



Seminar Year III
Fall, 2020
Ego Psychology
Christopher Morse, PhD

Seminar dates: September 24; October 1, 8, 15, 29; November 5, 12, 19.
Academic Lecture: September 17.
Special Topics: October 22.

This seminar is intended to offer an overview of the origins, development, and current state of psychoanalytic ego psychology. We begin with the problems of a clinical and conceptual nature which led to Freud's 1923-26 reformulations of his theories of psychical systems and anxiety. Anna Freud's The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense applied those formulations in a thoroughgoing way to clinical practice. From the 1940's to the 1960's a vast body of work attempted to clarify, expand, and synthesize the theoretical implications of these changes, and to extend them through clinical observation, applied analysis, and child developmental research—even seeking to make psychoanalytic psychology a foundation for 'general psychology'. By the 1970's it was apparent to many of ego psychology's most prominent contributors that the effort had been, at the very least, over-ambitious. Many left this era of grand metapsychological ambition and synthesis behind, and with it even the language of ego psychology. For others, returning to a more experience-near, clinically-oriented approach in psychoanalytic ego psychology has led in new and interesting directions. It is these newer trends we will be exploring in the last half of the seminar.

Week 1

Arlow, J. and Brenner, C. (1964). *Psychoanalytic concepts and the structural theory*. Ch. 2: The topographic theory, 9-23. Ch. 3: Freud's criticisms of the topographic theory, 24-30. Ch. 4: The structural theory, 31-42. International Universities Press. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsi.org.]

Supplemental:

Wallerstein, R.S. (2002). The growth and transformation of American ego psychology. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 50:135-168. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Students will be able to explain two clinical observations which led to Freud's decision to reject the qualities of being conscious versus being unconscious, as reliable and useful criteria for defining psychological systems in psychoanalysis.

Week 2

Freud, A. ([1936] 1966). Ch. 1: The ego as the seat of observation, 3-10. Ch. 3: The ego's defensive operations considered as an object of analysis, 28-41. Ch. 5: Orientation of the processes of defense according to the source of anxiety and danger, 54-65. In A. Freud, *The ego and the mechanisms of defense*. International Universities Press. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Supplemental:

Sandler, J. (1985). Ch. 2: The application of analytic technique to the study of the psychic institutions. In J. Sandler with A. Freud, (1985), *The analysis of defense: the ego and the mechanisms of defense revisited*. International Universities Press. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Learning objective:

Students will be able to identify and discuss the three sources of danger and anxiety which Anna Freud posits as eliciting defense.

Week 3

Hartmann, H., Kris, E., and Loewenstein, R.M. (1946). Comments on the formation of psychic structure. *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 2:11-38. [PEP Web Link](#)

Supplemental:

Apfelbaum, B. (1966). On ego psychology: a critique of the structural approach to psychoanalytic theory. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 47:451-475. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Hartmann et al. characterize the "systems or structures" id, ego, and superego as "centers of psychic functioning"—that is, as groups of functions which "commonly appear together in states of psychic conflict". Students will be able to define the functions attributed to each of the three systems.

Week 4

Arlow, J.A. (1963). Conflict, regression, and symptom formation. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 44: 12-22. [PEP Web Link](#)

Supplemental:

Abend, S.M. (1990). Unconscious fantasies, structural theory, and compromise formation. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 38:61-73. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Students will be able to explain Jacob Arlow's addition to the early theory of the precipitants of symptom formation, employing the construct of unconscious fantasy.

Week 5

Brenner, C. (2002). Conflict, compromise formation, and structural theory. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 71:397-417. [PEP Web Link](#)

Supplemental:

Renik, O. (1990). Comments on the clinical analysis of anxiety and depressive affect. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 59:226-248. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Students will be able to describe and explain Brenner's four evaluative criteria for characterizing compromise formations on a continuum from pathological to normal.

Week 6

Gray, P. (1993). Paul Gray, M.D.: A brief didactic guide to the analysis of the ego in conflict. *Journal of Clinical Psychoanalysis*, 2:325-340. [PEP Web Link](#)

Landau, B.J. (1996). Consciousness as a beacon light. In M. Goldberger (Ed.) (1996), *Danger and defense: the technique of close process attention*. Jason Aronson. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsl.org.]

Learning objective:

Students will be able to explain Paul Gray's concept of 'transference of authority' (or re-externalization of superego) as a defensive operation in the context of the psychoanalytic situation.

Week 7

Busch, F. (1993) "In the neighborhood": aspects of a good interpretation and a "developmental lag" in ego psychology. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 41:151-177. [PEP Web Link](#)

Supplemental:

Busch, F. (1997). Understanding the patient's use of the method of free association: an ego psychological approach. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 45:407-423. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Busch argues that Freud initially held three theoretical views which for some time interfered with his empathic clinical grasp of the relation between anxiety, defense, and psychopathology: students will be able to explain and critique those three views regarding anxiety, unconsciousness, and the two systems of mental representation.

Week 8

Paniagua, C. (2011). Psychotherapy and close process technique. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 92:43-56. [PEP Web Link](#)

Supplemental:

Erreich, A. (2015). Unconscious fantasy as a special class of mental representation: a contribution to a model of mind. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 63:247-270. [PEP Web Link](#)

Learning objective:

Students will be able to describe the four essential features of interventions which Paniagua defines as comprising the technique of 'close process attention'.

Suggested background reading:

Schafer, R. (1954). Ch. 3: The response process. In R. Schafer, *Psychoanalytic interpretation in Rorschach testing*. Grune and Stratton. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsj.org.]

Schafer, R. (1983). Ch. 7: Danger situations. In R. Schafer, *The analytic attitude*. Basic Books. [Available in the library: Check the reading folder or request from library@bpsj.org.]

Arlow, J.A. (1987). The dynamics of interpretation. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 56:68-87. [PEP Web Link](#)

Davison, W.T., Bristol, C., Pray, M. (1990). Mutative interpretation and close process monitoring in a study of psychoanalytic process. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 59:599-628. [PEP Web Link](#)