

to the compulsion that obliged it to obey its parents, so the ego submits to the categorical imperative of its super-ego.

However, the fact that the super-ego has its origins in the earliest object-cathexes of the id, and hence in the father complex, has other important implications for it as well: as we have already shown, these origins link it to the phylogenetic acquisitions of the id, and make it a reincarnation of previous ego forms that have left a residual imprint in the id. This means that the super-ego always has a very close relationship to the id, and can act as its representative *vis-à-vis* the ego. It secretes itself in the very depths of the id, and in consequence is further from consciousness than the ego.<sup>81</sup>

We can best appreciate these affinities if we turn our attention to certain clinical facts which, though by no means new, still await theoretical analysis.

There are people who behave in a very curious way in psychoanalysis. If you express any hope regarding the outcome of their treatment or show satisfaction over its progress, they do not seem the least bit gratified, and never fail to tell you that they feel worse than ever. At first you take this to be defiance, and an attempt to demonstrate to the physician their own superiority. Later, you arrive at a deeper and more just interpretation. You realize not only that such people cannot endure any form of praise or appreciation, but also that they react in directly inverse fashion to any progress in their treatment. Any element of the treatment that *ought* to produce an improvement or a temporary abeyance of symptoms, and in other cases does indeed produce such an effect, only serves to exacerbate their suffering, however briefly. Instead of getting better as the treatment proceeds, they get worse. They exhibit the phenomenon known as *negative therapeutic reaction*.

There can be no doubt that something within them actively resists recovery, and that the prospect of recovery is seen as a danger and feared as such. In the case of such people it tends to be said that the predominant factor is not the will to recover, but the need to be ill. Supposing we subject this resistance to analysis in the customary way, and supposing we manage to rid the patient of his attitude of defiance towards the doctor and his fixation on the various forms of

## V

*The Ego and its Forms of Dependence*

The sheer complexity of the topic in hand will perhaps excuse the fact that not one of these chapters has a title that entirely matches its content, and the associated fact that whenever we set out to explore new avenues of investigation we revert again and again to matters that we have already dealt with at an earlier stage.

Thus we have repeatedly stated that the ego very largely develops out of identifications which take the place of cathexes generated by the id and then abandoned, and that the first such identifications routinely assume the role of a special judgemental entity within the ego, and set about countering the ego<sup>79</sup> by behaving as a super-ego — whereas at a later stage the ego, having become stronger, may well show greater resistance to any such attempts on the part of identifications to exert influence over it. The super-ego owes its special position within — or counterposed to — the ego to a circumstance that needs to be appreciated from two distinct vantage-points: for one thing, it was the *first* identification, and it took place while the ego was still at a weak stage of its development; and secondly, it is heir to the Oedipus complex, and as such was responsible for introducing the most momentous objects into the ego. It relates to later ego-alterations rather as the primary sexual phase in childhood relates to the individual's later sexual life after puberty. Although it remains open to all the influences that subsequently play upon it, it still forever retains the particular characteristic that it acquired through its origins in the father complex, namely the ability to counter the ego and overmaster it. It is a monument to the erstwhile weakness and dependency of the ego, and it goes on to exert its dominance over the mature ego as well. Just as the child was subject

illness-gain<sup>82</sup> — even then, most of the resistance stays firmly in place; and this always proves to be the most powerful single obstacle to recovery — more powerful even than those already familiar to us: narcissistic inaccessibility, a negative attitude to the doctor, and unwillingness to relinquish the illness-gain.

