Chapter 6
Analyses of the ego

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we saw how Freud attempted to grasp the concept of the ego and the forces which affect and form it. That effort resulted in studies which he called “analysis of the ego”. These sought to chart narcissism, the conscience, the drives, love and hate, sadism and masochism, Eros and Thanatos. The ego is a construct in which narcissism is fundamental, but within which destructive forces are also active from the start. Via the analysis of the sense of guilt in “A Child is Being Beaten” and in the Wolf Man case he was able to clinically approach these destructive forces. Speculation regarding the death instinct in Beyond the Pleasure Principle reached beyond the analytic possibilities.

Two studies epitomize this period’s theoretical work as well as the powerful central position of the issue of the sense of guilt: Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego and The Ego and the Id. This chapter focuses on these studies and in both the sense of guilt is prominent. Finally, in this chapter we will return to masochism and the working through of the texts indicated above in The Economic Problem of Masochism. In order to understand the core structures of Freud’s work in these studies we must first examine the influence of Nietzsche’s thought on Freud.

It is clear that Freud relates Group Psychology to narcissism. A clear differentiation between the psychology of the individual and group psychology cannot be defended because others appear regularly as example, object, helper or opponent within the ego analysis. An individual cannot be isolated from the social environment. The question for Freud was whether that meant that there was a social drive or a social instinct. The answer to that question is of importance for our analysis of the sense of guilt. If there is a social instinct then the origins of the sense of guilt lie within it. Freud’s answer was that group relations do not spring from a social instinct, but rather from the group’s primal model, the family and identification with one’s parents and siblings.

The Ego and the Id dovetails perfectly with Beyond the Pleasure Principle. Freud testified to this himself in his introduction. It is thus also a clear continuation of ego analysis, but also with a far-reaching elaboration of the notion that an individual must always be comprehended in relation to others. Put another way, the ego is largely built upon identifications with others. These identifications are a further extension of the first narcissistic identification with one’s own image. The reason

---

1 S. Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego.
2 For example, idem, p.69.
for making the analysis of identification central to this chapter is simple and clear: dealing with the issue of identification puts a direct spotlight on the sense of guilt.

The subject of the sense of guilt dominated Freud’s work in the early 1920s. This might lead us to believe that Freud’s interest in the sense of guilt was only serious from this point onward. This study has already demonstrated the opposite, and this is underlined by a general tendency in Freud’s systematic publications, starting with *On Narcissism* and continuing until *The Ego and the Id*. In these studies in particular Freud repeatedly reached back to his oldest psychoanalytic material.

### 6.2 “The Sphinx of ancient legend”

Freud’s interest in group psychology stemmed from the observation that an individual can behave very differently as part of a group than one would normally expect. A group can decisively influence the individual. 3 In order to gain insight into this reciprocity, in *Group Psychology* 4 he sought a link with a renowned book by the physician Gustav le Bon entitled *La Psychologie des Foules*. 5

The masses can be compared to a sphinx, Le Bon wrote: a monster that must be defied. 6 This is an image he used when he looked back upon a hundred years of French history: the French Revolution, the 1848 Revolution and above all the Paris Commune of 1871. According to Le Bon, history demonstrated that we live in the “age of the masses”. He was not particularly happy about this: perhaps the rise of the masses constitutes one of the final stages of western civilization, the reversion to a time of confused anarchy. 7 Le Bon was a passionate anti-democrat who repeatedly pleaded for an aristocratic form of government, for political and religious leaders who could control the masses with psychological insights and thus safeguard civilization. The people, the herd, need a herdsman. 8 That was his message.

---

3 Idem, p.70.


7 Idem, p.5.

Although Freud avoided Le Bon’s political preoccupations, naturally they did affect his view of the masses. According to Le Bon, the masses’ qualities are comparable with the most primitive developmental stages, those seen among primitive peoples and children. In other words, a crowd is characterized by instinctiveness, fractiousness, an inaptitude for logical thought, a lack of judgment and critical spirit, and an abundance of emotion. Le Bon emphasized the instinctive and illogical character of the crowd: a crowd is naïve and thus also changeable. It can wield incredible power in both the positive (military heroism) and the destructive sense. Thus a crowd is prepared to do that which an individual would never dare. Primitive man’s instincts surface and a crowd is thus more powerful than egoistic drives. An irrational crowd can, after all, convince an individual to forgo self-preservation.

What interested Freud was Le Bon’s approach to the question of the origin of the transformation of an individual into a member of the crowd. Also, for Freud a crowd was, as it were, a single entity, a collective homogeneity. For Le Bon the characteristics of an individual when in a crowd were the disappearance of conscious personality (rationality, critical spirit, etc.), dominion over the unconscious (primal instinct), guidance of ideas and feelings through suggestion and transference, and the tendency towards immediate fulfilment of ideas. Freud largely adopted these ideas thus emphasizing the inhibition of intellectual activity and the increase of affectivity within a crowd.

With the exception of the ideas which he adopted, the road from Le Bon to Freud is otherwise a dead end. Le Bon only saw crowds as revolutionary hordes which briefly surged and then quickly disintegrated. In light of *Totem and Taboo*, it is clear that Freud was more interested in another kind of horde: the group mind as the bearer of the morality which forms individuals, as the creator of language and folklore, in short, the crowd as a society.

---

9 When Freud engaged in the study of group psychology he could hardly have avoided an authority in the field such as Le Bon. Nevertheless the reference is remarkable for two reasons. First, Freud called upon a scholar defending authoritarian leadership just after the fall of the Habsburg monarchy. Second, Le Bon’s view of the masses is comparably negative as was Freud’s view on the common folk in the 1880s and 1890s. Yet his assessment changed, and notably in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death* it was not mass behaviour but the primitive mechanisms that underlie civilization that were the focus of his attention.


11 Idem, p.22, p.41.

12 S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.82.

13 According to Freud, Le Bon had brilliantly depicted the group mind but failed to provide a thorough analysis of the mechanisms involved in group psychology. Le Bon had reduced the complexity of group psychology to “the mutual suggestion of individuals and the prestige of the leaders”. Idem, p.88, p.129.

14 Idem, p.83.
6.3 “A psychological crowd”

Although Freud was interested in organized social forms and much less in Le Bon’s unorganized groups, he held onto the image of the crowd as described by Le Bon. Calling upon William McDougall’s *The Group Mind*, Freud now explored the crowd further.\textsuperscript{15} McDougall differentiated between an organized and an unorganized group where, incidentally, the transition between the two is fluid. Not every group of people also constitutes a “psychological crowd”; not every group has the same goal, with a more or less homogeneous feeling. A psychological crowd presumes a certain degree of “mental homogeneity”. According to McDougall, the most important characteristic of such a psychological crowd is the “intensification of emotions” which has a powerful attraction for individuals.\textsuperscript{16} There is a “primitive response of sympathy”. That sympathy is an innate instinct. McDougall illustrated this by the phenomenon of panic. Crowd panic makes clear how hot emotions can run when individuals adopt another’s fear. He looked for an explanation for this in a speculative theory of the “collective consciousness” which principally stems from Hegel’s philosophy: individual consciousness is a fragmentary manifestation of the “all-inclusive world-consciousness”.\textsuperscript{17}

Freud ignored these speculations. When McDougall moved beyond these and progressed to the inhibition of the intellect in the crowd, Freud picked the text up again. This intellectual inhibition, in combination with the impulse to act emotionally, is strong in unorganized groups. Although the characteristics of this unorganized crowd can be found in all groups, a crowd can indeed function at a higher level. After all, civilized groups are also familiar with the containment of instincts and intellectual provocation. Freud criticized McDougall on this point. According to Freud, it is better to propose that the individual is intellectually curtailed when in a crowd. McDougall believed that organizational development was essentially an evolutionary process whereby an individual only reaches a higher level via the group.\textsuperscript{18} Freud wanted none of this; a crowd restrains an individual unless the roles are reversed and the character of the individual determines the character of the organization.

What remains is that an individual changes in and because of a group. What concerned Freud here was the question of the psychological explanation for the change. He first looked for an explanation in suggestion, or put differently...

\textsuperscript{15} Idem, pp.83ff.
\textsuperscript{17} Idem, p.38.
\textsuperscript{18} McDougall’s starting point is Darwin’s evolutionism and the idea that “the growth of the individual mind” is determined by the “mental forces of the society in which it grows up”. Idem, pp.5-6. That eventually leads to the continuing growth of knowledge and improvement in morality. Idem, pp.208ff.
“imitation” or “contagion”. The question is thus: what is the essence of suggestion? Yet Freud did not want to answer this question directly, or better said, he chose to search for the explanation for group psychology via the concept of libido. That in itself is not so strange, for this term fits Freud’s theoretical work from the preceding years better. Suggestion picked up a very old issue, for here in fact we can see the return of the problem of hypnosis. The article *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment* reflected his thoughts of the time on this matter. We saw in chapter three that Freud named obedience and faithfulness as the characteristics of a hypnotized person. Freud then already indicated that this faithful obedience belonged to the “characteristics of love”. Given this train of thought, it is understandable that Freud switched from suggestion to libido.

As previously stated, Freud was interested in organized groups. He chose two of the most highly organized groups to study: the Church and the army. They are both examples of an artificial crowd: the group’s coherence is not natural, but requires pressure from the outside (leadership) in order to protect the group against disintegration and change. He believed that this research into highly organized groups would be enlightening because it was in these relationships that he hoped to find that which was hidden elsewhere. This idea is curious, for until that time Freud constantly sought more primitive phenomena in order to clarify psychological subjects: the Oedipus myth, the child, the savage. These were for him phenomena in which he recognized basic psychic structures which were concealed by later developments. Freud’s study of the Church and the army claimed the opposite.

