Overview

- Topography and Structuring of the Mind
- Why do we talk about the unconscious?
- What is the unconscious?
- What role does phantasy play?
- How do the “positions” structure experience?
  - Paranoid Schizoid
  - Depressive
  - Autistic/Contiguous
Topography of the Mind

- Conscious
- Preconscious
- Unconscious
Structuring of the Mind

- Internal working models
  - Used to approach, understand and predict our world and our relationships
  - Are both conscious and unconscious
  - Working models contain representations of (1) actual experiences with objects and (2) our emotional/instinctual phantasies and reactions
  - Working models are also called *internal object relationships*

- Why internalize?
  - Frustration (Fairbairn)
  - Innate process or ‘primary identification’ (Winnicott)
  - Neurophysiological process (mirror neurons)
Why Talk about the Unconscious?

- Unconscious conflicts/dynamics are responsible for most instances of psychopathology.

- Goal of psychoanalytic treatment: “to make the unconscious conscious” – Freud

- “Unconsciousness-raising” (Jacobs, 2001).
Three Major Forms of the Unconscious

- **Primary unconscious**
  - Present at birth

- **Prereflective unconscious**
  - Experiential content that was never conscious

- **Dynamic, repressed unconscious**
  - Content moved into the unconscious because awareness is too difficult
What are We Born With?
The Primary Unconscious

- Example: The breast crawl
- Inborn, inherent

The source of phantasy: thoughts, emotions and images that emerge into the mind from the body
The Role of Phantasy

- First appears in the primary unconscious
- “Direct manifestation of instincts” interwoven with sensations and affects
- Experienced as part of a relationship to an object
- Early phantasy is about body, but becomes elaborated over time, particularly into defenses against anxieties
What Happens Next?:
The Prereflective Unconscious

- Example: The mother who held her infant at arm’s length (Mitchell)
- Contains organizing principles that shape experience without awareness or reflection
- Not the product of defenses
- Implicit procedural knowing
Example: “My mother would give you the shirt off your back!”

Created by three essential mechanisms: splitting, repression and projection.
The Dynamic Unconscious, Cont’d

- **Splitting** occurs when some part of the mind – an emotion, a part of an internal object, a desire – is too frightening or threatening. It becomes **split off** from the rest of the mind.

- **Repression** rids the mind of these frightening elements by banishing them to the unconscious.

- **Projection** also rids the mind of frightening content by locating it in someone or something else.
What is a “Position”?

- Basic ways experience is organized
- Constellation of anxieties, defenses and internal/external relationships with objects
- Many anxieties and defenses are unconscious and are linked to phantasy
- Each position present throughout life
The Paranoid/Schizoid Position

- Example: Hank and the retaliating bosses
- Predominant in first few months
- Persecutory anxiety
- Minimal cognitive processing
- Objects are polarized (all-or-none, good/bad), unintegrated
- Phantasy plays strong role
- Defenses: splitting, projection, repression

(Klein 1946)
The Depressive Position

- Example: Sally’s attempt to reverse her attack on Steve
- Begins 3-4 months
- More complete image of the object
- Anxiety: harming the object - guilt and concern
- Toleration of ambivalence: pain is now borne by reliance on the (integrated) good object
- Phantasy-constructed objects moderated by reality

(Klein 1946)
The Autistic-Contiguous Position

- Example: the girl who was drowned
- Pre-symbolic
- Sensory-contiguity of skin surface and rhythmicity
- Creates background of sensory boundedness in all states, rudimentary sense of "I-ness"
- Anxiety: disintegration
- Defenses attempt to re-establish bounded sensory surface and ordered rhythmicity

(Ogden, 1989)
References