We finally come to realize that what is involved here is a 'moral' factor, so to speak: a guilt-feeling that finds its gratification in illness and refuses to forgo the punishment that suffering represents. Although this explanation is scarcely cheering, it is one that merits our unwavering support. However, this guilt-feeling remains entirely mute *vis-à-vis* the patient: it doesn't tell him he is guilty, and instead of feeling guilty, he feels ill. The guilt-feeling expresses itself solely as a resistance to recovery that can be attenuated only with great difficulty. It is particularly difficult, too, to convince the patient that this is the driving force making his illness persist; he will always cling to the explanation that more readily presents itself, namely that psychoanalysis is not the right treatment for him.<sup>83</sup>

This description relates specifically to what happens in the most extreme instances — but it probably applies, albeit to a lesser extent, to very many cases of neurosis, and perhaps to all of the more serious ones. Indeed we can go further: it may be precisely this factor — the behaviour of the ego-ideal — that chiefly determines the severity of a neurotic illness. This being so, we cannot really avoid offering one or two further comments on the way the guilt-feeling manifests itself in various different circumstances.

The normal, conscious, type of guilt-feeling (conscience) is easily understood: it has its basis in the tension between the ego and the ego-ideal; it is a manifestation of the fact that the ego has been condemned in some particular respect by the critical entity within it. The feelings of inferiority that are so familiar in neurotics are probably not very far removed from this. In two disorders that are very well known to us, namely obsessional neurosis and melancholia, the guilt-feeling is excessively conscious; the ego-ideal displays particular severity in such instances and often attacks the ego in the most cruel way. Alongside this similarity, the two conditions also evince certain dissimilarities that are no less significant.

In obsessional neurosis (or certain forms thereof), the guilt-feeling is strident in the extreme, but incapable of convincing the ego that it is justified. The patient's ego therefore strenuously refuses any imputation of guilt, and demands that the physician support him in his rejection of these guilt-feelings. It would be folly to yield to him, for any such attempt would inevitably fail. It then becomes evident in analysis that the super-ego is influenced by processes that occurred without the ego ever becoming aware of them. It really is possible to uncover the repressed impulses that account for the guilt-feeling. In this instance, the super-ego knew rather more than the ego about the unconscious id.

In melancholia there is an even stronger sense that the super-ego has seized control of consciousness. But in this case the ego does not dare to protest; it pleads guilty and submits to the punishments imposed.<sup>84</sup> We understand how this difference comes about: in obsessional neurosis it is a question of offensive impulses that have remained outside the ego; in melancholia, however, the object at which the super-ego's anger is directed has already been absorbed into the ego through identification.

The fact that guilt-feelings reach such an extraordinary pitch of intensity in these two neurotic disorders is certainly not easy to understand — but in fact the main problem confronting us in this situation resides elsewhere. We shall postpone discussion of it until we have dealt with the other cases in which guilt-feelings remain unconscious.

Needless to say, this latter form of guilt-feeling is mainly to be found in hysteria, and in states of the hysterical type. The mechanism causing it to remain unconscious is not difficult to divine. When threatened by a painful perception engendered by criticism on the part of its super-ego, the hysterical ego fends it off in just the same way as it is otherwise wont to fend off an unbearable object-cathexis — by an act of repression. It is thus the ego that is responsible for the fact that the guilt-feeling remains unconscious. We know that normally the ego carries out repressions as an obedient acolyte of its super-ego; here, however, we have an instance where it turns this selfsame weapon against its own lord and master. In obsessional

neurosis: the predominant phenomenon is of course reaction-formation in its various manifestations – but in this present instance the ego succeeds only in shutting out the material that the guilt-feeling relates to.

One can go further and venture the hypothesis that a large part of the guilt-feeling is normally bound to be unconscious since the genesis of conscience is intimately linked to the Oedipus complex, which itself belongs to the unconscious. If anyone were to advance the paradoxical proposition that normal human beings are not only much more immoral than they think, but also much more moral than they realize, then psychoanalysis – on whose findings the first half of this assertion is based – would also raise no objections to the second.<sup>85</sup>

It came as a surprise to discover that an intensification of this *Ucs* guilt-feeling can turn a person into a criminal – but this is undoubtedly the case. In many criminals, especially juveniles, we find clear evidence of a powerful guilt-feeling that was already in existence *before* their criminal act, and thus was not a consequence of it but rather the impetus behind it, as if they found it a relief being able to tie this unconscious guilt-feeling to something concrete and immediate.

