

# Pyramid of Inferiority

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## Abstract

This article introduces, for the first time, a heuristic model of inferiority, outlining its key parameters as the result of research conducted by PhD Oleg Maltsev. The study also examines Maltsev's model of the human psyche, which serves as the foundation for understanding the structure of the pyramid of inferiority, explaining its components and the process of its formation. Key categories necessary for constructing a comprehensive schematic model of human inferiority are described, providing a systematic framework for analysis. Additionally, the article considers the height of the pyramid, reflecting the stages of personality development and the formation of the individual.

## Keywords

inferiority, pyramid of inferiority, human psyche, model of psyche

## Introduction

The topic addressed in this article has been touched upon in the works of various scholars and thinkers, even though it was not explicitly labeled as "inferiority" (Baudrillard, 1996, 1998; Fromm, 1973; Freud, 1999; Descartes, 2015). Questions related to the nature of human inferiority and limitations have been considered by philosophers and psychologists for centuries, highlighting the longstanding interest in this topic (De Carranza, 1582). This article presents a heuristic model of inferiority, outlining its central parameters and theoretical foundations. The model is the result of extensive research conducted by Academician Oleg V. Maltsev of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences in the field of the psychology of inferiority. Inferiority, as a psychological phenomenon, affects every individual to varying degrees, and understanding its structure requires a detailed examination of the human psyche, which forms its underlying basis.

The model of the psyche itself was first introduced by Academician Maltsev at the scientific symposium "*Life Triumph*" held in Palermo in December 2019. It represents the culmination of years of scholarly inquiry, integrating insights from Leopold Szondi's studies on the duality of factors in the Szondi test (Szondi, 1944a, 1952), lectures by the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso, and the works of Soviet academicians A. S. Yakovlev and G. S. Popov. By situating the concept of inferiority within this comprehensive model

of the psyche, the article aims to provide a systematic framework for understanding how inferiority manifests and operates within individuals.

## Methodology

The methodology proposed in this study is based on the psychical model developed by Oleg Maltsev, which is linked to the study of Lipót Szondi's works on the paired factors of the test. However, the model emerged as a result of research across several theoretical foundations, including the paired factors of the Szondi Test, lectures by the Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso (1898; Gatti & Verde, 2012), and the works of Soviet academics A. S. Yakovlev (1952) and G. S. Popov (1951).

One of the main methods employed is the research concept (Illiusha, 2020), described as "an idea transformed into a research methodology, brought through scientific transformations to an appropriate technologically acceptable level." This concept was presented in the book *Philosophy of Southern Italy* (Maltsev & Lunov, 2020). Additionally, a comparative analysis was applied: observed patterns are compared with historical models, including Szondi's paired factors and Lombroso's work, in order to validate the findings.

## Results and Discussion

### *Model of the Psyche*

The human psyche can be understood as a system that consists of four categories:

- "I can do";
- "I know";
- "I am able to";
- "I remember."