The choice of the Church and the army is striking for another reason. Or rather, the choice of the Church is striking. Naturally the First World War was still fresh in everyone’s memory in 1921 and thus the choice of the army is obvious. Others had also published on that theme. McDougall was Freud’s most important source and in a chapter entitled “The highly organized group” he described complex organizations based on the example of the army. Wilfred Trotter, to whom Freud later referred in *Group Psychology*, also wrote about the war and the behaviour of leaders and groups during it. However, neither McDougall nor Trotter examined religious organizations. Only Le Bon addressed religion, and then only in the context of a chapter on leadership. Thus Freud’s interest in the Church must be sought internally, and I believe this interest can firstly be explained by what he saw as an important difference between the army and the Church: the army does not demand that its soldiers identify with the general. Yet within the

---

19 S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.89.
20 Idem, p.90.
21 S. Freud, *Psychical (or Mental) Treatment*, p.296.
22 S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, pp.93ff.
Church the faithful are indeed urged to identify with their leader, Christ. A Christian thus identifies in two ways: with the leader and the group. That makes the Church an interesting case for the analysis of identification.

According to Freud, the artificial group is determined by the “illusion” that there is a leader – Christ, a general – who loves all the members of the group equally. The organization stands or falls with this illusion. Christians are brothers and sisters; Christ is, as it were, an older brother or father. The bond to the leader is also the origin of the mutual bonding. In order to strengthen this relationship-through-love thesis, Freud proceeded to a discussion of the consequences of such a bond being broken. Thus the war neuroses and the disintegration of the German army during the First World War constituted a protest against the loveless relationship between soldier and superior. The love-relationship between members of the group (horizontal) can also be broken, in which case the result is panic. Here for the first time Freud challenged McDougall, who believed that panic revealed the increase of affectivity within a group most clearly. The essence of panic was fear which arose from danger perceived by a few and then spread as panic. For Freud, however, panic was a sign of “relaxation in the libidinal structure of the group”. Panic fear presupposed the dissolution of affective bonds, generally as a consequence of the disintegration of the bond to the leader. The libido, not fear, was the key to understanding a crowd.

We already know how Freud approached love. It is a term that is not opposed to fear but to hate. Outbursts of violence – hate which was repressed when the love-relations were strong – occur when mutual love weakens or is threatened. Yet even when the mutual love is strong there is hate, hatred for those who do not belong to the group. According to Freud, this is why Christianity is always essentially intolerant. Without a doubt Freud was drawing here on his personal experiences. In chapter one we saw how he was cursed as a “dirty Jew” by the riff-raff who failed to credit him with Christian brotherly love when he opened the window in a train compartment.

6.4 Emotional bonds

Understanding a crowd means comprehending the ambivalent feelings of love and hate. Every love relationship is accompanied by hostile feelings which are repressed. What was already valid for parent-child relationships also applies to larger entities and as the differences between groups become larger, hate becomes more visible.

24 By Church Freud meant every community of believers. Concretely, he took the Catholic Church as a “type”. S. Freud, Group Psychology, p.93.
25 Idem, p.94.
26 Idem, pp.96-97.
27 Idem, p.96.
This ambivalence exists and in fact remains unexplained: Freud referred to the speculative life and death instincts which he derived from the ambivalence of love and hate, attraction and aversion.\(^{29}\) Aversion here is aversion towards the external world which threatens the ego. Freud now called this the distinguishing feature of narcissism which can only be superseded by libidinous bonding to another person. Why does this turn to others occur? The libido concentrates on satisfaction and draws in those people as objects who can contribute to this. Freud also called this “a change from egoism to altruism”.\(^ {30}\) We are already familiar with this principle. The love-bond in a crowd can also be seen as the outcome of this turn to objects, but in a crowd the mutual bonds are not determined by a direct sexual goal. We are dealing here with a sublimated love. Freud called these desexualized emotional bonds identifications and distinguished them from (sexual) object choices.

Freud introduced the term identification from his analysis of narcissism, love and hate. He now thought that this mechanism in psychoanalysis had actually already been identified, namely in the analysis of the Oedipus complex.\(^ {31}\) Without him having actually mentioned identification, we have indeed already seen this mechanism. In The Interpretation of Dreams (elaborating on Baldwin’s Mental Development) Freud had already been interested in imitation and the internalization of an “ideal self, my ‘ought’ set before me”. He had linked it in particular to the child (boy) and the relationship with his father whom he saw as an authority and rival. In Group Psychology he formulated it as follows: the boy has a special interest (epistemophilic instinct) in his father, wants to be like him, wants to take his place. He takes his father into himself “as his model”. This identification must be differentiated from the bond to the mother who is a sexual object for the boy. The actual Oedipus complex results from these two bonds: the identification with the father leads to the boy wanting to take his place with his mother. This identification has a “hostile colouring”. In other words, identification is by nature ambivalent. Freud had also already demonstrated that there were sadistic components to sexual object relations. This ambivalence is not lost in the sublimation (as desexualization). Thus he saw the transition from narcissism to “bonding to another person” as taking place via the Oedipus complex. Identification meant that an ego wanted “to be” his or her example. As an idea this can be set apart from the other as a sexual object where the formula is: I want “to have” the other. Of these two, identification was the most original. After all, it stemmed from narcissism (primary identification).\(^ {32}\)

\(^{29}\) Idem, p.102.

\(^{30}\) Idem, p.103.

\(^{31}\) Idem, p.105. See also J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse, p.188.

It is possible that object choice can become identification through regression, whereby it can perhaps appear that the object choice is more original than the identification.\textsuperscript{33} Freud believed that this for example was the core of hysteria and hysterical symptoms. The formula for this – Freud did not supply it – would run: “If you cannot have who you want, you can always still (partially) be who you wanted to have.” In that case identification is effected by the sense of guilt. With reference to the Dora case, hysterical symptoms are, after all, an expression of an identification which has arisen via a sense of guilt on account of hostile feelings towards the mother and object love for the father. He called a similar identification not only a regression, but henceforth chiefly introjection: the ego absorbs the qualities (usually a single specific trait) of the object.\textsuperscript{34} Study of hysteria revealed that such identification could be contagious. Girlfriends, for example, can adopt each other’s hysterical symptoms.\textsuperscript{35} The mechanism here is not compassion (which is an effect, incidentally), but identification once again. The other (a friend) recognizes in herself an analogy with the one. What then is the nature of this analogy which drives the girlfriends of an hysteric to develop hysterical symptoms themselves? Freud named a single principle: the sense of guilt.\textsuperscript{36} The girlfriends recognize in the hysterical symptoms the underlying Oedipal desires in the other and also in themselves. That awakens the sense of guilt regarding the desire and precisely because of this it is possible for a quality – the symptom, pain – to be introjected into one’s own ego. We see here once again in the details of examples and evidentiary material the contours of known central thoughts and bonds: emotional ambivalence, the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt.

\textit{6.5 Identification: from Oedipus complex to sense of guilt}

Freud introduced the term identification via the analysis of group emotional bonds. In so doing he set the term apart from “being in love”, but without defining this latter phenomenon. He only suggested that in bonding as a group the members were not pursuing a sexual goal. The difference between identification and being in love is fundamental to subsequent development, yet both share their origin in narcissism and appear related. After an introduction to identification, the chapter that followed was about being in love (and hypnosis).\textsuperscript{37} The analysis of the first object choice was now the starting point.

\textsuperscript{34} Idem, p.109. Here, according to Laplanche and Pontalis, Freud actually discerned two other forms of identification (in addition to primary identification), namely secondary identification as regressive substitute for a lost love object (for example in melancholia) and hysterical identification as identification with a specific trait. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, \textit{Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse}, p.189.
\textsuperscript{35} S. Freud, \textit{Group Psychology}, p.107.
\textsuperscript{36} “The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the suffering involved in it.” Idem.
\textsuperscript{37} Idem, pp.111-116.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

For a young boy his mother is the first love object towards which sexual urges are directed. The boy must relinquish this object, however. From that moment on the sexual urges are inhibited and are, in fact, replaced by tender, non-sensual feelings of love. During puberty the sexual drive becomes insistent (again). If all goes well then, the sensual (sexual) and non-sensual feelings come together in being in love. The hallmark of being in love is sexual overvaluation, that is to say, the object cannot be criticized and its qualities are very highly esteemed. The object is now more than just a sexual object. Freud now also called this idealization and further defined it as an “overflow of narcissistic libido to an object”.

Thus later something like idealization can arise from the Oedipus complex. Idealization can be seen in being in love with the sexual object, but also in the tendency to accept the other’s authority. In being in love the object is elevated beyond all reproach. It is as if one’s conscience has been blinded. “The object has been put in the place of the ego ideal”, but that old ego ideal is no longer an internal norm for the ego. It is “impoverished”, it submits to the elevated ideal, the other person. Here lies the crucial difference between idealization and identification. In identification an object is not substituted for the ego ideal but “put in the place of the ego”. It thereby “enriches” the ego.

After this first reconnaissance of the terms identification, being in love and idealization, suddenly hypnosis is once again the topic. After all, idealization could be linked not only to being in love, but also with the belief in authority. The relationship between hypnotizer and hypnotized can be described in terms of idealization. For Freud that relationship represents a model for the relationship with the leader of a group. The leader is idealized, yet is not the object of being in love although he/she is elevated beyond all criticism. He now defined a group with an analogy from hypnosis: it is “a number of individuals who have put one and the same object in the place of their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with one another in their ego”. There is thus first the idealization of the leader, then identification with the other members of the group.

