

## Part II

### Researching the defenses in language

#### Chapter V. Cluster of defenses, operationalization, levels of analysis

##### 1. Theoretical frame

We already stressed that defenses are libidinal vicissitudes (destinations) in the Ego. For each libidinal drive, various destinations (defenses) are possible. In consequence, if certain tools for the analysis of libidinal vicissitudes in the Ego were available, we could develop more specific investigations, seeking not only the efficacy of erotogenicities, but also the value of their vicissitudes in psychic life. But the theoretical frame in reference to the connections between drive exigencies and defenses requires a broader perspective, including more than libidinal drive perspective. Freud (1923b) stated that *Todestrieb* and Eros, the two basic groups of drives, defended each against the other. *Todestrieb* attempts to obtain the total discharge of Eros energy, aiming to leave the subject without resources, so that he or she falls into a toxic state leading to death. To the contrary, Eros attempts to maintain a basic reserve of energy to respond to internal and external exigencies. In consequence, the concept of defense is connected not only with libidinal drives (a component of Eros) but also with *Todestrieb*. The more severe and regressive the defense, the greater the efficacy of *Todestrieb* (or, more exactly, the greater the failure of Eros to neutralize the efficacy of *Todestrieb* that tends to extinguish the energy reserve). French authors (Green y Widlöcher (eds.), 1986, Missenard *et al*, 1989), stressing the relationship between *Todestrieb* and libidinal decathetization, arrived at conclusions that have some affinities with our proposals. In fact, whenever we research the defense as a libidinal vicissitude, we simultaneously investigate the degree of neutralization of *Todestrieb* by Eros. Masochism and the alteration of self-preservation drives (Freud, 1920g, 1940a, Maldavsky, 1998b) are the two expressions of those basic disturbances in the economy of Eros by *Todestrieb*. Defenses developed in the Ego bear witness to those transactions between the basic drives. Defenses as foreclosure of the affect and foreclosure of reality and the ideal are the most regressive, including broad-reaching processes of libidinal decathetization. At the other end of the scale, normal defenses and creativity are expressions of the opposite situation, with a low degree of pathologic libidinal decathetization. Freud (1917d) described the specific decathetization characterizing each defense. Each defensive decathetization leaves a specific psychic component abandoned by Eros, at the risk of disintegration, suffering the efficacy of the tendency to de-differentiation and consequently to advance rapidly toward death by way of self intoxication (Freud, 1920g; Maldavsky, 1992). In consequence, we can say that defenses are libidinal vicissitudes in the Ego, but are simultaneously an expression of the more or less successful or failed effort to neutralize the *Todestrieb* by Eros.

Now, we prefer to switch from this general perspective (in reference to the relationship between drives and defenses) to another one that refers to the problem of tools for researching psychic mechanisms.

##### 2. Cluster of defenses, levels of analysis

The presentation of the tools for the research of the defenses demands a previous discussion on clustering. Having studied other taxonomies of defenses, we decided to create our own. As the abarcatve book on defenses, edited by U. Hentschel *et al* (2004) shows, the discussions on clustering and operationalizing

defenses are central issues demanding more sophisticated perspectives. Some of the existent clusters (see Vaillant, 1992) considered some manifestations defenses when they are actually more a consequence of them, such as hypochondria. Other clusters simply grouped the defenses but did not define which is prevalent in each ensemble and which are complementary. There is no bibliotabley on the question of the state (successful, failed) of the defense. These deficiencies motivated us to make our decision. We present this cluster of the main defenses (Table I):

**Table I. Main defenses**

Non pathogenic	Pathogenic
Normal	Repression
Creativity	Disavowal
Sublimation	Foreclosure of reality and the ideal
	Foreclosure of the affect

The differentiation of the pathogenic defenses was done considering their efficacy in the development of the main clinical structures: transference neuroses (repression), pathological character traits (disavowal), psychoses (foreclosure of reality and the ideal), and traumatic and toxic pathologies, such as psychosomatic illnesses, and also, proneness to accidents or traumatophilia (foreclosure of the affect). Concerning complementary defenses, we will not present the corresponding taxonomy until we have explained the connection between mechanisms and libidinal fixations.