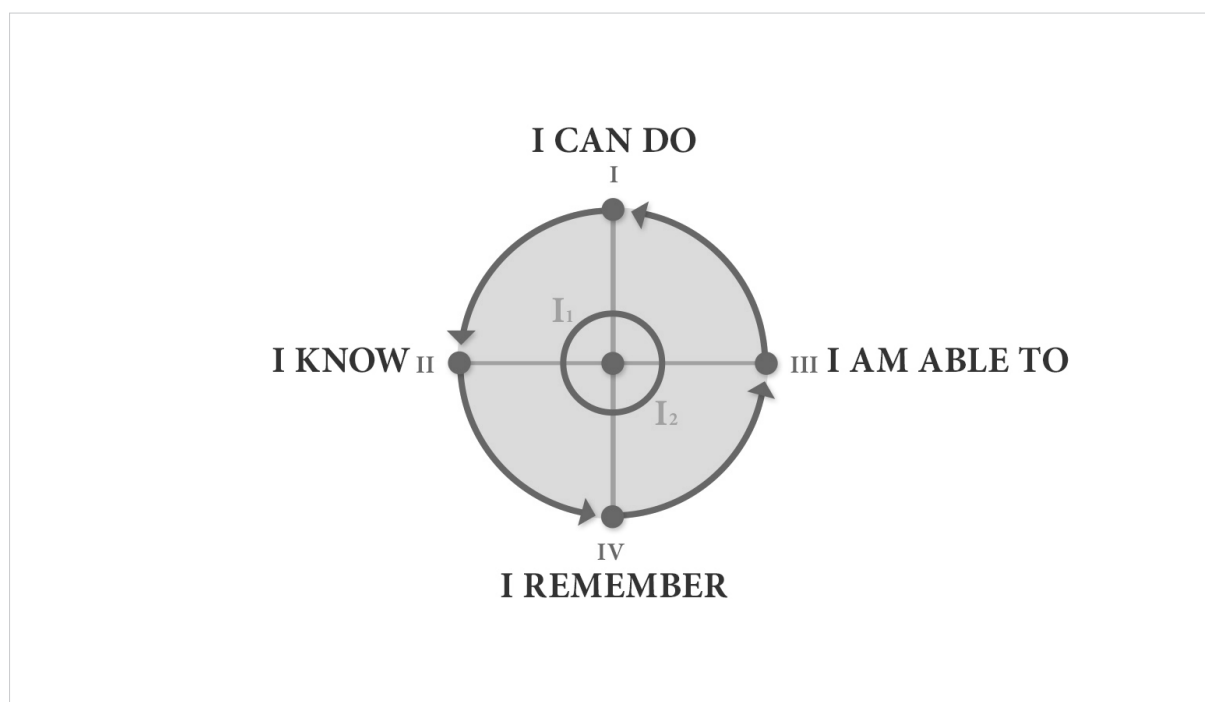


Figure 1: Model of the Psyche by Dr. Oleg Maltsev

“I remember” is the result of interaction between the so-called “self” and the human body. How is this perceived by a person? There is a certain volume of information an individual retains — from something as simple as a mother’s phone number to the multiplication table. This constitutes the information that one remembers.

“I know” is connected to the present. It does not refer to the past, which belongs to memory. A person knows something about where they are in the present moment. Knowledge is never abstract; one knows about specific things, either as elements or as part of a system. At the same time, “knowledge” is also the product of human misconceptions. However, people are not aware of these misconceptions and treat them as genuine knowledge.

“I am able to” always falls into the category of “X,” implying a change in the space in which a person exists. Any such change inevitably meets resistance from outside. As soon as an individual intends to alter something or someone in the world — even slightly — there will always be those who oppose it. Another distinctive feature of “ability” is its variety. A person can accomplish something directly, through others, by means of a system of coordinates (such as a company), or within a hierarchy. For instance, a woman may not be able to do certain things herself, yet her husband may be capable of much, and through him she is able to achieve many things in life. Thus, “ability” always represents a multivariate system that encounters resistance during its implementation.

The category of “I can do” is no less important in life than “I am able.” A person may possess ability but never act on it. “I can do” functions as a kind of instinct. One does not consciously reflect on how the awareness arises that something can be accomplished; it emerges as a spontaneous emotion, a sense of certainty that success is possible. Yet in order to truly be capable of doing something, time and a specific method of training are required. One cannot simply acquire a skill instantly. It is possible to have ability without determination, or, conversely, to have determination and high social standing without skills — resulting in failure to complete even a simple task. Such individuals are often described as having an “inflated self-esteem.”

It is important to note that all of the categories described above operate unconsciously. A person does not receive a predefined package of knowledge or skills from childhood. Instead, learning typically occurs spontaneously: individuals study whatever captures their interest at a given moment, without systematic effort. Memory, perhaps the least explored of these categories, is nonetheless used by everyone at some level throughout life. Active self-training and personal change begin only when fear sets in — fear of losing shelter, food, employment, or fear of violence, among other threats.

