

Psychoanalytic Theory: Unlocking the Hidden Mind

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The predominant psychoanalytic theories can be grouped into several theoretical "schools." Although these theoretical "schools" differ, most of them continue to stress the strong influence of unconscious elements affecting people's mental lives. There has also been considerable work done on consolidating elements of conflicting theory (cf. the work of Theodore Dorpat, B. Killingmo, and S. Akhtar). As in all fields of healthcare, there are some persistent conflicts regarding specific causes of some syndromes, and disputes regarding the best treatment techniques. In the 2000s, psychoanalytic ideas are embedded in Western culture, especially in fields such as childcare, education, literary criticism, cultural studies, and mental health, particularly psychotherapy. Though there is a mainstream of evolved analytic ideas, there are groups who follow the precepts of one or more of the later theoreticians. Psychoanalytic ideas also play roles in some types of literary analysis such as Archetypal literary criticism.

Topographic Theory

Topographic theory was first described by Freud in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900). The theory posits that the mental apparatus can be divided into the systems Conscious, Pre-conscious and Unconscious. These systems are not anatomical structures of the brain but, rather, mental processes. Although Freud retained this theory throughout his life he largely replaced it with the Structural theory. The Topographic theory remains as one of the metapsychological points of view for describing how the mind functions in classical psychoanalytic theory.

Structural theory

Structural theory divides the psyche into the id, the ego, and the super-ego. The id is present at birth as the repository of basic instincts, which Freud called "Triebe" ("drives"): unorganised and unconscious, it operates merely on the 'pleasure principle', without realism or foresight. The ego develops slowly and gradually, being concerned with mediating between the urgings of the id and the realities of the external world; it thus operates on the 'reality principle'. The super-ego is held to be the part of the ego in which self-observation, self-criticism and other reflective and judgemental faculties develop. The ego and the super-ego are both partly conscious and partly unconscious.

Ego Psychology

Ego psychology was initially suggested by Freud in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926). The theory was refined by Hartmann, Loewenstein, and Kris in a series of papers and books from 1939 through the late 1960s. Leo Bellak was a later contributor. This series of constructs, paralleling some of the later developments of cognitive theory, includes the notions of autonomous ego functions: mental functions not dependent, at least in origin, on intrapsychic conflict. Such functions include: sensory perception, motor control, symbolic thought, logical thought, speech, abstraction, integration (synthesis), orientation, concentration, judgment about danger, reality testing, adaptive

ability, executive decision-making, hygiene, and self-preservation. Freud noted that inhibition is one method that the mind may utilize to interfere with any of these functions in order to avoid painful emotions. Hartmann (1950s) pointed out that there may be delays or deficits in such functions.

Frosch (1964) described differences in those people who demonstrated damage to their relationship to reality, but who seemed able to test it. Deficits in the capacity to organize thought are sometimes referred to as blocking or loose associations (Bleuler), and are characteristic of the schizophrenias. Deficits in abstraction ability and self-preservation also suggest psychosis in adults. Deficits in orientation and sensorium are often indicative of a medical illness affecting the brain (and therefore, autonomous ego functions). Deficits in certain ego functions are routinely found in severely sexually or physically abused children, where powerful effects generated throughout childhood seem to have eroded some functional development.

Ego strengths, later described by Kernberg (1975), include the capacities to control oral, sexual, and destructive impulses; to tolerate painful affects without falling apart; and to prevent the eruption into consciousness of bizarre symbolic fantasy. Synthetic functions, in contrast to autonomous functions, arise from the development of the ego and serve the purpose of managing conflictual processes. Defenses are synthetic functions that protect the conscious mind from awareness of forbidden impulses and thoughts. One purpose of ego psychology has been to emphasize that some mental functions can be considered to be basic, rather than derivatives of wishes, affects, or defenses. However, autonomous ego functions can be secondarily affected because of unconscious conflict. For example, a patient may have an hysterical amnesia (memory being an autonomous function) because of intrapsychic conflict (wishing not to remember because it is too painful).

Taken together, the above theories present a group of metapsychological assumptions. Therefore, the inclusive group of the different classical theories provides a cross-sectional view of human mentation. There are six "points of view", five described by Freud and a sixth added by Hartmann. Unconscious processes can therefore be evaluated from each of these six points of view. The "points of view" are:

1. Topographic
2. Dynamic (the theory of conflict)
3. Economic (the theory of energy flow)
4. Structural
5. Genetic (propositions concerning origin and development of psychological functions) and
6. Adaptational (psychological phenomena as it relates to the external world).