Regarding the main pathogenic defense a first differentiation can be made by taking into account the rejection of what the defense is against (Tables II y III). A second differentiation can discern, for each group of mechanisms, the procedure used by the Ego and the resource placed at the service of the defense.

**Table II. Similarities and differences of defenses against reality and the ideal: disavowal, foreclosure, creativity and sublimation**

Defense	Is against	Procedure	Resource
Disavowal		Refutation of objective or critical judgment	Taken from objective reality (i.e. fetishism)

Foreclosure (Verwerfung)	Perceptions and/or affects, objective judgment, critical judgment	Abolition of the Ego that formulates the objective (definitive real Ego) and/or critical (Superego) judgment or of the Ego subject of the affect (primitive real Ego)	Produced in the Ego as a substitute for abolished objective reality (i.e. hallucinations or accounts)	
Creativity		directed against the Ego	Formal regression of the PREC to UCC functioning (with the support of the Superego)	Humor, gardening
Sublimation			Change of the goals of the drives and elevation of the ideal	Work with a cultural value

**Table III. Similarities and differences of defenses against wishes: repression, creativity and sublimation**

Defense	Is against	Procedure	Resource
Repression	desire	PREC decathectization and counter- cathexis PREC	Substitute formations (fantasies and thoughts)
Creativity		Formal regression of the PREC to UCC functioning (with the support of the Superego)	Jokes
Sublimation		Change of the goals of the drives and elevation of the ideal	Works with a cultural value

Also, considering repression, disavowal and foreclosure, Freud (1918b, 1927e, 1950a) distinguishes between normal and pathological defenses. The former offer no obstruction for increasing psychic complexity, while the latter interfere in it. This taxonomy of the defenses has to be refined and include another question. Freud (1905d, 1905e) stated that hysterical symptoms are a consequence of the failure of repression, and that the Wolf man's hallucination responds to the failure of the foreclosure of reality and the ideal. Megalomania responds to psychic withdrawal (a

consequence of the successful defense against reality and the ideal), and toxic states of actual neuroses are responses to the simultaneous success and failure of the same defense (Freud, 1914c, 1918b, 1985). In consequence, we also need to investigate the state of the defense (Table IV).

**Table IV. State of defenses**

Successful	Failed	Both
Maintenance of narcissistic equilibrium	Narcissistic wound	Narcissistic wound
Rejection of wishes / reality and ideal judgments	Return of wishes / reality and ideal judgments	Rejection of wishes / reality and ideal judgments

This presentation of the cluster of the main mechanisms and of an additional cluster on their possible states leads us to present the questions to be answered by the tools we build: 1) against what is the defense aimed?, 2) is the defense creativity / sublimation or a (potentially) pathogenic one?, 3) is the (potentially) pathogenic defense normal or pathological?, 4) is the pathogenic defense successful, failed or both? The terrain on which we attempt to study the defense is the patient's discourse, particularly the scenes. In previous chapters we described the two fields where we intend to detect the scenes. One of those fields is the extra-transference relationship, which we can study by focusing on the narration level of analysis. The other field for our analysis is the transference relationship, which we investigate by examining on the speech acts level of analysis. In consequence, we need to construct the corresponding tools for answering the previous questions on defenses on these two levels of discourse: narration and speech acts.

