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INSIDE THE PSYCHE

From the online book *Photographic Psychology: Image and Psyche* by John Suler

Inside the Psyche proved to be the perfect opportunity for an image involving clones. Because the id, ego, and superego are all parts of an individual's personality structure, it made perfect sense to have the same person (me) portray each one. Attempting to recreate Freud's concept of how they interact with each other, I struck a tense and angry pose for the id, an upright and preachy posture for the superego, and then placed the ego in-between the two as it attempts to assuage both of them.

Several symbolic elements were added to enhance the meaning of the image. The id wears black and clutches a red pillow to represent how its primitive sexual and aggressive energies reside with the realm of the unconscious. A white shirt captures the superego's quest for what is good and pure according to the conventions of society. Wearing a gray shirt as well as eyeglasses, the ego attempts a rational compromise between the two. To create some visual continuity, to capture the fact that id, ego, and superego all belong to the same intrapsychic fabric, and to avoid excessive wardrobe changes, I had all three wear the same pair of jeans. Although I didn't plan this aspect of the shot, I like how the ego seems to sink into the couch, as if exhausted by its efforts as a peacemaker.

The three parts of the couch and the pattern of threes in the background details create a tiny measure of visual rhythm while reinforcing the idea of the tripartite structure of the psyche.

Clone shots are most interesting when the clones interact, as opposed to simply being alongside each other in the image. Because they are facing off, the strongest psychological line in this image is between the id and superego, which is consistent with the idea that they often clash due to their opposing objectives. With the id's eyes squinting angrily while the superego's eyes flutter with self-righteous pretentiousness, I was able to conceal any possible mismatch in their eye contact, which would have been a clue giving away the fact that the image was created by cutting and pasting. Overlapping the ego's hands with the bodies of the id and superego also adds some realism to the image, as opposed to images where the clones are pasted into separated areas.

Inconsistent shadows result in clone images that look unrealistic. Here diffuse light from a window on the right and a lamp on the left created an unproblematic,



Figure 8.2 Freud believed the psyche consists of three parts. The id strives to express our primitive impulses. The superego upholds the rules and morals of society. The ego tries to mediate between the two. Photo by John Suler

even illumination. Those light sources may not be obvious given the fact that I added some vignetting to create a “closed in” feeling, symbolic of the intrapsychic world. The black frame with an inner glow enhanced that effect, as if we are looking down into this scene.

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