In light of the hypothesis regarding the group, it is important that Freud now paid attention to horizontal identification and the question of how the mutual bond must be explained. Freud pointed out that within the group there is influence from individual to individual, an influence which when considering the spread of hysterical symptoms could be regarded as imitation or contagion. There is identification with the other members of the group. In order to explain this

---

38 Idem, p.112.
phenomenon, Freud entered into a discussion with William Trotter, who had developed a theory of social instinct, the “herd instinct”.\textsuperscript{43}

Trotter distinguished four basic instincts.\textsuperscript{44} In addition to “instincts as self-preservation, nutrition and sex”, he also names “gregariousness”, an instinct for living in groups, in short, a social instinct. That instinct is a weapon in the battle against natural selection. After all, the complexity of organisms and the consequent variety of social forms increased the chances of survival. Although Trotter hardly mentioned Darwin, it is nonetheless clear that his social instinct as compared to natural selection was a reference to Darwin’s theory in \textit{The Descent of Man} of the social instinct, “sympathy”, and its importance for a group. In chapter four we saw that Darwin derived moral qualities and the conscience from this social instinct. He also dealt with the social instinct in a section of his work on the mental powers of man including the moral sense.\textsuperscript{45} When Trotter listed the characteristics of the social instinct, he was also dealing with the development of morality. In principle an individual is egoistic and will put the group in danger when he pursues pleasure. That egoism belongs to the lower qualities of man, what Trotter called the “unconscious self”. That egoism is characterized by irrationality, the ability to imitate, cruelty and a lack of self-control. It is through these egoistic characteristics that people are capable of being influenced, that they are suggestible. The social instinct is thus nothing other than “the suggestible subconscious self”. This suggestibility manifests itself in higher human characteristics and underlies altruism. A similar development is a question of group dynamics. Trotter paid no attention to the leader, but wrote of “the group voice”. Indeed, the development of language is crucial here for the development of morality. Being spoken to can mean not only influence, but also judgement. This is why herd animals (such as people) have a “conscience and feelings of guilt and of duty”.\textsuperscript{46} Conscience and feelings of guilt are thus a consequence of a social instinct.

Freud’s primary criticisms of Trotter concentrated on the fact that he paid no attention to the leader and on the existence of the social instinct. In contrast to Trotter, Freud stated that social abilities can only arise from relationships with parents and siblings: feelings of envy and hostility are repressed in order to be able to count on parental love and it is from this process that identification with siblings takes place. The group feeling thus ensures a certain social justice: “Whatever I must renounce must also be denied by the others.” Within the group this mechanism is “the root of social conscience and the sense of duty”.\textsuperscript{47} This social conscience is presented here as synonymous with what Freud had previously called the sense

\textsuperscript{43} Idem, pp.117-121.
\textsuperscript{44} W. Trotter, \textit{Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War}, pp.5ff.
\textsuperscript{45} Ch. Darwin, \textit{The Descent of Man}, chapter III.
\textsuperscript{46} W. Trotter, \textit{Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War}, p.26. This train of thought implied that other herd animals can also have a sense of guilt. Trotter mentioned dogs as an example, because a dog “knows” when he is going to be punished for a misdeed. In that sense the dog has a “sense of sin”.
\textsuperscript{47} S. Freud, \textit{Group Psychology}, p.121.
of guilt in hysteric identification. Freud subsequently briefly formulated the origin of the social feelings, including the sense of guilt: “The social feeling is based upon the reversal of what was first a hostile feeling into a positively-toned tie in the nature of an identification”. Based on the analogy with siblings who focus on parental love, Freud saw the upheaval as a consequence of a bond to a person outside or above the group. The definition of a group was now also adjusted: the members of the group must be equal and can thus identify with each other because they all want to be ruled by a leader. In order to be able to receive the leader’s love the crowd must adhere to the precept of equality between members of the group. This criticism of Trotter also meant of course a denial of the innate “unconscious self”, an innate entity or organization: the ego is a construction and what preceded it may not be called an organization.

Freud proceeded further with the formulation of a link between his ideas regarding the crowd and the leader and the primal horde thesis he proposed in Totem and Taboo based on the negation of a social instinct and the consequent implicit criticism of part of Darwin’s theories. The primal model, the primal horde is visible anew in every group. The sons’ sense of guilt about having murdered their father lives on in the group’s social feelings and the sense of guilt regarding repressed feelings of jealousy and hostility. Put another way, every artificial group reveals a regression to the characteristics of the primal horde: the surrendering of individuality, the dominance of affectivity, the carrying out of assignments without criticism, the orientation of thoughts and feelings in a single direction. It now becomes clear what Freud meant when he wrote that in artificial groups structures buried elsewhere can be laid bare: it is indeed within an artificial group that a “revival of the primal horde” is visible. In the beginning there was the father, who was independent and whose will needed no confirmation, and the group of sons. “He, at the very beginning of the history of mankind, was the ‘superman’ whom Nietzsche only expected from the future”. The primal father-Übermensch has a “masterful nature” and is “absolutely narcissistic”. This primal father has an ego that is still barely libidinously connected to other people. It is this father who forces the sons into sexual abnegation and consequently into emotional links with each other. This structure is also visible in artificial groups such as the Church and the army. To this he added that the primal father-son relationship is also recognizable in hypnosis: the hypnotizer takes the place of the father just as the primal father once dominated the sons’ ego ideal.

48 Idem.
49 The criticism of Trotter is important because it implies that the sense of guilt is not the effect of innate social instincts.
50 Idem, p.123.
51 Idem.
52 Idem, p.124. This idea of the Übermensch’s absolute narcissism is not only a clear reference to Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy, but also to the ideas of Näcke and Rank on the Übermensch.
53 Idem, pp.125-128.
Freud took this point even further. A modern individual participates in all kinds of groups and via identification has incorporated various models into his ego ideal. This is the root of an individual’s “independence and originality”.

Simultaneously, it appears that an individual is ready to trade in his ego ideal for a leader who embodies that ideal. He wrote of a “grade in the ego” when he dealt with the ego ideal. This is thus about an inner partition. In the group the ego identifies with the group members; the leader takes the place of the ego ideal. From group psychology we have thus returned to ego analysis.

Freud pointed out that in his work he repeatedly encountered differentiations in the human mind. Even in his earliest psychoanalytic work he was concerned with the difference between the ego and the unconsciously repressed and he was constantly confronted with his patients’ reluctance and resistance to absorb one into the other. However, he preferred to refer to narcissism because systematic ego analysis had begun with that term. With the differentiation between ego and ego ideal he now thought he had the key to explain patients’ resistance. It was the ego ideal that limited and set rules for the ego: “The ego ideal comprises the sum of all the limitations in which the ego has to acquiesce”. Yet this limitation was welcomed by the ego because the defence of the unconsciously repressed ensured that the ego “could be satisfied with itself”: it was better to be limited by the ego ideal, which provided a lovely norm to which the ego can conform, than be overwhelmed by that which has been repressed. There was thus a narcissistic reason why the ego embraced a limiting ego ideal and it is here that the reason why people so gladly embrace leaders must be sought.

The idea that the ego welcomed an ego ideal can be positively interpreted when we consider that the ego ideal is not just a restrictive reaction to underlying aggression such as in *Totem and Taboo* or even an enforced model, but also offers a concrete form in which the ego can realize itself. Another positive interpretation could be that Freud championed a certain idealization of leaders. However, we must remember here that Freud did not equate the formation of an ego ideal with the idealization of a leader. We must also remember that Freud was not interested in praising the longing for authority, but in giving identification a central place and showing that it was there that narcissism remained preserved and could even be strengthened.

At the end of *Group Psychology* Freud returned to the case histories and his position that identification was linked to narcissism and the Oedipus complex. On account of the narcissistic foundation to the ego ideal, Freud could speak of

---

54 Idem, p.129.
55 Idem.
56 Idem, p.131.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

a “triumph” when ego and ego ideal coincide: it increased self-awareness.\(^{59}\) On the other hand the tension between ego and ego ideal must be denoted with the sense of guilt.\(^{60}\) He now pointed to melancholia: it was there that the accusation by the ego ideal against the ego was evident. In melancholia a lost person is “set up again inside the ego” and strongly condemned by the ego ideal.\(^{61}\) The intense self-reproaches are an expression of the enormous difference between ego and ego ideal.

With this we have finally arrived at the sense of guilt that reflects the tension between the ego and the ego ideal, but that simultaneously can be further differentiated. After all, identification in hysteria arose based on recognition of Oedipal desires and the accompanying sense of guilt. In other pathologies we do not find a similar contamination. In melancholia, for example, the ego’s place is taken by an object via identification, not because one recognizes one’s own guilt in another, but because the culpable other is lost and only by identification can it be retained. Various identifications thus bring different senses of guilt or self-reproaches with them and vice versa. Ultimately we can say that Freud’s example of horizontal and vertical identifications within a group is a reworking of an old theme: he laid attenuated links between the Oedipus complex and the sense of guilt. Yet these links, as a result of the first explorations of the term identification, are still far from clear. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud attempted to clarify these links.\(^{62}\)

### 6.6 “The only pre-psychoanalytic thinker”

We have just noted a reference to Nietzsche. Before we continue this chapter, we should now spend some time examining Freud’s relationship with Nietzsche. It appears that Nietzsche had an important influence on Freud vis-à-vis the genesis of *The Ego and the Id* and his new formulations of intrapsychic structures and the sense of guilt. It is naturally beyond the scope of the present work to provide a thorough analysis of Nietzsche’s thought on, for example, the Übermensch and morality. We shall deal here with main themes, as Freud incorporated them into his thinking. The parallels between the two are have been extensively documented

\(^{59}\) This triumph is most clearly visible in mania. S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.132.

\(^{60}\) Idem, p.131; M. Vansina, *Het super-ego*, pp.165-172.

\(^{61}\) S. Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.133.