In all these various circumstances the super-ego demonstrates its independence of the conscious ego, and its intimate rapport with the unconscious id. Now, with reference to the importance that we have ascribed to pre-conscious verbal residua in the ego,<sup>86</sup> the question arises whether the super-ego itself, assuming it is indeed *Ucs*, doesn't perhaps consist of such word-notions; and if not, then what *does* it consist of? One might tamely reply that the super-ego, too, cannot possibly deny that its roots lie in things *heard* – it is part of the ego, after all, and remains accessible to consciousness as a result of these word-notions (concepts, abstractions); but the *cahlee-<sup>87</sup>* *tic energy* delivered to these notions that make up the super-ego derives not from auditory perception, not from the classroom, not from reading, but from sources within the id.

The question we deferred for later consideration is this: how is it that the super-ego very largely manifests itself as guilt-feeling (or

rather as criticism, since guilt-feeling is properly speaking the perception within the ego that corresponds to this criticism) and, in so doing, brings such extraordinary harshness and severity to bear against the ego? If we turn first to melancholia, then we find that the excessively strong super-ego, having seized control of consciousness, attacks the ego with unsparring savagery as if it had harnessed to its own purposes the entire store of sadism available within that particular individual. Putting it in terms of our interpretation of sadism, we would say that the destructive component has lodged itself in the super-ego and then turned against the ego. What thereupon prevails in the super-ego is not unlike a pure form of the death drive, indeed it quite often succeeds in driving the ego to its death if the ego doesn't manage in time to keep its oppressor at bay by switching into mania.

The reproaches of conscience are similarly torturous and disconcerting in certain forms of obsessional neurosis, but the situation here is less perspicuous. In contrast to melancholia, it is notable that obsessional patients don't really ever tread the path of self-destruction; they appear in effect to be immune to the danger of suicide, and to be far better protected against it than hysterics are. We can readily see that retaining the object is what guarantees the safety of the ego. In obsessional neurosis, regression to the pre-genital form of sexual organization makes it possible for love impulses to turn into impulses of aggression towards the object. Once again, the destruction drive is on the loose and wants to destroy the object – or at least there is every semblance of there being such an intention. The ego does not adopt these tendencies; it vigorously resists them by means of reaction-formations and precautionary measures, with the result that they remain in the id. The super-ego, however, behaves as though the ego were responsible for them, and at the same time shows us, through the utter seriousness with which it combats these destructive intentions, that what is involved here is a very real substitution of hate for love, and not a mere semblance of it called forth by regression. Helplessly besieged on two fronts, the ego battles in vain against the demands of the murderous id on one hand, and the reproaches of its punitive conscience on the other.

All it can manage to do is to block the grossest depredations of both, and the outcome is, first, unending self-torment, which then develops into systematic tormenting of the object if and when it is accessible.

The dangerous death drives are dealt with in a variety of ways within each individual. Some of them are neutralized by being merged with erotic components, others are deflected into the outer world in the form of aggression, but in the main they undoubtedly continue their inner activities unchecked. How is it, then, that in melancholia the super-ego can turn into a kind of rallying-ground for the death drives?

Taking morality, the curbing of drives, as our parameter, we can summarize the position as follows: the id is wholly amoral; the ego tries hard to be moral; the super-ego can become hypermoral, and thereby show a degree of cruelty that only the id can match. It is a curious thing that the more a person curbs his aggression towards the external world, the more severe and hence more aggressive he becomes in his ego-ideal. Viewed in the customary manner, the situation appears to be quite the reverse: on this view it is the imperative of the ego-ideal that causes the aggression to be suppressed. The fact of the matter, however, is just as we have described it: the more a person succeeds in controlling his aggression, the more intense becomes his ego-ideal's aggressive disposition towards his ego. It is tantamount to a displacement, to the ego-ideal turning on the person's ego. But then even ordinary, normal morality is characterized by harsh restrictiveness and savage forbiddance. Indeed, it is from this that the conception arises of a higher being inexorably bent on meting out punishment.