Modern Conflict Theory

A variation of ego psychology, termed "modern conflict theory", is more broadly an update and revision of structural theory (Freud, 1923, 1926); it does away with some of structural theory's more arcane features, such as where repressed thoughts are stored. Modern conflict theory looks at how emotional symptoms and character traits are complex solutions to mental conflict. It dispenses with the concepts of a fixed id, ego and superego, and instead posits conscious and unconscious conflict among wishes (dependent, controlling, sexual, and aggressive), guilt and shame, emotions (especially anxiety and depressive affect), and defensive operations that shut off from consciousness some aspect of the others. Moreover, healthy functioning (adaptive) is also determined, to a great extent, by resolutions of conflict.

A major objective of modern conflict-theory psychoanalysis is to change the balance of conflict in a patient by making aspects of the less adaptive solutions (also called "compromise formations") conscious so that they can be rethought, and more adaptive solutions found. Current theoreticians following Brenner's many suggestions (see especially Brenner's 1982 book, *The Mind in Conflict*) include Sandor Abend, MD (Abend, Porder, & Willick, (1983), *Borderline Patients: Clinical Perspectives*), Jacob Arlow (Arlow and Brenner (1964), *Psychoanalytic Concepts and the Structural Theory*), and Jerome Blackman (2003), *101 Defenses: How the Mind Shields Itself*).

Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory attempts to explain vicissitudes of human relationships through a study of how internal representations of self and of others are structured. The clinical symptoms that suggest object relations problems (typically developmental delays throughout life) include disturbances in an individual's capacity to feel warmth, empathy, trust, sense of security, identity stability, consistent emotional closeness, and stability in relationships with chosen other human beings. (It is not suggested that one should trust everyone, for example.) Concepts regarding internal representations (also sometimes termed, "introjects," "self and object representations," or "internalizations of self and other") although often attributed to Melanie Klein, were actually first mentioned by Sigmund Freud in his early concepts of drive theory (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1905). Freud's 1917 paper "Mourning and Melancholia", for example, hypothesized that unresolved grief was caused by the survivor's internalized image of the deceased becoming fused with that of the survivor, and then the survivor shifting unacceptable anger toward the deceased onto the now complex self image.

Vamik Volkan, in "Linking Objects and Linking Phenomena", expanded on Freud's thoughts on this, describing the syndromes of "Established pathological mourning" vs. "reactive depression" based on similar dynamics. Melanie Klein's hypotheses regarding internalizations during the first year of life, leading to paranoid and depressive positions, were later challenged by Rene Spitz (e.g., *The First Year of Life*, 1965), who divided the first year of life into a coenesthetic phase of the first six months, and then a diacritic phase for the second six months. Margaret Mahler (Mahler,

Fine, and Bergman, "The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant", 1975) and her group, first in New York, then in Philadelphia, described distinct phases and subphases of child development leading to "separation-individuation" during the first three years of life, stressing the importance of constancy of parental figures, in the face of the child's destructive aggression, to the child's internalizations, stability of affect management, and ability to develop healthy autonomy.

Later developers of the theory of self and object constancy as it affects adult psychiatric problems such as psychosis and borderline states have been John Frosch, Otto Kernberg, and Salman Akhtar. Peter Blos described (in a book called *On Adolescence*, 1960) how similar separation-individuation struggles occur during adolescence, of course with a different outcome from the first three years of life: the teen usually, eventually, leaves the parents' house (this varies with the culture). During adolescence, Erik Erikson (1950-1960s) described the "identity crisis," that involves identity-diffusion anxiety. In order for an adult to be able to experience Warm-ETHICS" (warmth, empathy, trust, holding environment (Winnicott), identity, closeness, and stability) in relationships (see Blackman, *101 Defenses: How the Mind Shields Itself*, 2001), the teenager must resolve the problems with identity and redevelop self and object constancy.

Self Psychology

Self psychology emphasizes the development of a stable and integrated sense of self through empathic contacts with other humans, primary significant others conceived of as "selfobjects." Selfobjects meet the developing self's needs for mirroring, idealization, and twinship, and thereby strengthen the developing self. The process of treatment proceeds through "transmuting internalizations" in which the patient gradually internalizes the selfobject functions provided by the therapist. Self psychology was proposed originally by Heinz Kohut, and has been further developed by Arnold Goldberg, Frank Lachmann, Paul and Anna Ornstein, Marian Tolpin, and others.