\(^{62}\) *Group Psychology* can be seen as an important step towards the development of the second topic model in *The Ego and the Id*. That meant that the psychical apparatus was no longer predominantly described in terms of conscious, preconscious and unconscious systems or psychic representation and related effects, but instead the structural object relations become prominent. Here the Oedipus complex, identification and also the sense of guilt gain importance. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse*, p.189.
by others. At the same time, reconstruction provides insight into the roots of *The Ego and the Id* within Freud’s own work.

Incidentally, it is not always clear which of Nietzsche’s works Freud read himself or heard about through others, specifically from his followers. The fact is that many of his followers, for example Otto Rank, Sabine Spielrein, Alfred von Winterstein, Eduard Hitschmann, Viktor Tausk, and Lou Andreas-Salomé, were familiar with Nietzsche. Andreas-Salomé had known Nietzsche well and had also written a biography about him. Yet a problem for Freud was that not only did his faithful followers and sympathizers cite Nietzsche, but so did opponents such as Adler and Jung. Another, more profound reason for Freud’s circumspection with Nietzsche lay in his own recognition of similarities. The correspondence with Arnold Zweig provides a beautiful example of Freud’s anxiety to acknowledge Nietzsche’s profound influence upon him. Zweig wrote in December 1930 that he saw Freud as someone who had completed Nietzsche’s thinking. Psychoanalysis “reversed all values” which Nietzsche strove to plumb including the origin of moral concepts and tragedy, the scientific description of the human mind, the triumph over Christianity and the liberation of the repressed ascetic ideal. Freud reacted very guardedly. The article Zweig wanted to write on the affinity between Freud and Nietzsche would have to be written without any information from Freud himself.

The question here must chiefly be how Freud understood Nietzsche and how Nietzsche could have influenced Freud’s thinking. Such a reconstruction could begin with two Wednesday evenings in 1908 during which the third part of *On the Genealogy of Morality* and Nietzsche’s “autobiography” *Ecce Homo*.

---


64 It was Tausk who wrote in 1914: Nietzsche is the “only pre-psychoanalytic thinker” who in the art and content of his thought recognized the contours and intents of an affecitive constellation. V. Tausk, “Psychoanalyse der Philosophie und psychoanalytische Philosophie”, in *Gesammelte psychoanalytische und literarische Schriften*, H. Metzger (ed.), Medusa, Vienna, Berlin, 1983, pp.124-133 (127). Tausk argued here that Nietzsche not only defended a dualistic world view, but also explored the dynamics of repression. After all, a central theme in Nietzsche’s writings was the differentiation between repressed desires and the social and moral relations in civilized society. Also, Nietzsche had put forward the idea that the repressed desires actually form the foundation for repressing thought systems.

65 L. Andreas-Salomé, *Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken*, Insel, Frankfurt, 2000 (originally published in 1894). Andreas-Salomé approached Nietzsche’s work as a self-confession. She did so not only as a closed philosophical system, but as a reformulated result of self-analysis. In the Freud-Andreas-Salomé correspondence Nietzsche is not mentioned.

66 Adler was very impressed by Nietzsche’s thoughts on power; Jung called upon Nietzsche in his conflict with Freud in 1912. R. Lehrer, *Nietzsche’s Presence in Freud’s Life and Thought*, p.120. In 1926 Rank also called upon Nietzsche in his conflict with Freud.

were discussed. On the first of these two evenings, 1 April 1908, Hitschmann introduced *On the Genealogy of Morality*. He summarized the first two parts and subsequently read from and commented upon the third part on “ascetic ideals”. The discussion concentrated on Nietzsche’s person: there was a character hidden behind his work. After Adler had declared that he saw a strong affinity between Nietzsche and psychoanalysis, Freud remarked that he was not familiar with Nietzsche’s work – which was not entirely true – but had tried now and again to read him to no avail. He then made a remarkable statement: he assured his followers that Nietzsche had had no influence upon his thinking. He qualified this by saying that often when justifying a discovery or a new theory in the face of rejection by critics he discovered how he had come to a certain train of thought and upon which authorities he could thus rely. He subsequently pointed out that despite similarities with psychoanalytic ideas, Nietzsche had not identified a number of things, including the importance of infantile sexuality.

On the evening during which *Ecco Homo* was discussed, 28 October 1908, Freud reiterated the difficulty he had with Nietzsche precisely because he saw so many similarities with his own thinking and because the richness of Nietzsche’s ideas so overwhelmed him that he could get no further than repeatedly reading the same half page. On this evening his followers again linked Nietzsche’s character with all kinds of pathologies and Freud opined that Nietzsche’s enigmatic character was far from being fully understood. Freud’s interest here appeared chiefly to be in Nietzsche’s considerable ability for self-analysis. In this vein he observed that Nietzsche’s self-analysis was so fascinating because it resulted in an imperative. What Freud encountered in him was what he would later call a splitting between the ego and the ego ideal, between “is” and “ought” (a moral view). In addition, Nietzsche charted the deepest “instincts” through every psychic layer. Although Freud was not able to work this out further, we see here the first contours of a tripartite division: the “instincts”, “is” and “ought”.

This tripartite division is subsequently visible in the closing section of *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, in particular the final line of this case where the language is strongly reminiscent of the third part of Nietzsche’s *On the Genealogy of Morality* where he writes on ascetic ideals. Freud suddenly wrote about “asceticism” and an “ascetic personality”. This ascetic person is a

70 Through a *Leseverein* which he joined in his student years Freud had already become acquainted with some aspects of Nietzsche’s earlier writings. In 1900 Freud bought Nietzsche’s collected writings. G. Gödde, *Traditionslinien des “Unbewußten”*, p.111; P. Gay, *Freud*, p.45.
72 S. Freud, *Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis*, pp.248-249.
designation for one part of a trio. A person is composed of three personalities. There is an unconscious with repressed primal “evil” instincts. Then there are two preconscious parts between which consciousness fluctuates. The first preconscious part is the “official ego”. The other preconscious part is the “ascetic personality”, which primarily consists of reaction formation against unconscious urges. The ascetic person can thus also be traced back to the unconscious drives from which it was formed as a reaction. We see here Nietzschean vocabulary creeping into Freud’s text where the emphasis lies on what Nietzsche discovered through self-analysis.

On the Genealogy of Morality can be read as a continuous analysis and articulation of the tension between the deepest human motives (man as “predator”) and their repression. Originally there is predator man and his battle of person vs. person, self against the other. At a certain moment this battle is internalized and a mental conflict arises. There are instincts which at a given moment are no longer “discharged outwards”, but are curbed, turn inward and are “directed against the person themselves”. This is where Nietzsche located the genesis of “bad conscience”, in short, the tension between the most profound will (drive) and what Nietzsche then called an “ideal”, the self-imposed limitation which is also honoured by society as a whole. Man views his natural urge “angrily” and has created for himself an (ascetic) ideal against which he measures himself and which has split his mind. Now, the partition I cite here is not so clearly formulated by Nietzsche. It is evident that “the angry view” is a reaction to the original, natural cruel drives. At first sight it is less evident whether the angry view is actually directed at the drives or the conscious ego. The latter is the more obvious choice because the self-curtailment, the ideal that turns against the person themselves, “is” the cruel instinct (or a continuation of it) which in a civilized world insists on self-control. What is important here is that Freud read Nietzsche as an analyst of the mind and that he thus also had an eye for his description of man as a split being, a being in conflict. This is what comes through in the final section of the Rat Man case.


74 Idem, p.322. These Nietzschean ideas were elaborated by a follower of Freud’s, Leo Kaplan, in an article on the tragic hero. This hero met with disaster on account of his “bad conscience”, which stemmed from a sense of guilt because of sin. He also indicated that this conscience preserved parental character traits. L. Kaplan, “Der tragische Held und der Verbrecher. Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie des Tragischen”, in Imago 4 (1915-1916), pp.96-124.  

75 Incidentally, the Rat Man himself referred to Nietzsche in his therapy with Freud. He quoted from Jenseits von Gut und Böse to express his ambivalent feelings, his repressed feelings of hate and his sense of guilt. S. Freud, Notes upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis, p.184. Compare: F. Nietzsche, Jenseits von Gut und Böse, in Sämtliche Werke, Vol. 5, p.86.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

Today it seems obvious that Jones was correct that Nietzsche’s ideas on the bad conscience, i.e., the sense of guilt, resonate in *Totem and Taboo*. This position has much to recommend it, chiefly because Nietzsche also argues his case for the origins of bad conscience within a Darwinistic model of man evolving from predator to domesticated animal, from brutal egoist to compassionate altruist, and in addition sees the sense of guilt as the key to understanding culture. However, *Totem and Taboo* also presents problems regarding Nietzsche’s influence. The first of these is that there is not a single reference to Nietzsche. Even more important is the fact that the sense of guilt was an old topic for Freud, which could have developed with no influence from Nietzsche at all. In Freud the sense of guilt was primarily concerned with infantile desires and it was exactly that theme, so Freud said one evening in 1908, that Nietzsche ignored. The entire analysis of obsessional neurosis revolved around that point. Freud used obsessional neurosis as a model for his theories in *Totem and Taboo* and his speculations regarding what actually happened in humankind’s infancy.77

There is however, as Jones thought, a certain effect of Nietzsche’s bad conscience on Freud’s sense of guilt. In my opinion, however, it was only after the introduction of the term narcissism that Freud reached a true synthesis. When Freud equated the primal father with the *Übermensch* in *Group Psychology* he not only preserved the character of the *Übermensch* but also inserted it into a primal myth of patricide. In other words, Nietzsche’s influence on Freud’s thought regarding the sense of guilt is only visible after the introduction of narcissism, the theory of the ego and ego ideal, and the tension between them. I believe that this effect is also found in the problems surrounding the inheritance of phylogenetic material. Nietzsche too wrote about a kind of inheritance of a bad conscience down through history. This inheritance must certainly not be thought of as biological. He emphasized heavily that the bad conscience was repeatedly an individual reaction to drives considered to be bad.78

After those Wednesday evenings in 1908 Nietzsche became the most studied and cited philosopher among Freud’s followers. As summarized by Tausk, Nietzsche was “the only pre-psychoanalytic thinker”.79 Freud himself kept his distance, but in the years following the publication of *Totem and Taboo* we see that Nietzsche did indeed play a role in the introduction of the concept of narcissism. Via Näcke and Rank we have already discovered a line in which Nietzsche also played a role: the narcissist, the egoist as *Übermensch*.

