

February
Memo

"The Ego's Fear of its Wish to regress"; "The Ego's Basic Anxiety in Neuroses?"
I cannot help, this formulation did not stop to mean to me a distortion of
and "basic" concept of regression as a neurotic defense and the meaning
of anxiety. You know of my aversion to complicate analytic conceptions
either by expanding their applicability, or by using them in modified or
transformed ways, or isolating them by means of or from proper connections by
means of specific or speculated definitions.

First: what is the "basic" anxiety? In Freud's description, anxiety
is a danger-signal given by the ego as a warning against the danger of
approach of a state of psychic helplessness in facing an overwhelming
experience. In considering what might represent a danger of helplessness, Freud
concluded that this would be modified in different stages of development,
and he correlated these modifications with different clinical conditions, e. g.
fear of the loss of the protecting and gratifying object, fear of loss of love by the
ego or by the super-ego, castration-fear, etc. Basically, anxiety is a
sort of sample-remembrance of a previous helplessness as experienced in the
ontogenetic development at birth, in the phylogenesis as primary anxiety, ~~forming an~~
~~an~~ instinctual warning-signal in the service of self-preservation.

This summary given by Freud's ~~in his~~ monograph, *Inhibition, Symptom-
Formation and Anxiety* (first translated 1936) is not supposed to be
complete and adequate, but essentially this schema did not change up
to now. I cannot see how "The Ego's Basic Anxiety" ^{of the wish to regress}
~~can be interrelated without to disturb the whole analytic concept of anxiety~~
~~to shake the whole concept of analytic metapsychology.~~ The ego-wish always strives for
~~the pleasure or the gratification of the pleasure-principle,~~ the pleasure-principle,
~~and if the wish seems to affect a state "beyond the pleasure-principle" as in~~
masochism or the need for self-destruction. Freud ~~concludes~~ regards the ego as the
ally of the instinctual wishes and aggressive impulses, ~~and it would be most~~
likely their executor to attain ego-gratification, unless the ego would not be
forced ^{for the sake of peace's sake} to the higher institution of the super-ego for peace's
sake to submit to the higher institution of the super-ego and, to use Freud's
words, "to enter obediently into a struggle against the instinctual
impulse, ~~without~~ with all the consequences which such a struggle entails." To continue
with Freud: "The characteristic point about this process is that the ego itself
does not regard the impulse which it is fighting as in the least dangerous.
The motive which prompts the defence is not originally its own."

June
Memo

The defenses are neutralizers of anxiety and as such not ego-wishes, but forced upon the ego by stronger and more effective institutions. Therefore regression as a defense cannot be an ego-wish, but a condition subsistent to the pressure of circumstances which, from the point of view of conflict-alleviation, may be regarded as effective. In your formulation "Regression, an ego defense against instinctual frustration, at the very same time, becomes a basic threat to its very own existence. The wish to regress is merely the distorted neurotic derivative of the original need for survival primary expressed in the healthy striving toward the mother from which it derives its instinctual intensity." Granted that this definition is admissible, in what is expressed the essential purpose of a defense to decrease the inner strain of the unconscious conflict? Then regression ^{creates} as a basic threat to the ego's existence, why is it an ego-wish the ego wishes to regress, and in which way this defense contributes to the ego's release from instinctual frustration? There is no defense-mechanism which would not be a threat to the ego's identity, but in the condition of defense the ego is too much preoccupied with the re-establishment of its balance as to be concerned at its identity which ^{has been} confused anyway.

I do not think that your statements are basically wrong. I have just the impression that too many psychobiological facts are integrated into each other and used as an explanation of functioning and interacting, so that the process appears to be unduly complicated and more difficult to perceive. For instance in your formulation the original ^{mechanism, process} meaning of a defense gets lost and involved in processes which are not only indirectly connected with the mechanism of defense. It seems to me, that you are sometimes avoiding to consider that the descent of a psychic process as identification, internalization etc. does not necessarily determine its later functioning. Growing up alters the original functions as much as maturation and the influence of different internal institutions and external circumstances and conditions. Therefore one has to be on guard using generalizations. What appears to be true in the development of one case, can be completely different in another, even if the result ~~therein~~ is the same. That all is well known to you, and it may appear to be meaningless to call your attention to it as commonplace. But just because I happen to know you every inch, I feel better to remind you that falling in love with an idea ^{leads} like enthusiasm can easily blind one's logic and self-control. I like your paper and most of your ideas are splendid, good and interesting contributions to analytic psychology. Nevertheless I would like you revise your formulations thoroughly before you decide for publication.

April
Memo

In Chapter V of "The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence" Anna Freud gives three ^{main} sources of anxiety and danger which (the ego) motivates to initiate defences against instincts; (a) super-ego anxiety ~~of~~ the neuroses of adults. The instinct is regarded as dangerous because the super-ego prohibits its gratification and, if it achieves its aim, it will certainly stir up trouble between the ego and the super-ego. Hence the ego of the adult neurotic fears the instincts because it fears the super-ego. (b) objective anxiety, related only to infantile neurosis, — (c) instinctual anxiety (dread of the strength of the instincts). The human ego by its very nature is friendly to the instincts, only as long as it is itself but little differentiated from the id. When it has evolved from the primary to the secondary process, from the pleasure-principle to the reality-principle, it has become alien territory to the instincts, its mistrust of their demands is always present, but normally hardly noticeable. It is lost sight of in the warfare waged within its domain by the super-ego and the outside world against the impulses of the id. But, if the ego feels itself abandoned by these protective higher powers or if the demands of the instinctual impulses become excessive, its innate hostility to instinct is intensified to the point of anxiety.

To return to the formulation: "the ego's fear of its wish to regress", there is to say, that ego-anxiety of an ego-wish as such is a contradiction in terms, since the ego does not wish what may arouse its anxiety. The adult ego discriminates ~~staply~~ distinctly between the wish and its fulfillment, and will rather renounce the wish than to risk the anxiety which the veto of superior institutions resulting from the veto of authoritative quarters. In the mature ego the wish ~~is~~ ^{is} indeed ~~directed~~ ^{governed} according to the pleasure-principle but the expectation of fulfillment depends on the reality-principle. Its ~~same~~ trend it expresses: "The sovereign principle which governs the psychic processes is that of obtaining pleasure; but in the ego the association of ideas is subject to strict conditions ^{to} which we apply the comprehensive term "secondary process" (in contrast to the ^{inappropriate} "primary process" in the id). These conditions dominate the ego and determine its defensive measures against the instinctual wishes. If the ego-demands with which they are associated are to be warded off, the instincts or affects must submit to the defensive method which neutralizes them by ~~available~~ ^{available} means, consequently whether the ego likes it or not.

Once more, ego-anxiety is not due to an ego-wish, but ^{to} the reinforcement of the power of the super-ego or ~~to the~~ ^{to} the strength of the instinct and the danger of the reactivation of the sexual or aggressive instincts in the ego itself.