From the perspective of inferiority, the system always experiences one of two types of failure: either the engine is disabled, or the shutter does not function. In other words, either a single component (the engine) fails, or both categories that form the shutter fail simultaneously, with the engine always being primary. How does this manifest in life? A person may remember something but lack ability, know something but be unable to act, or remember and know yet neither possess skill nor the capacity to execute. Each individual exhibits a particular configuration in the functioning of this system. One, two, or even three components may fail. The degree of a person’s inferiority can be assessed by asking: which part of this system is not functioning?

Knowledge and skill define humanity. Animals possess determination and memory rooted in instinct. An animal may be capable of performing simple tasks, such as digging burrows, but the category of “knowing” is uniquely human.

Another essential category in this model of the psyche is “understanding.” This category is the most expansive and least explored in terms of the human psyche. To “understand” means to know how and by what means something can be accomplished. For example, it

is not enough to understand that one can write on a board; a marker is also required to perform the action.

**Most people believe that they “know”, that they “remember” some things, yet the question remains: can they actually do anything? Moreover, they often do not truly understand what they are doing.**

This is how the human psyche operates, with each of the categories presented serving merely as an evaluative measure.

### ***Model of the Inferiority***

Next, we will describe the categories that must be considered to construct a comprehensive schematic model of human inferiority. These can be thought of as components influencing the formation of inferiority.

1. **Training and upbringing.** There is a particular stage in personality development when a person's behavioral patterns are most strongly influenced by their animalistic traits. During this period, upbringing functions as a form of training, without involving any physical intervention.
2. **Characteristics of the established configuration of inferiority.** These differ from person to person and include habits, opinions, principles, and so forth.
3. **Level of knowledge at the present time.** People vary in their knowledge and preparation, regardless of age.
4. **Degree of determination.** This also varies among individuals, irrespective of age or gender.
5. **Depth of interaction with memory.** This refers to intuition, which is developed to varying degrees across individuals.
6. **Skills and learning speed.** It is crucial to consider how quickly a person can acquire new skills.
7. **Compensation for deficiencies.** Simply put, this refers to how a person regulates their state, compensating for failures, consequences of inferiority, and so on (for example, one may punch a bag in a boxing gym, while another may rely on alcohol).
8. **Tendencies in striving to realize inferiority according to one of three scenarios:**
  - a. **Antonio Mattei line:** Accept one's inferiority and use it as a pathway toward perfection.
  - b. **Leonardo Ciaccio line:** A combination of magician and scientist. This system is in constant conflict, and the battle between these two sides generates the best solutions.
  - c. **Francesco Villardita line:** Altering the geometry of the vessel, consuming the cup of inferiority until only a single drop remains.

Each person has a phantom notion of what would be best for them. However, this is always merely a representation that cannot be clearly described or verified (Maltsev, 2017, 2018).

Human inferiority can be represented as a pyramid, the configuration of which determines its height. The degree of integrity (the four support points of the pyramid) forms vertical structures. At the base of the pyramid, as its foundation, lies the human psyche.

### ***Components of Inferiority***

Let us consider how the “components” affecting the formation of inferiority, along with other elements, correspond to the inferiority model itself.

For example, training and upbringing serve as the material from which the pyramid is made. There is an expression: “what kind of dough a person is made of,” referring to how skillfully one is shaped or molded and what one represents. Here, we deal with two