---


77 We could say here that Nietzsche and Freud held different views on the origin of bad conscience or the sense of guilt. According to Nietzsche, bad conscience is the result of the internalization of aggression due to a lack of enemies or conflict. F. Nietzsche, *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, p.323.

78 Idem, pp.270ff.

The ego and the ego ideal are central to Freud’s theory of narcissism. That ego ideal is a yardstick used to measure the ego. Simultaneously, that ideal is the condition for the repression of drives. The ego ideal is a narcissistic ideal, a self-image that is both a critical agency and prevents the ego from being overrun by the drives. We could say that here Freud picked up the thread of the closing section of the Rat Man case where he formulated in thinly disguised Nietzschean terms a careful tripartite division of the mental apparatus. That Nietzsche played a background role is even more clear when we realize that Freud introduced that ideal in On Narcissism from an exchange with Adler and his exegesis of Nietzsche’s “will to power”.

In short, Freud probably borrowed the term ego ideal from Nietzsche’s ideas on the ascetic ideal and indicated as much with the differentiation between the ego and the ego ideal after Nietzsche’s division of “is” and “ought”, between ego and ideal. We can now extend this line of thought to one of Freud’s most important works, The Ego and the Id. In that study Freud developed a tripartite division of the mental apparatus, a new division into ego, id and superego, but also a division whose contours we recognize from the Rat Man case. The ego is indeed not a new concept; the id (Es) and the superego (Über-Ich) are, however. These two new concepts both betray Nietzsche’s influence.

Freud himself stated emphatically that he borrowed the concept of the id from Georg Groddeck, who in turn had taken it from Nietzsche. We could ask ourselves why he explicitly mentioned this. In Groddeck’s Das Buch vom Es we find no references to Nietzsche. Moreover, the term “id” is not easy to find in Nietzsche’s work. Why then does Freud refer to Nietzsche?

In 1917 the amateur psychoanalyst Groddeck contacted Freud because he thought that he saw certain similarities between his ideas about the id and Freud’s unconscious. To Freud, however, he was a wild analyst whom he preferred to keep at a distance, also because Groddeck’s ideas bore strong similarities to those of Jung and Adler. Yet the correspondence continued. The situation changed when Freud re-examined his terminology: unconscious, preconscious and conscious are phenomenological terms which were no longer sufficient for Freud’s new classification. He postulated an ego and a repressed component which was split from the ego. These overlap and the ego is thus also partly unconscious. Freud

---

80 S. Freud, On Narcissism, pp.93-94.
81 Idem, p.92, p.99.
82 The concept of “ideal” as indicating an inner psychic standard only gained importance in Freudian vocabulary after 1908 (after the Nietzsche evenings), notably from On Narcissism onwards.
83 S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.23.
84 G. Groddeck, Das Buch vom Es. Psychoanalytische Briefe an eine Freundin, Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig, Vienna, Zurich, 1926, pp.10-11. Groddeck defined the id as the “unknown” which “ruled everything man does and happened to him”.
86 S. Freud, G. Groddeck, Briefwechsel, pp.11ff.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

wanted to name the split, repressed part the id. Thus although Freud borrowed the
term, he certainly did not borrow Groddeck’s theory. When Groddeck reacted to
*The Ego and the Id* in May 1923, he compared reading the book to which he had
contributed to ploughing a rocky field. He thus revealed his disappointment, not
only because Freud sought to credit Nietzsche, but also because Freud’s id meant
something completely different from his own.87

There are two reasons why Freud borrowed this term. He cited Nietzsche
because he thought his term matched Nietzsche’s ideas on the repressed instincts,
from which an ideal could emerge that would subsequently be used against the
instincts. Conceptualized within my hypothesis, Freud wrote at the end of the
Rat Man case in Nietzschean terms about another kind of division within the
unconscious, preconscious and conscious, and when the last of these then came
under fire the Nietzsche-inspired division came to the fore. That is the first reason
for the reference to Nietzsche.88 The second reason dovetails immediately with
the first: in 1913 Hitschmann wrote an article in *Imago* on the unconscious in
philosophy. He cited Nietzsche’s adage *Es denkt in mir*, an adage in which the
id expresses what Schopenhauer called *Wille* and in psychoanalysis is referred to
as the unconscious. The link between the id and the unconscious was thus also
established by one of Freud’s followers before Groddeck dealt with the issue.89

In *Group Psychology* Freud had proposed that the tension between the ego and
the ego ideal was the sense of guilt. He incorporated Nietzsche’s ideas on the
bad conscience into the definition of this tension. The parallels are manifest.90
According to Nietzsche, a bad conscience stemmed from the “evil” instincts
which are no longer directed at other people, but are internalized and cause conflict
between the instincts and the struggle against them by the conscience which had
set up “negative ideals”. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche succinctly summarized: the
conscience is the cruel instinct that turns against the person itself when it can no
longer be discharged in the outside world.91 This intrinsic indulgence of cruelty
against oneself signifies an abandonment of an expression of the instinctive to
the outside world. In other words, this internalization is “unegoistic”. One’s own
instincts are now examined critically. One might ask why an individual would
permit this kind of self-curtailment. However, Nietzsche saw the negative ideal,

88 An indication of this interest in Nietzsche is a short passage in *A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-
analysis* from 1917 where Freud argues that “the ego is not master in its own house”, referring to
Schopenhauer and “famous philosophers” who could be cited as “forerunners” of this idea. It is
most likely that Nietzsche is included here. S. Freud, *A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis, SE
XVII*, p.143. In his 1924 autobiographical study Freud mentioned Schopenhauer and Nietzsche in
one breath as important forerunners on key issues in psychoanalysis. S. Freud, *An Autobiographical
Study*, pp.59-60.
89 E. Hitschmann, “Schopenhauer. Versuch einer Psychoanalyse des Philosophen”, in *Imago* 2 (1913),
the ascetic ideal, also as a protective instinct aimed at staying alive. The repression of the instincts made it possible to conserve life. The ascetic ideal was not conscious; it was an “unconscious imperative” and the ideal’s struggle against the instincts was an unconscious conflict. A bad conscience, the tension between these two, was thus also an unconscious sense of guilt. But that unconscious conflict did ensure that via that self-curtailment a bourgeois moral illusion arose which raised humankind to a higher level. Put another way, the domesticated was elevated above the predator. Freud recognized in Nietzsche elements such as the double character of the conscience, that on the one hand it could rage mercilessly against the ego and on the other simultaneously be embraced as protection against destructive drives, the elaboration of the aggression against oneself, and the linking of the bad conscience (unconscious feelings of guilt) with cultural history.

In The Ego and the Id Freud introduced the term superego (Über-Ich) to replace the ego ideal. This new term permitted him to demonstrate a clearer link with the ego and the largely unconscious character of the superego. The term ideal always suggested a distance vis-à-vis the ego. In addition, for Freud this term was originally strongly linked to a divided bourgeois morality. It is for this very reason that the term was no longer sufficient: the superego was extremely internal. That Über-Ich also evoked two important reminiscences. The first association was with the Übermoral of the neurotic. Freud had labelled this morality an excessively critical conscience par excellence which is additionally strengthened by cultural morality. The other association was that with the word Übermensch. I believe this association was consciously evoked by Freud. He wanted to confirm the link to narcissism, which is exactly what the association with the Übermensch achieved. In addition, if we also assume that his ego ideal was also a reference to Nietzsche, this link is all the more clear.

We have now extensively examined the influence of Nietzsche’s ideas on Freud. The importance of this analysis was not to demonstrate a factual relationship between Nietzsche and Freud, but chiefly to show what Freud took from Nietzsche in order to support the core of his own vision. That core is man as a being in conflict whereby that conflict is not only an inner conflict between drives and repressed mechanisms. It was indeed in Nietzsche that Freud also found a link with culture and with authority figures who could be internalized via identification. The tensions people have as beings in conflict were classified by Nietzsche in terms of a sense of guilt (“bad conscience”). That sense of guilt was a key for both

---

92 Sein Nein, das er zum Leben spricht, bringt wie durch ein Zauber eine Fülle zarterer Ja’s an’s Licht. F. Nietzsche, Zur Genealogie der Moral, p.367.
93 Idem, p.400.
94 Notably in “Civilized” Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness Freud had used the term “ideal” to describe the cultural ideal of marriage and the related repression of sexual instincts. Here the term “ideal” was thus solely associated with an outside ideal, not with an inner narcissistic ideal.
95 Freud used the term Übermoral in Totem and Taboo when discussing the analogy between obsessional neurosis and primitive man and establishing a connection between what he called psychical reality and historical reality. S. Freud, Totem and Taboo, 160.
Nietzsche and Freud in order to fathom the individual and culture as well as to link the two. What is important here is that both assumed that “good” was not innate. It must thus be developed, transferred or called forth, but because it is never a given, the sense of guilt remains a dominating factor. People can never meet the demands placed on them. By appealing to Nietzsche, Freud was able to emphasize this as central to his work.

