EGO SYNTONIC VS. EGO DYSTONIC MENTAL ILLNESS: When the viewpoint embodied in a psychological disturbance is one’s *own* viewpoint, that disturbance is *ego-syntonic*, meaning that it is in allignment with, not opposed to, the ego of the subject whom it afflicts. An example is the schizophrenic’s belief that the President is personally monitoring her phone conversations.

When the viewpoint embodied in such a disturbance is alien to that of the afflicted party’s ego, it is *ego-dystonic*, meaning that it is opposed to, and not in allignment with, said ego. An example is the obsessive-compulsive person’s compulsion to engage in ritualistic behaviors that he knows to be irrational. The obsessive-compulsive does not *judge* his obsessions and subsequent compulsions to be irrational. He *experiences* them as being irrational.

The schizophrenic’s inability to distinguish between fantasy and reality has been damaged. The obsessive-compulsive’s ability to make this distinction has *not* been damaged, but his ability to do the things that he knows to be demanded by reality *has* been damaged. It is his will, not his judgment, that his been damaged.

What the schizophrenic and the obsessive-compulsive have in common is a fundamentally infantile outlook. Each has retained the narcissism of the infant, even though each has the intellect of an adult. The schizophrenic’s ego is *also* the ego of this still very much alive inner infant. As a result, his ego has two distinct and incompatible outlooks, and it therefore has no coherent way of processing information. The obsessive-compulsive’s ego is *not* identical with that of the infant within him, and this is way his ego, unlike that of the schizophrenic, has no trouble distinguishing between fantasy and reality. But because there are two egos within the obsessive-compulsive, both competing for the reigns of agency, the obesssive-compulsive cannot *act* rationally, even though he can *think* rationally.

In general, an ego-syntonic illness is an inability to *think* rationally, and an ego-dystonic illness is an inability to *act* rationally.