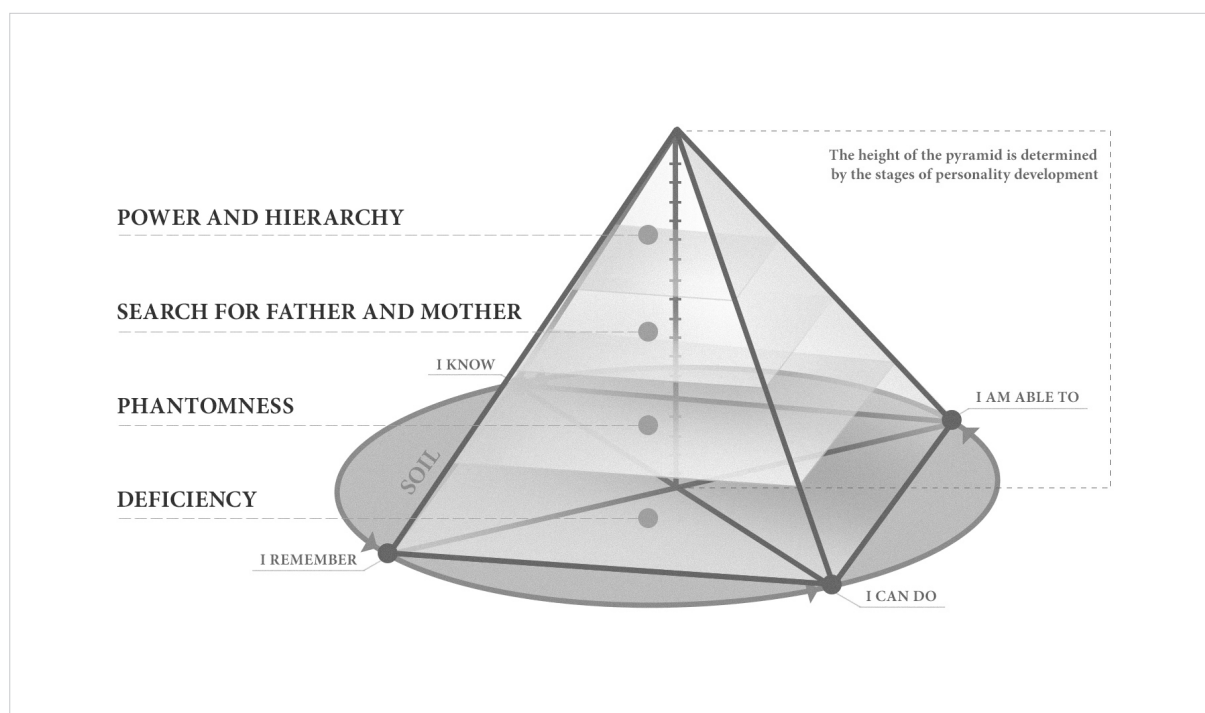


Figure 2: Pyramid of Inferiority

categories — the material and the art of constructing the pyramid, with one compensating for the other. This can be roughly represented as plaster and the hands of a craftsman, or marble and the ability to work with it. It is about what the pyramid is made of and how it is made. The stronger the construction, the more challenging it is to work with.

**Learning speed** reflects the rate at which the pyramid's configuration changes, and it can vary. The pyramid in a person is never as whole as depicted in illustrations; it represents an ideal that is always unattainable.

**The blueprint for constructing** the pyramid represents one of three approaches to working with inferiority. The lines of Mattei, Villardita, and Ciaccio are the project documentation for building the pyramid — how one would ideally like to construct it. However, tendencies usually remain tendencies, because no one truly knows how it works; there is only a phantom representation.

The foundation on which the pyramid stands is the dynamic impulsive component of the human psyche. Imagine that the pyramid does not float in a vacuum but rests on a solid base formed by the human psyche; beneath this base lies a particular “soil.” Where does this soil come from? It originates from the individual's animalistic component, shaped through training. This involves a complex of accumulated behavioral models and anthropological traits that appear effective. It is a system of memory functioning, certain anthropological characteristics, and our impulsive component. One manifestation of this foundational “soil” in life is mentality. For example, people living on different continents exhibit distinct cultures, traditions, religions, thought patterns, values, and so on.

We must also consider the height of the pyramid, determined by the stages of personality formation. There are four stages, which allows us to conceptually divide the pyramid into four levels:

1. Deficiency.
2. Phantomness.
3. Search for Father or Mother.
4. Power and hierarchy.

To describe these stages in detail, it is necessary to examine the key concepts from Lipót Szondi's research on drives, upon which he based his projective test (the Szondi Test).