Now I cannot expand any further on these matters without introducing a new hypothesis. The super-ego, as we know, resulted from an identification with the father *quia* paradigm. Every such identification is in the nature of a desexualization or even a sublimation. Now it seems that when such a conversion process occurs, a de-mergence of drives takes place as well.<sup>88</sup> After sublimation, the erotic component no longer has the strength to annex all the destructive capacity that has been added to it, and the latter becomes

free-moving and manifests itself as an aggressive and destructive tendency. It is precisely from this de-mergence that the ideal presumably derives its harsh and cruel manner of dictating to the individual what he shall and shall not do.

Let us return for a moment to obsessional neurosis. Circumstances are different here. The de-mergence whereby love turns into aggression is not brought about by anything the ego does, but is the result of a regression that takes place in the id. But this process spills over from the id to the super-ego, which now becomes even more severe towards the innocent ego. In both cases, however [that is, in obsessional neurosis and in melancholia], it would seem that the ego, having taken control of the libido by means of identification, pays a heavy price for so doing by having to suffer the aggression that is mixed in with the libido as a punishment imposed by the super-ego.

Our ideas about the ego are beginning to settle, its various relations are becoming steadily clearer. We can now see the ego in all its strengths and weaknesses. It is entrusted with important functions: by virtue of its relation to the perceptual system it determines the temporal sequence of psychic processes and submits them to the 'reality-test'; by interpolating thought processes it is able to delay motor energy discharges,<sup>89</sup> and it controls the pathways to motor activity — though it must be admitted that this particular power is more formal than real: in its relationship to action the ego's position is somewhat akin to that of a constitutional monarch, without whose approval nothing can pass into law, but who would think extremely carefully before vetoing any bill laid before him by his parliament. The ego is enriched by all life experiences deriving from the external world — but the id is its *other* external world, which it seeks to subordinate to its own purposes. It withdraws libido from the id; it refashions the object-cathexes of the id into creations of the ego.<sup>90</sup> With the help of the super-ego, it draws — in some way as yet unclear to us — on the experiences of previous eras stored in the id.

There are two routes by which the content of the id can find its way into the ego. One is the direct route, while the other goes by way of the ego-ideal, and for some psychic activities it may well be

crucially important which of these two routes they follow. As it develops, the ego first *perceives* drives, and later *controls* them; first *obeys* drives, and later *inhibits* them. This achievement is due in great measure to the ego-ideal, which is indeed itself to some extent a reaction-formation against the id's drive processes. Psychoanalysis is an instrument that is meant to enable the ego to defeat the id, and to go on defeating it.

On the other hand, however, we can see this same ego as a poor little creature subjected to servitude in three different ways, and threatened in consequence by three different dangers — one posed by the external world, one by the libido of the id, and one by the harshness of the super-ego. Corresponding to these three dangers are three different kinds of fear, for fear is the manifestation of a retreat from danger. As an entity located on the border between the world and the id, the ego seeks to mediate between them: it seeks to make the id tractable to the world, and by means of the muscle activity it instigates, it seeks to make the world match the wishes of the id. In fact it behaves rather as the physician does in psychoanalytic therapy: it comments itself, and its regard for the objective world, to the id as a potential libidinal-object, and seeks to divert the id's libido onto itself. It is not merely the id's adjutant, but a growing lackey desperate to win his master's love. It does its utmost to stay on good terms with the id; it dresses up the latter's *Ucs* commands in its own *Pcs* rationalizations; when reality wags its finger, it feigns obedience on the part of the id, even when the id has in fact remained obdurate and intransigent; it hushes up the id's conflicts with reality, and also, wherever possible, its conflicts with the super-ego. Positioned as it is between the id and reality, it yields all too often to the temptation to fawn, to lie, to do whatever may be opportune, rather like a politician who knows full well what he *ought* to do, but wants none the less to preserve his popularity in the eyes of the public.