### **3. Connecting the investigation of drives and defenses**

Having arrived at a presentation of our main questions and the fields where we try to answer them, we can turn to a second question: how can we connect the tools previously discussed for the analysis of scenes with the concept of defenses. The first argumentation we can use is theoretical: defenses are libidinal viscissitudes (or destinations) developed in a specific Ego. Each Ego can be seen to accompany the emergence of certain libidinal exigencies, and the defense is one of the resources that each Ego can use. In each Ego, we observe various psychic currents. Freud (1918b) used the term "psychic current" in the broad sense when he tried to explain the complexity of the Wolf man's Ego structure: "We are already acquainted with the attitude which our patient first adopted to the problem of castration. He rejected castration, and held to his theory of intercourse, by the anus. When I speak of his having rejected it, the first meaning of the phrase is that he would have nothing to do with it, in the sense of having repressed it. This really involved no judgment upon the question of its existence, but it was the same as if it did not exist. Such an attitude, however, could not have been his final one, even at the time of his infantile neurosis. We find good subsequent evidence of his having recognized castration as a fact. In this connection, once again, he behaved in the manner which was so characteristic of him, but which makes it so difficult to give a clear account of his mental processes or to fell

one's way into them. First he resisted and then he yielded; but the second reaction did not *do away with* the first. In the end there were to be found in him two contrary currents side by side, of which one abominated the idea of castration, while the other was prepared to accept it and console itself with femininity as a compensation. But beyond any doubt a third current, the oldest and deepest, which did not as yet even raise the question of the reality of castration, was still capable of coming into activity. We have elsewhere reported a hallucination which this same patient had at the age of five and upon which we need only add a brief commentary here" (pp. 84-85).

Freud (1927e) described the theoretical and clinical significance of this concept in his paper on "fetishism": one current of the Ego accepts an unpleasant reality, while the other (viewing the world from the perspective of wishes) rejects it. The two currents make different transactions, one of these being fetishism. The same concept was also subjacent to the Freudian description of the similarities and differences between fetishism and psychotic hallucinations (Freud, 1940e).

"Psychic current" is a concept at the crossroads between theoretical and clinical research. Its position in the Freudian theoretical frame can be clarified. After introducing the second theory of the psychic processes in 1923, Freud switched to an attempt to reach a new panorama of clinical structures, especially in "Neuroses and psychoses" (1924b). He stated that the clinical structures can be understood by taking into account the main conflict the Ego has to deal with. In the neuroses, the conflict (and the defense) concerns drives and wishes, in the psychoses, the conflict (and the defense) concerns reality, while in melancholia, the conflict (and the defense) is with the Superego. But when Freud (1927e) tried to connect those proposals with clinical problems, he found that they were too restrictive, since clinical facts demanded a more complex conception. Clinical facts showed that in the same patient two positions could coexist: one opposed to wishes and the other to reality. Freud called each of those coexisting positions a psychic current. Precisely, the fragment quoted above from Freud's analysis of the Wolf man reveals that the concept of psychic current is more complex than defense: it also involves judging activity, a special type of perception, etc. That is, the concept of psychic current implies the consideration of one or more functions of the Ego.

Thus, we see that "psychic current" is an intermediate concept, less abstract than Ego, Superego and id, but less empirical than repression, disavowal, etc. Disavowal, for example, involves a combination of two psychic currents, one tallying with reality and the other one agreeing with wishes. Each psychic current involves a specific position of the Ego in the conflict between drives, reality and Superego. Freud (1915c) stated that various Ego structures are developed during psychic life: primitive reality Ego, purified pleasure Ego, definitive reality Ego and the Superego-Ego ideal (Freud, 1915c, 1915d, 1923b). Each Ego has the function of responding to specific libidinal drives, thanks to the development of A certain symbolic world representing those sexual exigencies (Table V).

**Table V. Libidinal exigencies and Ego structures**

Ego	Erotogenicity
Primitive reality Ego	IL
Auto-eroticism	O1
Purified pleasure Ego	O2, A1
Definitive reality Ego	A2, UPH, GPH