Thus, let us briefly discuss the factors and vectors of the Szondi Test as central concepts in the School of Fate Psychology (Szondi, 1944b, 1960).

| FG | S |   | P |    | Sch |   | C   |   |
|----|---|---|---|----|-----|---|-----|---|
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| +  |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
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|    |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
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|    |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
| -  |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
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|    |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
|    |   |   |   |    |     |   |     |   |
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|    | + | + | - | -  | +/- | + | +/- | 0 |

| BG | S   |   | P |    | Sch |   | C |   |
|----|-----|---|---|----|-----|---|---|---|
|    | h   | s | e | hy | k   | p | d | m |
| +  |     |   |   |    |     |   |   |   |
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|    | +/- | + | - | 0  | -   | + | - | + |

Figure 3: Szondi test

One of the central concepts in Fate Psychology is the notion of a "drive." Szondi examines this topic in detail in his book *Experimental Diagnosis of Drives*. Drives act as radicals or sources of human actions.

A **radical** is a global root factor that serves as the source of a person's actions. Radicals are formed through a system based on eight drive factors, which, as sources of unknown forces, push a person in a particular direction. This occurs at the unconscious level. For convenience, we can organize these into the following blocks:

- **Block 1 — Attraction to men/women and destruction (h; s):** This block corresponds to a person's skills and knowledge.
- **Block 2 — Ethics and morality (e; hy):** This block shapes an individual's philosophy.
- **Block 3 — Tendency to "be" and "have" (k; p):** This block governs management and leadership.
- **Block 4 — Tendency toward social contact (d; m):** This block determines environmental conditions.

All four groups of drive tendencies combine to form the individual manifestation of drives, impulses, and needs, which the Szondi Test ultimately reveals. The system is described in greater detail by O. V. Maltsev in the book *The Philosophy of Szondi* (Maltsev, 2019).

Next, we need to examine the stages of personality development through a central "engine," which plays a critical role in a person's fate and in achieving triumph in life. This primary engine acts as a starting point for personality development and a key factor in attaining success. To realize triumph, an individualized approach must be selected for each person, tailored to their core engine.

In addition to the primary engine that each person possesses from birth, up to three additional engines may emerge throughout their life. Ideally, this results in a system of four engines.

Let us now examine the nature of the human engine system. For this, conditions, management, skills and knowledge, as well as philosophy, are required. In Szondi's terms, these correspond to four blocks that unconsciously propel a person toward certain actions. For example, if a child grew up in a family with frequent quarrels, under constant tension, deprived of attention and recognition, unloved, or denied what they desired, their engines will be h; s.

If a person grew up with alcoholic or addicted parents, or as a neglected child, their engines will be e; hy. Such individuals constantly reflect on justice and injustice, and those who change their lives and help them "rise" in society will gain their lifelong loyalty. If a person was beaten, humiliated, or shown that they were "worthless," their engines will be k; p. If a person experienced a childhood of hunger and deprivation, their engines will be d; m.

It can be said that a person's life, understood in its complexity, determines their engine. In other words, whatever was most important to the person, what they lacked the most, or were deprived of, becomes their engine. Thus, deficiency creates conflict and triggers the engine.

**Deficiency** creates the need for compensation in a person. Humans are always drawn toward what they lack, reflecting a conflict with the external world. What a person was deprived of from early childhood, what they most acutely lacked, becomes their engine. This engine is formed by the age of 14–16 and remains unchanged throughout life, with its influence increasing over time.

During the stage of career choice, a person encounters a fork in the road. At this point, they may lean toward a socially acceptable profession or a criminal path. If external pressures are not critical, the person generally chooses a socially acceptable profession, through which they can compensate for deficiency.

From the perspective of compensation, professional activity contains specific nuances. For example, parents may have forced the child to enter a university of their choosing. Situations can arise in which the child fails the entrance exams and must select another field, or chooses incorrectly, thinking a certain direction will suit them when it does not. In these cases, the deficiency remains uncompensated.

If a profession compensates for deficiency, the person ascends the social hierarchy. If it does not, they descend. This dynamic is referred to as the "social elevator." A second fork then appears: the person must choose whether to pursue a leadership track or a specialization track within their profession. Here, certain predispositions can be observed: individuals with h; s or d; m engines tend to become experts, whereas those with e; hy or k; p engines generally aim for leadership.