The ego does not show impartiality in its dealings with the two types of drives. Through the work it does to bring about identifications and sublimations it helps the death drives to assert control over the libidinal, but it thereby runs the risk of itself becoming the object

of the death drives and thus perishing. In order to provide such help, it must make itself replete with libido, thereby becoming a representative of Eros, keen to live and be loved.

However, since its sublimational work results in a de-mergence of drives and the unleashing of aggressive drives within the super-ego, its battle against the libido exposes it to the danger of suffering harm and death. If the aggression of the super-ego causes it to suffer or even perish, then its fate is analogous to that of the protista, which are destroyed by the products of their own catabolism. Viewed in economic terms, the morality operative within the super-ego seems to us to be just such a product of catabolism.<sup>91</sup>

Amongst the ego's various forms of dependence, the most interesting is probably its dependence on the super-ego.

The ego is of course the true locus of fear.<sup>92</sup> Threatened by dangers from three different directions, the ego displays the flight reflex by withdrawing its own catexis from the perception of the threat or from the process within the id that is deemed to be posing the threat, and re-deploying it as fear. This primitive reaction is later superseded by the enactment of protective cathexes (the phobia mechanism). It is impossible to say precisely what the ego fears from the danger without, and from the libidinal danger within the id, we know it involves being overwhelmed or destroyed — but we cannot apprehend it analytically. The ego simply responds to the warning given by the pleasure principle. On the other hand it is possible to say what lies hidden behind the ego's fear of the super-ego, behind its consensual fear.<sup>93</sup> At some point in the past there was a threat of castration at the hands of the superior being that subsequently turned into the ego-ideal, and the fear of castration provoked by this is probably the core around which consensual fear subsequently accretes; consensual fear is the continuation of that castration fear.

The grandiloquent assertion that 'all fear is essentially fear of death' is more or less meaningless, and in any event impossible to justify.<sup>94</sup> On the contrary, it seems to me altogether right to distinguish fear of death from objective fear and neurotic libidinal-fear.<sup>95</sup> The fear of death poses a severe problem for psychoanalysis, for death is an abstract concept with negative content for which no

unconscious correlative can be found. The mechanism behind the fear of death could only be that the ego very largely jettisons its narcissistic libido-cathexis, thus forsaking its own self in much the same way as it forsakes external objects in other fear situations. I rather think that the fear of death is something that evokes between the ego and the super-ego.

Fear of death arises, as we know, in two sets of circumstances (both incidentally directly analogous to those that apply in other instances where fear is generated): as a reaction to an external danger; and as an inner process, for instance in melancholia. Once again, the neurotic scenario may help us to understand the objective one.

There is only one possible explanation for the fear of death that arises in melancholia, namely that the ego gives up on itself because it feels itself to be hated and persecuted by the super-ego instead of loved. For the ego, therefore, 'to live' means the same as 'to be loved' - to be loved by the super-ego, which in this context, too, serves to represent the id. The super-ego plays the same protective, salvatory role as the father once did, and as providence or destiny will do later on. But the ego must inevitably draw the very same conclusion when confronted by a massive danger in the objective world that it believes itself powerless to overcome: it sees itself as deserted by all the forces that could have protected it, and lets itself die. Incidentally, this is the same situation as that which underlay the first great fear-state of birth and the fear-cum-longing<sup>96</sup> of infancy, namely separation from the protecting mother.

On the basis of these considerations, therefore, fear of death, like consciential fear, can be viewed as a modified form of castration fear. Given the enormous importance of guilt-feeling in neuroses, we cannot by any means dismiss the idea that ordinary neurotic fear may well be compounded in severe cases by the fear generated through the interaction between ego and super-ego (castration fear, consciential fear, fear of death).

The id - to which we finally return - has no means of showing the ego either love or hate. It cannot declare its will, for no single, unified will has ever lain within its means. Eros and the death drive

do battle within it; we have already seen the various means that the two sets of drives deploy in their fight with each other. We could depict the id as being entirely under the control of the more but mighty death drives, who seek peace and, prompted by the pleasure principle, seek to pacify Eros the troublemaker - but we fear that to do so would be to underestimate the part that Eros plays.

(1923)