6.7 Towards an unconscious sense of guilt

Freud began The Ego and the Id with a succinct reiteration of earlier material. He derived the unconscious, preconscious and conscious from his clinical experience demonstrating the existence of resistance and repression. In a subsequent step, he analysed the ego to which consciousness is connected, which represses and resists the return of the repressed. In this way the ego was linked to consciousness, the repressed and the unconscious. The problem now was that the ego was not conscious of this resistance and it was thus clear that it must be partially unconscious. It is with this observation in mind that he now reformulated his model of the psychical apparatus.

The ego is partially conscious and partially unconscious. In order to chart which part of the ego could be unconscious, Freud posed the question of what it meant when something (in the ego) becomes conscious. That process took place via the preconscious: unconscious (or preconscious) ideas can become conscious when they are able to link to word presentations. These word presentations are the remains of memories of what was once perceived consciously (expressed in language). If an idea wants to become conscious, it must be converted into a word presentation, into language.

But how did this relate to pleasure and displeasure or to the affective charge which is coupled to an idea? Like energy, feelings of displeasure want to be drained off and thus become insistent (are pushed up). Freud thought these feelings of displeasure could also become conscious if they could be converted into word presentations. However, repression disconnects affect and representation. This meant that not every affect could automatically be translated into a word presentation. Feelings of displeasure can thus be insistent without the ego being conscious of this insistance. That meant that there can be unconscious feelings in the sense Freud reiterated in The Unconscious: an affect is uncoupled from the original idea and is either repressed or converted into another affect.


97 S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.19.

98 Idem, pp.20f.
The core of the ego is preconscious and is composed of the system of word presentations that plays an intermediary role between the internal and external worlds. From this definition of the ego Freud then introduced the id: reasoning from the outside in, the ego merges into the id. The id is certainly unconscious and is composed largely of repressed material. It is spurred on by the drives and guided by the pleasure principle. Freud compared the relationship of the ego and id with the well-known image of the horse and rider: the id hurries along and the ego has no choice but to remain sitting and convert the id’s “will” into a action which it claims as its own.

The ego can be differentiated from the id not only by virtue of the word-presentations. Freud had argued earlier that the ego was a narcissistic construction. It can be viewed as “another object” with a physical surface. The ego as physical surface is moreover symptomatic (and that is reminiscent of hysteria). In other words, the core of the human psyche is the id from which the ego emerges as its surface.

In chapter one we saw how Freud described the ego as a moral character which offered resistance to pressing morally, unwanted drives. In *The Ego and the Id* the ego also stood for civilization. It represented “reason and common sense”. We have already seen that that must also be ascribed to moral character. By bringing up for discussion the difference between the unconscious and the conscious in relation to repression and the ego Freud now also sought to discuss the moral consequences. If the ego is also partly unconscious or preconscious, then it is no longer plausible for the higher social and moral convictions, judgments and assessments to be located in consciousness. The idea that the unconscious is linked to lower, immoral drives and that consciousness is linked to higher values – Freud speaks of “scale of values” – must be jettisoned. It appears as if once again Nietzsche is in the background contributing to his critique of the value of moral stands.

This is the moment for Freud to discuss “unconscious sense of guilt”. Conscience, which is generally seen as a higher mental function (compare for example Meynert’s Darwinistic argument or the bourgeois society as ideal in Krafft-Ebing’s work), largely works unconsciously. The most important example of this is a patient’s resistance in analysis. That resistance is, after all, extraordinarily powerful without the person being conscious of it. The unconscious sense of guilt “plays a decisive economic part” in a great number of neuroses “and puts the

---

100 Idem, p.25.
101 In other words, the ego cannot merely be seen as a modification of the id “by the influence of the perceptional system, the representative in the mind of the external world”. Idem, p.28.
103 S. Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.25.
105 Idem, p.27.
most powerful obstacles in the way of recovery”. Thus: “Also what is highest in
the ego can be unconscious”. Likewise the reverse, the most conscious part of
the ego is its surface, its corporality (“body-ego”), and that is traditionally not the
most highly elevated part of mankind. Here Freud articulated his Umwertung aller
Werten, his version of a transvaluation of all values. We can elucidate this by means
of hysteria. The hysterical is no longer a consciously moral person who resists urges,
but the physical symptoms are conscious, symptoms of the unconscious sense of
guilt. We are no longer dealing with a conscious struggle against drives, but with
an unconscious will which wants to express itself anyway it can. It was thus via
the unconscious sense of guilt that Freud came to discuss the superego.107

6.8 The Oedipus complex and the superego

In the third chapter of The Ego and the Id Freud discussed the relationship
between the ego and the superego. The superego was primarily part of the ego.108
Freud had in fact already recognized this in his analysis of melancholia where
he emphasized the analysis of self-reproach by a critical apparatus in the person
acting against the person. A general theory was the result. Objects are libidinously
occupied proceeding from the id. When those objects must be given up or are lost
they are re-established through identification in the ego. Freud formulated this
even more clearly: identification is the precondition under which the id surrenders
its objects.109 The ego forces itself on the id as a love object and only then is the
id ready to surrender all kinds of (partial) objects and embrace the ego as a love
object. In narcissism the drives are bound for the first time and, as Freud also
wrote, sublimated, for the ego is a love object, not an object for direct sexual
satisfaction.110

Based on these ideas about narcissism and identification Freud reasoned the
existence of the superego. In Group Psychology he wrote that primary identification
is older than the first object choice. In The Ego and the Id, Freud did not further
comment on what preceded what: identification and object choice existed side by
side, but when the sexual desires for the mother become stronger (the perspective
here is that of a young boy), the father is experienced as a hindrance. This is how
the Oedipus complex came into being: identification with the father takes on a

106 Idem.
107 Laplanche and Pontalis have shown that Freud’s elaborations of the unconscious sense of guilt are
a crucial step in the thought process towards the concept of superego. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis,
Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse, p.472.
108 The superego is primarily regarded as a “grade in the ego”. S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.28. Here
we find the reason why the text is called “The Ego and the Id”, and not “The Ego, the Superego and
the Id”. The ego includes the superego. On the superego see M. Vansina, Het super-ego, chapter 6;
109 S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.29.
110 Idem, p.46.
hostile tone and the desire arises to kill him in order to be able to take his place with the mother.\textsuperscript{111}

In order to conquer this Oedipus complex, the mother as a sexual object must be given up. Put another way, the child is confronted with the fact that the love for one parent is not exclusively reciprocated. The child must then abandon his Oedipal desires: the Oedipus complex is fundamentally about an “internal impossibility”.\textsuperscript{112} The (sexual) object choices of the Oedipus complex are surrendered and replaced by identifications. There are two possibilities: the boy identifies with his mother or identifies even more strongly with the father. We have already encountered the notion that a boy can also identify with his mother in the Wolf Man case. We now find material from that case in a new definition of the Oedipus complex. It is not only an ambivalent emotional attitude vis-à-vis the father and mother as first object choices (positive Oedipus complex), it is also (and simultaneously) a feminine attitude as regards the father and a jealous, hostile attitude as regards the mother (negative Oedipus complex).\textsuperscript{113} The relationship between these identifications and object choices is individually determined. The outcome is more or less clear: a predominantly positive complex results in heterosexual object choices and a predominantly negative complex in homosexual choices.\textsuperscript{114} More important than this outcome here is that the “two identifications [with the mother and the father, H.W.] in some way united with each other” are reflected in the ego.\textsuperscript{115} These identifications set themselves up as the superego as distinct from the other contents of the ego.

These identifications are the enduring results of the Oedipus complex, whereby initial object choices must be surrendered. These identifications form the core of the superego’s commandments and prohibitions. It is from there that Freud could now assert that the superego was a “residue of the earliest object-choices of the id”.\textsuperscript{116} Yet the superego is simultaneously also a reaction formation against these choices. The reinforced identification resulting from the complete Oedipus complex is now expressed as a superego commandment: “you ought to be like this (like your father)”. Simultaneously, the superego always recalls that the mother as

\textsuperscript{111} Idem, pp.31-32. Laplanche and Pontalis define the Oedipus complex as ensemble organisé de désirs amoureux et hostiles que l’enfant éprouve à l’égard de ses parents. J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse, p.79. We should also note here that although the Oedipus complex is clearly gaining in importance in Freud’s second topic model, and indeed becomes the “nuclear complex” of psychoanalysis, Freud never provided a systematic outline of the concept. Its function, though, seems to be clear and is twofold: identity formation and drive regulation. In other words, it has a “humanizing” function. Ph. van Haute, P. Verhaeghe, Voorbij Oedipus? Twee psychoanalytische verhandelingen over het oedipuscomplex, Uitgeverij Boom, Amsterdam, 2006, pp.13-14, p.60, p.78.

\textsuperscript{112} S. Freud, The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex, SE XIX, p.173.

\textsuperscript{113} S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.33.

\textsuperscript{114} See A. de Block, P. Moyaert, “Freuds theorie van de mannelijke homosexualiteit”, in Tijdschrift voor Psychoanalyse 7 (2001/2), pp.64-75.

\textsuperscript{115} S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.34.

\textsuperscript{116} Idem.
object choice has been surrendered and will remain so. The boy may not take the father’s place with her: “you may not be like this (like your father)”.

This outcome of the Oedipus complex is nothing other than its repression. After all, identification with the father as a hindrance to the mother as object choice also means the introjection of that hindrance. The ego is strengthened in its resistance to the pressing id. The superego preserves the father’s character: the stronger the Oedipus complex, the stronger its repression and the superego. That superego then dominates as unconscious sense of guilt over the ego, as a “categorical imperative”. With this definition that the superego— which has arisen via identification — rules as an unconscious sense of guilt, Freud’s old question as to the origin of the sense of guilt appears to have been answered: it emanates from identification with parents. This possible conclusion had barely seen the light of day before it was once again questioned by Freud. No, the superego and the unconscious sense of guilt appeared to be even older than the Oedipus complex as they were also related to the id and cultural history.

