazines. Edited by Photoshop, those elements changed into symbols with weirdly fantastic colors by drawing and modifying color curve. Scanning, editing, assembling, and re-editing, I have kept visual experiments. Afterwards, a visual look like nerves and carol reefs with dimensions and dramatic colors is created to describe the underwater subconscious world.

![Figure 2: Style Frames, (image by the author)]

Character

The person who speaks for the ego in the film has been made female to insinuate the maker. Besides, in this society girls are usually more restricted as a typical ego than boys. Eadweard Muybridge’s photography is the primary material of the character. First, when Eadweard’s work is a realistic recording of everyday lives, it is perfect to represent the ego which always stands for reality. Second, those photos have been taken during the Victoria’s era, making the movement and clothing always seem restrained and formal as the typical ego.

![Figure 3: Character, (image by the author)]
**Animating Technique**

In after effects, still images were animated by Puppet Tool and basic transforms such as changing opacity and position. To create a vast space for the id, I have opened the 3D layers of those 2D elements and then put some of them in the distance. Also, I have only used a dim spotlight to highlight the main elements and keep the space dark. When the camera is traveling in the deep and dark world, audiences come into the vast environment. Besides, because part two is underwater, I have added a distorfer filter to imitate the waving.

**Plots & Metaphor**

In order to illuminate the psychology topic, metaphors are needed in this animation. The form in part one is a symbol of identity, persona, reality, and routine. When the girl goes down to the undersea world, the stairs-like conch represents the ice-burg of the human psyche model, and the undersea world is as her subconscious. After this scene, we can see instinct drives show as organs and body parts, including impulses and a beating heart. When animals and ancient masks appear, they indicate evolution, history and collective unconscious which are the memories, deeply hiding in the id. Later, the bubbles and plants represent the nature, and the opening door is as development. Afterwards, the fancy city comes on to symbolize the chaos and busy lives. It reflects her routine life in the subconscious. The undersea world ends with a volcano, which are the core of this environment and the destination of this girl. In the volcano, both the lava and babies represent re-birth, re-formation, and going back, as the id is strongest on new babies, and people need to go back to find the power of the id. At the end, as soon as the girl starts to draw, it indicates that she has realized the id inside her, and she has been releasing it to colorize her boring life.

**Logo**

The “ID” logo is a combination of “id” and “ID” (the ego).
Exhibition

This project has been exhibited in Imagine RIT, the annual festival in Rochester, NY. The narrative animation has been projected on a big screen in a dark booth built by black curtains. With an entrance, revealing a corner of the shining screen, the booth was like a mysterious cave that has aimed at attracting people to discover. Cut paper in organic shapes has been used to screen colors installed on the wall to bring the film scene out, helping the audience get greater enjoyment. The Sigmund Freud’s human psyche model and a brief introduction were provided as hints for the audience. With mystique and sense of infinite space, music made by Kaman Chang, the composer from East School of Music, creates an attractive atmosphere for this project.

Souvenir
For the consistency, souvenirs, hanging pins, are also made by cut pieces. Those gifts have two sides. The front side is cut from the critical scene of the id film, while the back side is a form filled with maker’s information as a business card. Those pins symbolize the combination of the ego and the id.

![Souvenirs, (image by the author)](image)

5. Evaluation

People come to the exhibition, they watch, and they think. Some of them cannot understand the topic until they see the hints I have prepared. After viewing the hints, they say they find the same conflicting feeling inside themselves, and now they know about the id and the ego more. Some of them keep watching it over and over again. Because of the psychology background knowledge, children can hardly understand this movie. However, they are attracted by the colors, moving shapes, and sounds. Being afraid of the dark space, some children stop by the entrance and gradually come into for the most colorful part, the id’s part. After all, children are usually dominated by the id.

6. Conclusion
In conclusion, the primary aim of the project is to show a better understanding of the relationship between the ego and the id through the creation of an experimental animation with an environment and the use of an abstract collage style. For the maker, I have released my id to create a work that is talking about the id, while for the audiences, they have learned themselves with the help of this project. The unique visual style created by me has impressed the audience by the metaphor cut-paper shapes and the changing background. Thus, such collage film is an experiment that contributes to the collage-motion, shifting interpretation.

In the future, I seek participation in a variety of film festivals and competitions to bring my project to the public view. Moreover, I am going to work on my next project that will have a similar topic, making use of the opportunity to combine 3D motion and collage to enrich the visual style and more appealing to the public.
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