



B P S I

boston psychoanalytic
society & institute

Boston Psychoanalytic Society
And Institute

Second Quarter, 2021-2022 Freud II

Instructors: Jan A. Seriff, Psy.D. and Julia Matthews, PhD, MD

Welcome to Freud II. This 8 session seminar is intended to introduce you to selected aspects of the evolution and elaboration of Freud's metapsychological ideas during his middle phase (1910-1925). We will specifically consider Freud's perspective on unconscious processes, his shift from a topographic to a structural theory of the mind, the centrality of object relations to these theoretical changes, and the changes in his thinking about the nature of fundamental drives.

It had become plain to Freud that his early efforts answered some questions but also uncovered further problems. At the same time he sought to expand the reach of psychoanalytic understanding into new and puzzling areas: (1) experiences of self-love and self-hatred and their implications for normal development, paranoia, and severe depression; (2) inner objects and identifications, (3) the dynamic of self-love and love of the other, (4) the clinical and theoretical importance of repetitive, self-destructive, self-punishing features of mental life and destructive repetitions, and (5) the source and function of anxiety in psychic life.

Freud found himself obliged to modify his views of drives as well as his conception of mental systems and the properties of being conscious and unconscious. These considerations offered a greater elaboration of his theory of mental functioning, psychosexual development, anxiety and defense, the relation to reality, and the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis and finally led to the structural model of the mind (id/ego/superego).

In 1914, Freud published *On Narcissism: an introduction* (SE XIV, p 67-102) one of his most seminal papers, in which Freud considers carefully the relation between self-love and love of the other. Following from his observations of the megalomania and withdrawal of schizophrenics, he began to focus on the narcissistic transferences, hypothesizing about a primary infantile narcissism. Developing his theory, he writes of the relationships between two types of libido, that of object-libido and ego-libido, and he uses the study of love to continue looking at narcissism. This work importantly anticipates his consideration of

object relations, the influence of the actual object on psychic life and the enduring internalized role of the other.

There's not time to read all of Freud in our seminars. Although we won't have time to study this text, we encourage you to read it, and we will refer to some of the central ideas put forth in this paper as we talk about our patients.

Each of the major papers covered could easily comprise a full seminar on its own! It is our hope, by carefully reading the chosen texts, we can understand together the major theoretical points and what motivated them.

Throughout the seminar we'll connect the theories discussed with clinical material, particularly your own clinical experience.

Each week, please bring at least one specific point for discussion from the reading (something you find interesting, puzzling, useful, or evocative.) We'll also ask each of you to be responsible, once during the course of the seminar, to bring in a clinical vignette that came to mind while studying the reading.

A useful book we can recommend for its explication of Freud's work is:

Quinodoz, Jean-Michel (2005) *Reading Freud*. Routledge, New York, NY [Can be requested from the [library](#) by BPSI Members and Partners].

Supplemental Reading for the Seminar (please try to find time to read this):

Freud, S. (1914) *On Narcissism: An Introduction (SE XIV, pp. 67-102)* [PEP Web Link](#)

Part 1: The unconscious - These first three sessions will focus on the unique insights developed by Freud about the unconscious sources or influences in mental life – an idea that is perhaps the most central precept of all psychoanalytic thought.

Week ONE – Dec. 2, 2021

Main Topics: In several papers over the course of 20 years Freud carefully lays out his reasons for asserting that unconscious processes are *mental* despite being outside conscious awareness, and that they make powerful contributions to conscious perceptions, thought and feelings. We will begin with one of Freud's case histories, in order to set the stage for always reading Freud's metapsychology in the context of his clinical practice and his efforts to understand his patients' psychic reality.

Readings:

Freud, S. (1895) *Katharina Case History* [4] (S.E. II, Pages 125-134) [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1911) *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning* (S.E. XII, Pages 213-226) [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1912) *A Note on the Unconscious in Psychoanalysis* (S.E. XII, Pages 255-266) [PEP Web Link](#)

Week TWO – Dec. 9, 2021

Main Topics: In *The Unconscious*, Freud carefully lays out his reasons for asserting that unconscious processes are mental, despite being outside of conscious awareness, and that they make powerful contributions to conscious perceptions, thought, and feelings.