Freud himself indicated that the attention he was now paying to the higher, moral aspects of humanity was not new. According to him, “the moral and aesthetic trends in the ego” had always been recognized. Indeed, we discovered this in chapter one. It was, however, never his intention to develop a philosophical system in which moral judgements also had a place. Yet only now would Freud give that “higher” aspect a name. It is the superego, “the representative of our relation to our parents”. You could say that with this the definition matches that of the ego: the superego should then be nothing more than a representation of a part of the external world within the mind. However, Freud also wanted to claim the opposite: the superego is very near the id to which it is bound by narcissism. It is an “expression of the most powerful impulses and most important libidinal vicissitudes of the id”. In order to support his ideas about the superego, Freud now also included the cultural-historical inheritance whose content determined the superego’s commandments and prohibitions. Freud sought to link this to Totem and Taboo where he speculated about the inheritance of the sense of guilt from the primal sons without degenerating into Jungian teachings regarding the archaic remains in the soul. The superego is not only a strict, individual response to the earliest ties to parents, but repeatedly absorbed into cultural patterns which are somehow mirrored in the id. Given that the id cannot perceive anything, but consists of drives stemming from physical stimulae and these are seeking a way

\[\text{idem.}\]

\[\text{On this see Ph. van Haute, “Michel Foucault: de psychoanalyse en de wet”, in Tijdschrift voor Filosofie 55 (1993/3), pp.449-471 (459-462).}\]

\[\text{S. Freud, The Ego and the Id, p.35.}\]

\[\text{idem, pp.35ff.}\]

\[\text{idem, p.35.}\]

\[\text{idem, p.36.}\]

\[\text{On this see M. Vansina, Het super-ego, pp.236-238.}\]

199
out via the pleasure principle, the idea that there is phylogenetic material locked up within is hardly conceivable. Freud later argued that the child does not identify with the parents (as model), but more precisely with their superegos which in turn are also based on identification. There is thus a chain of identifications that together form a “tradition” of values that have been passed on from generation to generation. This is certainly a more convincing idea.

Freud did not want to stress this problem too much at that time, as is clear. With the reference to *Totem and Taboo* Freud wanted to establish that the superego not only maintained close ties to the id, but simultaneously represented that which was “higher” in man throughout history. It is the carrier of religiosity, of morality or social feeling.

The point of departure was and remained that of the id which, as a reservoir of life and death drives, was the source of object relations in the form of object choices and identifications. Narcissism and the Oedipus complex are the fundamental determinants of the superego. The reference to *Totem and Taboo* was an attempt to show that the superego was not only meant to be a repressive power against the id, but also that the drives can be cast in a concrete, “ideal” form. The superego was not only formed externally against the id, it is also the representative of the id. It is the concrete form in which the drives can find satisfaction, the welcome inner norm that defends from being overwhelmed by the id, the safeguard of the individual’s “independence and originality”.

The reference to *Totem and Taboo*, and thus also to the primal father whom he called the Übermensch, also made the relationship between the Übermensch and the superego more clear. The superego was not only representative of the identification with one’s own father, the construction of the superego also constantly preserved that what was stored in the id: the continued effect of the murder of the Übermensch. Freud wrote of a “cross-inheritance” of cultural-historical material within the superego. In *Totem and Taboo* he specifically meant the sense of guilt which, originating in a primal crime, is capable of affecting thousands of years and surviving in generations who have no knowledge of the deed. Evidently there is continuity in emotional life; Freud now called that emotional life the id and considered it a supra-individual idea.

From this point onward we shall concentrate on the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* Freud once again redefined that concept as the tension between the ego and the superego. By this Freud meant the “normal, conscious sense of guilt

---

126 In fact, this recalls an old notion in Freud’s thought. We have already seen (in chapter 1) that enforced morality could not sufficiently explain unpleasure or the sense of guilt. If the libido were strong enough, morality could be overcome. This old clinical idea is reflected in Freud’s formulations of the origin of the superego.
127 Idem, p.37.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

It is thus actually the sense of guilt which can be defined as “the expression of a condemnation of the ego by its critical agency”. It is naturally the ego that experiences this condemnation as a sense of guilt. The analyses of obsessional neurotics and melancholics have already demonstrated the severity of this conscience and the power of the sense of guilt. That conscience, the guardian of commandments and prohibitions of the conscience, functions as the superego’s moral censor. The tension between the stimulations of the conscience and the ego’s performance is the “normal, conscious sense of guilt”. This tension is merely a partial explanation for the sense of guilt. Freud’s point, however, was that a great deal of the sense of guilt must be traced back to the id-superego relationship. In fact, the unconscious sense of guilt (that had indicated the unconscionssness of the superego in the first place) was the key to understanding this relationship between superego and id.

6.9 Unconscious sense of guilt

As part of the ego, the superego is rooted in narcissism and as such is also the successor, the residue, of the libidinous occupation of the drives. It is also, by extension, the “heir to the Oedipus complex”. Further speculation regarding inherited phylogenetic material and supra-individual sense of guilt did not take place. For Freud it was clear that the sense of guilt primarily arose as an effect of the Oedipus complex, that is to say from the first object choices of the id. There was thus a close relationship between the id and superego formation, and the unconscious sense of guilt was the key to understanding this relationship.

In The Ego and the Id, Freud tried anew to make the connection to clinical experience and he did so via the so-called “negative therapeutic reaction”. This reaction consists of an exacerbation of complaints and symptoms when the therapist indicates that the treatment has made progress. Something within the patient resists getting better. The need to be sick exceeds the desire to be healthy. Freud called this reaction “a ‘moral’ factor, a sense of guilt, which is finding its satisfaction in the illness and refuses to give up the punishment of suffering”. This unconscious sense of guilt has a special character: after all, it doesn’t make one feel guilty, just sick. “This sense of guilt is dumb” (stumm); it only expresses

---

128 Idem, pp.50-51.
129 Idem, p.51.
130 Idem, p.36, p.48.
131 Idem, pp.49-50. See J. Laplanche, J.-B. Pontalis, Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse, pp.388-390. Clinical experience also demonstrated that although Oedipal desires could be reconstructed, they were generally unconscious and remained repressed. The sense of guilt was then clinical proof that there is powerful resistance to certain ideas. In “A Child is Being Beaten” Freud reconstructed similar Oedipal desires when he attempted to answer the question of how desire and pain were linked. The sense of guilt was evidently a powerful repressive factor, but simultaneously also an expression of the repressed material.

201
itself negatively.\textsuperscript{132} It is only with difficulty that this can be made conscious.\textsuperscript{133} Seen clinically, this unconscious sense of guilt is the best evidence for the close connection between the id and the superego. Incidentally, it is partly also an expression of the tension between the ego and the superego, but here it is clear that the superego knows more about the id than the ego does. Thus it is possible for the superego to pass critical judgment without the ego even knowing about it: normal man is “not only far more immoral than he believes but also far more moral than he knows”.\textsuperscript{134}

Freud did not want to approach the unconscious sense of guilt which makes one sick from obsessional neuroses and melancholia, but from the other great neurosis: hysteria.\textsuperscript{135} The hysterical ego represses with all its power every painful apperception the critical superego sends its way. The ego keeps every reference to a sense of guilt at a distance. This repressed sense of guilt builds up unconsciously and can lead to hysteria. This means nothing other than that the ego represses the superego (or part of it) and the id. The word presentations in the superego can be made conscious but the affective charge cannot. It is pushed even further into the id from which it originally came (causing physical complaints through conversion). Here we see the close relationship between the id and the superego applied: the ideas in the superego are internalized externally via identification, but the affective charge stems directly from the id. Put more concretely, we are dealing with the destructive components of the drives which are directed at the ego through the superego. The superego’s severity and strictness is derived from the drives. The more severe the criticism, the greater is the sense of guilt, which is either perceived by the ego or repressed with all its strength.\textsuperscript{136}

The question remains as to the means by which the ego actually is able to repress. For Freud, the ego could only defend itself or absorb things into itself.


\textsuperscript{133} It was indeed clear to Freud that therapeutic success was largely dependent upon the analysis of this sense of guilt. If a therapist fell into the trap of being equated with the ego ideal, the chances were quite high that the sense of guilt would only be strengthened.

\textsuperscript{134} Idem, p.52. Freud later returned to this problem in 1937 with \textit{Analysis Terminable and Interminable}. The sense of guilt and the need for punishment must be localized in the tension between the ego and the superego, he wrote then, “but this is only the portion of it which is, as it were, psychically bound by the superego and thus becomes recognizable”. In addition, Freud maintained, it must be assumed that part of the sense of guilt is a direct expression of the death drive. \textit{Beyond the Pleasure Principle} and \textit{The Ego and the Id} thus meet: the negative therapeutic reaction presumes a sense of guilt and/or a need for punishment which is partly a direct expression of the death drive and partially an expression of the tension between the ego and the superego whereby the latter “knows” about the most deeply repressed and forbidden desires. S. Freud, \textit{Analysis Terminable and Interminable}, \textit{SE XXIII}, pp.242-243.

\textsuperscript{135} S. Freud, \textit{The Ego and the Id}, pp.51-53.