These Ego structures have a different position in conflictive situations and, when the degree of psychic complexity increases, its components initiate various kinds of oppositions and transactions. Each psychic current has some relevant defense mechanisms. One Ego (definitive reality Ego), in favor of reality (and the Superego) and against wishes and drives, usually leads to repression (Freud, 1924b). Another Ego (purified pleasure Ego), opposed to reality (and the Superego) and in favor of wishes, leads to disavowal and foreclosure (Freud, 1918b, 1927e, 1940e). Freud described Ego functioning using this concept, especially when he needed to explain clinical problems in relation to the splitting of the Ego, such as hallucinations, fetishism, etc (Freud, 1918b, 1927e, 1940e). In these cases, the Ego is fragmented into different sectors, each of them with a specific position in the conflictive situation; these sectors then interrelate and make complex transactions (Freud, 1927e, 1940e). The concept of psychic current requires that we consider: 1) theoretical discussions on the Ego, its structure, its conflictive relationship with the drives, reality and the Superego and with different inner sectors (other psychic currents), and the corresponding principal and complementary defenses and 2) clinical manifestations. Thus, “psychic current” is a useful concept for connecting theoretical discussion and clinical manifestations.

Summarizing, we emphasize that “psychic current” and “defenses” bridge the gap between theoretical and clinical research. The concept of “psychic current” (especially the coexistence of different, contradictory fragments) allows us to depict clinical situations in a non reductionist way (Table VI). In spite of the opposing relations between the different currents, in the clinical situation, they can make various types of transactions.

**Table VI: Logical organization of concepts**

Theoretical level	Id, Ego, Superego
Intermediate level	Different Ego fragments (primitive reality Ego, purified pleasure Ego, definitive reality Ego) Psychic currents
Clinical level	Defenses: principal (repression, disavowal, foreclosure) and complementary mechanisms (projection, introjection, identification, undoing, isolation, etc.)

We can now come back to our main question: how can we connect the theoretical concepts of libidinal drives and defenses. We stated that the concepts of Ego and psychic currents are the mediators between defenses and sexual drives. of the defenses, we are now interested especially in the pathogenic ones and their relationship with the libidinal drives. Thus, we have now arrived at this proposal (Table VII):

**Table VII. Main defenses and erotogenicities**

Repression	Disavowal/Foreclosure of reality and the ideal	Foreclosure of the affect
GPH UPH A2	A1 O1 O2	IL

Each libidinal fixation is also accompanied by some specific defenses that complement the main ones (Table VIII).

**Table VIII. Complementary defenses and erotogenicities**

IL	O1	O2	A1	A2	UPH	GPH
- drive regression -Ego regression - organic introjection -incorporation -organic projection -expulsion -adhesive identification -hyper-cathexis of external sensoriality -splitting of the primitive real Ego -missatention -maintenance of non integration of different drive sources	-drive regression -Ego regression - intrachannel splitting -projection -introjection -identification - transformation into the contrary -turning against oneself -mimetism	-drive regression - Ego regression -splitting of the Ego -introjection -identification -projection -transformation into the contrary -turning against oneself	-drive regression -Ego regression -splitting of the Ego -introjection -identification -projection -transformation into the contrary -turning against oneself	-drive regression -undoing -isolation -reaction formation -control -suppression of the affect	-Ego regression -displacement -projection -evitation (inhibition)	-Ego regression -Superego repression -identification -condensation

Freud stated that the same defense (i.e. repression) is effective in different transference neuroses (conversion hysteria, anxiety hysteria). The difference between them can be found in the complementary mechanisms and the libidinal fixations. We proposed this synthesis (Table IX) on libidinal fixations, main defenses and pathological structures.

**Table IX. Libidinal fixations, main defenses and clinical structures**

Structure	conversion hysteria	Anxiety hysteria	Obsessional neurosis	Transgressive pathological character traits	Depressive pathological character traits	Schizoid pathological character traits	Paranoia	Melancholia	Schizophrenia	Toxic and traumatic pathologies
erotogenicity	GPH	UPH	A2	A1	O2	O1	A1	O2	O1	IL
Defense	Repression	Repression	Repression	Disavowal	Disavowal	Disavowal	Foreclosure of reality and the ideal	Foreclosure of reality and the ideal	Foreclosure of reality and the ideal	Foreclosure of the affect