Reading:

Freud, S. (1915) *The Unconscious*, Sections I-III (S.E. XIV, Pages 159-179) [PEP Web Link](#)

Week THREE – Dec. 16, 2021

Main Topic: Freud continues to illuminate the distinct properties of conscious and unconscious thought, further elaborates the primary principle governing admission of thoughts to consciousness, and suggests the mechanisms for exclusion of unacceptable thoughts.

Reading:

Freud, S. (1915) *The Unconscious*, Sections IV-VII (S.E. XIV, Pages 180-204) [PEP Web Link](#)

Part 2: Identification with the object – Freud further develops his account of ‘within-self’ relationships involving self-observation and self-criticism, based on internalization and identification, which he had begun in the 1914 paper on narcissism.

Week FOUR – Jan. 6, 2022

Main Topics: ‘Mourning and melancholia’ shows Freud finding guilty conscience to be an independent actor in the genesis of severe or psychotic depression, in neurotic character, and in normal mental life. Freud’s account of ‘within-self’ relationships involving self-observation and self-criticism, based on internalization and identification, anticipates later changes in the theory of psychical systems.

Freud, S. (1917) *Mourning and melancholia* (S.E. XIV, Pages 237-258) [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1915) *On Transience* (S.E. XIV, Pages 303-307) [PEP Web Link](#)

Part 3: Revisiting drive theory in the context of trauma

Beyond the Pleasure Principle is one of Freud’s most seminal papers, in which he revised his ideas about the universality of the pleasure principle, in the context of trauma. He also put forward a new hypothesis in this paper, that the mind is governed not only by a conflict between pleasure/unpleasure, but also a fundamental conflict between pull to life, love and union, the *life instinct or eros*, and the pull to death, dissolution and destruction, the *death instinct or thanatos*. The notion of a death instinct has been controversial and we will try to sort out its possible theoretical value.

Week FIVE – Jan. 13, 2022

Main Topics: In these sections Freud considers the tensions between the pleasure principle and the reality principle and the inevitability of experiences of psychic displeasure. He then takes up the dynamics of traumatic dreams which do not appear to conform to the expected “wishful” nature of dreams and other seemingly masochistic trends in the ego including the “compulsion to repeat.”

Freud, S. (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, section I-IV (SE XVIII, pages 7-33) [PEP Web Link](#)

Week SIX – Jan. 27, 2022

Main Topics: Having laid out the problem of masochism, and other mental activities that seem to contradict the pleasure principle, Freud postulated a solution by proposing a negative drive, one has “the appearance of some ‘daemonic’ force at work” and that tends toward destruction, dis-integration and ultimately death (rooted in the requirement that all living things must die). This proposed opposition between life and death is in place of the prior theory of self-preservative instincts vs libido.

Freud, S. (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, section V-VII (SE XVIII, p 34-64) [PEP Web Link](#)

Part 4: Structural Theory: Main Topics: The emphasis will be on Freud’s presentation of the clinical grounds for distinguishing the facts or qualities of consciousness and unconsciousness from the nature of mental systems or structures, and on the implications he draws from re-thinking those systems.

Week SEVEN – Feb. 3, 2022

Freud, S. (1923) *The ego and the id*, Chapters 1-3 (S.E. XIX, Pages 1-39) [PEP Web Link](#)

Week EIGHT – Feb. 10, 2022

Main Topics: We will consider the origin of superego in the resolution of the Oedipus, its relations to both ego and id, and the nature of internal object relations.

Readings:

Freud, S. (1923) *The ego and the id*, Chapters 4, 5 (S.E. XIX, Pages 40-59) [PEP Web Link](#)

Freud, S. (1924) *The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex*. (S.E. XIX, Pages 171-180) [PEP Web Link](#)