The fourth and final fork is "activity cessation." This may not manifest but exists and will influence the person. Many continue their work well into old age, while others stop all activities upon retirement. However, fully ceasing activity is not recommended, as it triggers a mechanism of regression.

The second engine, **Phantomness**, enables a person to secure a desired future. The phantom image of a prosperous life raises questions of justice. The second engine is activated when a person discovers a source of power that helps them realize fairness.

Typically, a person's first job results in some form of psychological trauma. They may be fired due to a lack of skills, or they may have taken a position they did not want or choose, merely to support themselves and their family. This job never represents the future they truly desired. The concept of the future is significant because it triggers self-identification: "Who am I?" and "What do I belong to?" An organization must provide a strong support system, accept the individual, and ensure protection. Historically, this is why knightly orders, secret societies, and scientific organizations were so prominent. Today, most commercial enterprises are primarily created to serve the owner's future.

The activation of the third engine, **Search for Father or Mother**, involves seeking authority or a mentor. At a certain point in life, a person experiences disappointment in their parents, leading them to instinctively search for a substitute parental figure. In Jungian archetypal terms, a woman seeks the Great Father, while a man seeks the Great Mother (Jung, 1957). Why does this occur? At a certain stage, the person realizes that their parents could not provide justice or facilitate upward movement.

However, at this stage, there is a risk: searching for the Great Mother is a dead end. One must seek the Great Father, regardless of one's own gender, though this often occurs unconsciously. Those who find the Great Mother risk remaining inconsequential for life, while those who find the Great Father typically achieve triumph.

A person searches for someone who can guide them in life and help them achieve greater results. When such an authority appears, the third engine is activated.

The fourth engine, **power and hierarchy**, represents the **sacrifice of freedom**, which, in the interest of present and future power, completes the formation of a person's personality and endows them with relatively stable force components. The term "sacrifice of freedom" refers to the utilization of hierarchical power, allowing a person to exert control over others outside that hierarchy. With the emergence of all four engines, the individual acquires power. The instinct for power manifests in one of two directions: for personal benefit or in service of the hierarchy to which the person belongs.

The development of these stages and engines occurs in all people, usually unconsciously and without deliberate control. How long it takes to form this system is unknown to the individual. The person whose system is fully developed is stronger, while others require external organization. The need for power arises only after the first three engines are in place, when the individual possesses intellect, strength, and determination.

This illustrates the heuristic model of the **pyramid of inferiority** based on the human psyche. However, several additional aspects are worth noting.

The absence of inferiority would correspond to a complete pyramid with ideal facets standing on solid ground — but this never occurs in reality. Each individual exists at a certain stage of personality development, influencing the pyramid's levels. The psyche's engines also function individually and incompletely, affecting the pyramid's facets. For instance, if the "can do" engine does not function, one facet of the pyramid is missing; if two engines are inactive, two facets are absent, and so on. Every person knows, can do, remembers, and is capable to some extent.

## Conclusions

Inferiority is one of the central categories of the human psyche. One can say that the configuration of inferiority (the pyramid) effectively represents the structure of the human psyche.

The primary obstacle to forming a coherent pyramid is that an individual alone cannot transform it into a model of a virtuous character. Guidance from a master — someone to direct, assist, and oversee the construction of the pyramid — is always necessary. While God has already created the person, the pyramid itself must be constructed over the course of life, ideally with knowledge of how to do so. This process can also occur unconsciously, but in that case, the outcome is unpredictable and uncontrollable, potentially harming the individual or those around them.

For example, a doctor said, "I can," and proceeded with surgery, resulting in the patient's death. Another person said, "I will remember," but forgot, causing someone to die of starvation. A third faltered on the battlefield, resulting in the deaths of others. This is what is commonly referred to as the human factor — the application of the resources of the

inferiority pyramid against other people. Given that each person possesses such a pyramid, people inevitably apply it to one another throughout life.

The inferiority pyramid fundamentally shapes each individual's perception of the world. As a result, they see reality through the prism of this pyramid. To alter perception, one must change the geometry of inferiority, though the pyramid itself cannot be changed.

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