\textsuperscript{136} This is the first time since the Dora case that Freud discussed the mechanisms involved in hysteria. In fact, the old intuition of the moral character of hysterical patients is repeated here: the stronger the superego, the moral unconsciousness, the stronger the repression.
Chapter 6. Analyses of the ego

The ego perceives that which comes at it from the id as a danger which causes it to reflexively retreat into a defensive position. Anxiety is the expression of this. That anxiety, Freud believed, has castration anxiety at its core, that is to say, fear of losing loved ones (the parents). The ego will always hold onto its narcissistic ideal of being loved as an object. Fear of losing loved ones is the reverse of this. That fear is generally strengthened in neuroses by the sense of guilt. Freud expressed the tension between self-regard and the sense of guilt here in terms of fear: when the sense of guilt becomes stronger, self-regard decreases and fear increases.

In the preceding chapters we have seen how Freud repeatedly sought to chart the human mind via the analysis of the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* as well, it is ultimately the unconscious sense of guilt that is the key to insight into the close connection between the id and the superego, the two great powers of the mind, in between which the passive ego may have the illusion of control. Where in *Totem and Taboo* Freud saw the sense of guilt as the key to understanding culture and to fathoming the categorical imperative, now individual sense of guilt also became the key to comprehension of the id’s amoral drives and the superego’s morality. Yet simultaneously this was also the limit of the analysis, literally, for he had to recognize that an analysis of unconscious sense of guilt was often impossible. After all, its source (the death drive) was “dumb” in a “talking cure”. It was thus the final clinical proof of repressed drives which remain repressed.

6.10 The problem of masochism

Within the superego the death drives, the destructive components of the drive, are piled up and directed against the ego. Of course Freud had always spoken about a sadistic component to the drive, but it followed from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id* that that component was masochistic in nature. The death drive was destructive to the ego and could be converted only later into sadism towards objects.

Freud thus also returned to masochism, which required clarification again. The result was *The Economic Problem of Masochism*. Here he differentiated three forms of masochism: erotogenic, feminine and moral. The first was “extremely obscure” and also the most fundamental (primary masochism). Here, the death drive was supposed to be the source for pleasure in pain. How the death drive, which is directed at an inorganic condition, can be bound and libidinously occupied is a mystery. That appeared to be paradoxical and he thus presumed that the largest

---

137 Idem, p.57.
138 Compare S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.167. Freud wrote that the superego can be labelled an individual “categorical imperative”. Once again we find here the suggestion (but no more than that) of a link between phylogenesis and ontogenesis.
part of the death drive is not so bound.¹⁴⁰ No matter how enigmatic this form of masochism may be, Freud recognized its processing in oral fantasies of being eaten, in the sadistic-anal fantasy of being beaten, and in the Oedipal castration complex; the actual death drive remained dumb.¹⁴¹ “Pleasure in pain” also formed the immediate basis for feminine masochism.¹⁴² By this he understood, in fact, masochism in a narrow sense, one in which pleasure in pain is experienced in masochistic fantasies and desires related to others. He paid hardly any attention to this masochism. His attention was – as ours is – focused on the third form: moral masochism.¹⁴³ In other words, he did not focus on the type of masochism that would incite further speculations on the dumb death drive, but instead he concentrated on the type of masochism in which the sense of guilt was the dominant issue.

According to Freud, moral masochism was quite common. The emphasis here thus lay completely on suffering itself; in it the link with sexuality has become looser. Just as in the feminine form, this form of masochism is secondary, that is, sadism is “once more introjected” as regression to its earlier situation.¹⁴⁴ In order to come to grips with this masochism, he returned to clinical experience: an unconscious sense of guilt is the strongest hindrance to getting well. A person does not want to stop being ill. This unconscious sense of guilt wants to be satisfied and that is accomplished through suffering. It wants to be pacified, as we have seen with the Wolf Man. Instead of an unconscious sense of guilt, Freud now wrote of a “need for punishment” (Strafbedürfnis).¹⁴⁵ This need must not be confused with the (ordinary) sense of guilt. In an obsessional neurotic’s “excessive morality” the emphasis lies on a heightened sadism of the superego, while in the need for punishment the emphasis is on the ego’s masochism.¹⁴⁶ The latter is thus not characterized by an internalized hate of a parental figure, but here we are dealing with regression. Pleasure is experienced in the pain inflicted on the ego. In the passive position, the masochist identifies with the mother. Here we can think of the Wolf Man who in his masochism sought a sexual relationship with his father. In that case Freud discovered that the Wolf Man also sought mitigation of his feelings of guilt in punishment. That idea is picked up here anew: moral masochism in

¹⁴⁰ S. Freud, *The Economic Problem of Masochism*, p.164. According to Freud this is indeed an assumption, for the life and death drives can never be encountered in a pure form. They are always fused and amalgamated. See also J.-M. Quinodoz, *Reading Freud*, p.214.

¹⁴¹ In 1941 Reik wrote that Freud’s attempt to trace masochism back to the death drive was a long shot that failed to hit its target, but nevertheless also Freud’s best shot. It was after all the only way to explain the obscure origins of masochism. Vice versa however, this “origin” could not explain the exact emergence of primary masochism, namely in the libidinal binding of the death drive. Th. Reik, *Aus Leiden Freuden. Masochismus und Gesellschaft*, Fischer, Frankfurt, 1983, p.45, p.51.


¹⁴⁵ Idem, p.166.

fact arises from an emancipation of the sense of guilt which must be salved by punishment.

The moral masochist has a need to be punished which can now be satisfied by the superego (as a substitute for the parents). Although in both obsessional neurotic morality as well as moral masochism we are dealing with a strict superego directed against the ego, these must be differentiated, albeit that this is difficult for two reasons. Firstly, both are (at least partly) expressions of the death drive which is first manifest as primary masochism, then as hate and sadism towards others, then again by regression as secondary masochism. Secondly, the consequences of both an excessive morality and moral masochism are the same: the repression of the drives, which is also demanded by civilization, results in a strengthening of the sense of guilt and of the conscience.

It appears here that this moral masochism can be translated as melancholia. Yet there was a reason why Freud reserved self-reproach for melancholia and the need for punishment for masochism. Melancholia revolves around the loss of a reprehensible love object. The relationship with a specific loved one is here determinative. In moral masochism it does not matter where the punishment comes from. The ego does not need a loved one, nor the loss thereof. For Freud, melancholia is a variant of obsessional neurosis: sadism is directed towards the ego.

Strictly speaking, we must now also differentiate the need for punishment in moral masochism from the unconscious sense of guilt that was discussed in *The Ego and the Id*. The need for punishment in moral masochism can be traced back to the (negative) Oedipal desire to be beaten by one’s father and take the mother’s place as the father’s sexual object – the unconscious sense of guilt that Freud chiefly linked with hysteria in *The Ego and the Id*. That unconscious sense of guilt also seeks satisfaction of a need for punishment, indeed for the Oedipal, hateful desires towards a loved one or for shortcomings regarding a loved one. It is noteworthy that in *A Short Account of Psychoanalysis* Freud referred to Elisabeth von R.’s pain and her (unconscious) sense of guilt which arose at her sister’s deathbed on account of her desire to marry her brother-in-law. She repressed this immoral desire powerfully which Freud, in this 1924 retrospective, linked with the Oedipus complex as the primal model of mental conflict. Only now, so many years later, could Freud provide some clarification of the hysteria and the conversion of a mental conflict into physical pain. There is an unconscious sense of guilt which seeks satisfaction through punishment. Elisabeth von R. is a splendid example of this. She suffered unconsciously from desires which were repressed and showed the external world a strong moral character. And yet that moral character was only the external side: her superego accused her unconscious and made her ill.

---

6.11 Conclusion

At the end of two chapters full of theoretical renovations, yet simultaneously also a strong reprise of earlier ideas, we have seen how the sense of guilt repeatedly appears. The most important reason for this was that the analysis of the sense of guilt brought underlying mental structures and conflicts to light. By analyzing the sense of guilt in obsessional neurosis, melancholia, masochism and hysteria, Freud repeatedly ran into elements of that conflict in their specific constellation, but also in what they shared in common, such as with the Wolf Man. In the wake of these analyses, Freud now also sought to differentiate the sense of guilt: there is an element of self-reproach in melancholia; there is a sense of guilt when the (conscious) conscience conflicts with the ego; there is a need for punishment and there is an unconscious sense of guilt that shows how closely id and superego are related.

It was in his analysis of melancholia that Freud first established a link between self-reproach and identification with a love object based on his ideas on narcissism. Freud subsequently elaborated this identification in *The Ego and the Id* and he linked it firmly to the Oedipus complex, a complex that was for him always linked to the sense of guilt. By concentrating on identification and the Oedipus complex, the various tensions and ambivalent feelings were charted further and the sense of guilt as an expression of that ambivalence was paid more attention than ever before.

For Freud, the sense of guilt in *The Ego and the Id* was the most important gateway to unconscious psychic structures. After all, it was only after this point that Freud made the Oedipus complex the crux of his work. Until *Totem and Taboo*, that complex hardly appeared in his work. His followers regarded it as the psychoanalytic paradigm, but Freud was very cautious. Only after he made identification the most important creative alternative to inherited instincts did the Oedipus complex truly become central. Only then could that which was already known be confirmed: the complex was about conflicting desires, ambivalent feelings and the sense of guilt with which they are inextricably linked.

Ever since the seduction theory Freud had been searching for the origin of the sense of guilt. In *The Ego and the Id* he found its most important source: identification with parents and the formation of the superego (which is both heir and repressor of the Oedipus complex and the drives it expresses) locates the source of the normal sense of guilt first of all in the tension between the ego and the superego. Yet Freud immediately asked again: what is the relationship to anxiety and castration anxiety in particular? And what is the relationship with phylogenic material? Speculations on the “dumb” death drive incited Freud to search beyond the Oedipus complex for a possible source. The sense of guilt is not definitively explained yet and in the next chapter we shall thus see how this issue returned in the subsequent conflict with one of Freud’s followers, Rank.