Lacanian Psychoanalysis (Jacques Lacan)

Lacanian psychoanalysis, which integrates psychoanalysis with semiotics and Hegelian philosophy, is especially popular in France and parts of Latin America. Lacanian psychoanalysis is a departure from the traditional British and American psychoanalysis, which is predominantly Ego psychology. Jacques Lacan frequently used the phrase "retourner ? Freud" ("return to Freud") in his seminars and writings, as he claimed that his theories were an extension of Freud's own, contrary to those of Anna Freud, the Ego Psychology, object relations and "self" theories and also claims the necessity of reading Freud's complete works, not only a part of them. Lacan's concepts concern the "mirror stage", the "Real", the "Imaginary" and the "Symbolic", and the claim that "the unconscious is structured as a language".

Though a major influence on psychoanalysis in France and parts of Latin America, Lacan and his ideas have had little to no impact on psychoanalysis or psychotherapy in the English-speaking world, where his ideas are most-widely used to analyze texts in literary theory. Due to his unorthodox methods and theories, Lacan was expelled by the International Psychoanalytic Association, and many of Lacan's psychoanalytic concepts have been described as nonsensical, inconsistent or pseudoscientific.

Interpersonal Psychoanalysis

Interpersonal psychoanalysis accents the nuances of interpersonal interactions, particularly how individuals protect themselves from anxiety by establishing collusive interactions with others, and the relevance of actual experiences with other persons developmentally (e.g. family and peers) as well as in the present. This is contrasted with the primacy of intrapsychic forces, as in classical psychoanalysis. Interpersonal theory was first introduced by Harry Stack Sullivan, MD, and developed further by Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Clara Thompson, Erich Fromm, and others who contributed to the founding of the William Alanson White Institute and Interpersonal Psychoanalysis in general.

Culturalist Psychoanalysts

Some psychoanalysts have been labeled culturalist, because of the prominence they gave on culture for the genesis of behavior. Among others, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Harry Stack Sullivan, have been called culturalist psychoanalysts. They were famously in conflict with orthodox psychoanalysts.

Relational Psychoanalysis

Relational psychoanalysis combines interpersonal psychoanalysis with object-relations theory and with Inter-subjective theory as critical for mental health, was introduced by Stephen Mitchell. Relational psychoanalysis emphasizes how the individual's personality is shaped by both real and imagined relationships with others, and how these relationship patterns are re-enacted in the interactions between analyst and patient. In New York, key proponents of relational psychoanalysis include Lew Aron, Jessica Benjamin, and Adrienne Harris. Fonagy and Target, in London, have propounded their view of the necessity of helping certain detached, isolated patients, develop the capacity for "mentalization" associated with thinking about relationships and themselves. Arietta Slade, Susan Coates, and Daniel Schechter in New York have additionally contributed to the application of relational psychoanalysis to treatment of the adult patient-as-parent, the clinical study of mentalization in parent-infant relationships, and the intergenerational transmission of attachment and trauma.

Interpersonal-Relational Psychoanalysis

The term interpersonal-relational psychoanalysis is often used as a professional identification. Psychoanalysts under this broader umbrella debate about what precisely are the differences between the two schools, without any current clear consensus.

Intersubjective Psychoanalysis

The term "intersubjectivity" was introduced in psychoanalysis by George E. Atwood and Robert Stolorow (1984). Intersubjective approaches emphasize how both personality development and the therapeutic process are influenced by the interrelationship between the patient's subjective perspective and that of others. The authors of the interpersonal-relational and intersubjective approaches: Otto Rank, Heinz Kohut, Stephen A. Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin, Bernard Brandchaft, J. Fosshage, Donna M. Orange, Arnold "Arnie" Mindell, Thomas Ogden, Owen Renik, Irwin Z. Hoffman, Harold Searles, Colwyn Trewarthen, Edgar A. Levenson, Jay R. Greenberg, Edward R. Ritvo, Beatrice Beebe, Frank M. Lachmann, Herbert Rosenfeld and Daniel Stern.

Modern Psychoanalysis

"Modern psychoanalysis" is a term coined by Hyman Spotnitz and his colleagues to describe a body of theoretical and clinical approaches that aim to extend Freud's theories so as to make them applicable to the full spectrum of emotional disorders and broaden the potential for treatment to pathologies thought to be untreatable by classical methods. Interventions based on this approach are primarily intended to provide an emotional-maturational communication to the patient, rather than to promote intellectual insight. These interventions, beyond insight directed aims, are used to resolve resistances that are presented in the clinical setting. This school of psychoanalysis has fostered training opportunities for students in the United States and from countries worldwide. Its journal *Modern Psychoanalysis* has been published since 1976.