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THE EGO AS SUBJECT AND OBJECT IN NARCISSISM *

"Natura non facit saltum!"

Variations in ego feeling are experienced by normal people and, particularly, by persons who feel the external world to be estranged. As I have discussed elsewhere,¹ this fact permits us to recognize, by means of self-observation, one libidinal component of the ego. The ego must be conceived of as a continuous experience of the psyche and not as a conceptual abstraction. Communications of patients concerning such self-observations constitute important material for the study of the functions of the ego. Such inquiries do not merely investigate interesting phenomena of estrangement, but rather do they touch upon the fundamental theories of psychoanalysis. They represent empirical proof for the correctness of Freud's doctrine of narcissism. Likewise, it should be possible to demonstrate, from the study of the various kinds of depersonalization, the reality of other libido processes inferred by psychoanalysis. Without such, or other, new evidence the libido theory would time and again be designated, by its adherents as well as by its opponents, as a happy "heuristic" idea, not be taken as a description of reality, in spite of its fruitful development and perhaps because of the very resistances which the idea arouses. Hence everyone would consider himself justified, according to

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• From a paper read before the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society, June 27, 1928.

¹ See "Some Variations in Ego Feeling," Chapter 1, and "Narcissism in the Structure of the Ego," Chapter 2.

his personal predilection and evaluation, in applying another theory of psychodynamics.

The actual observation of libido processes requires the cooperation of many psychoanalysts who are also interested in the phenomenology of these processes and whose writings should complement each other. The writings must also be mutually understandable. This requires the use of an unequivocally uniform terminology.

My earlier papers merely expected the reader to differentiate conceptually between ego libido and object libido, and to distinguish whether the term "narcissism" was used with reference to the subject or to the object. Briefly, the main conclusion was that feelings of estrangement in perceiving the external world ensue when the ego boundary *loses* some of its libidinal cathexis (subjectively recognizable as ego feeling), despite the persistence of object cathexes (subjectively recognizable as investing of objects with significance).² With this statement I contradicted the previous explanations of estrangement (and of all states of depersonalization) which implied, on the contrary, an increase in narcissism attended by a decrease in object cathexis. Nunberg came close to the correct interpretation when he spoke of an "injury" to narcissism by the loss of object libido. To my knowledge, only Minkowski, who is not a psychoanalyst and who uses the psychology and terminology of Bergson, arrived at the same conception as I did.

Since we designate as narcissism the "cathexis of the ego by libido," I stated briefly that estrangement is based on "impoverishment in narcissism on the part of the ego boundary." To my surprise, experts on libido theory and Freudian metapsychology were quite unable to comprehend my explanation, so that they were unable either to accept or to reject it. To these readers the term "narcissistic cathexis" always meant a libidinal preoccupation *with* the ego, a concentration *on* the ego. Since patients with feelings of estrangement are very much preoccupied with their own states, this would indicate a concentration of libido on the patient's ego, and thus an "increase in narcis-

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²The object representations also may lose their cathexes, depending on the course of the disease, the onset of which is marked by depersonalization.

sism." How then could Federn speak of a "decrease in narcissism?"

A remote cause of the misunderstanding is that many readers and some authors have indiscriminately accepted "estrangement" and "object-loss" as synonymous, and expected the terms to be explained identically. But whereas "estrangement" constitutes a specific occurrence, a particular mental sensation, "object-loss" is an expression with many meanings.

It seems more important to me to reach an agreement about the use of the term "narcissism," especially whether it is correct to use it in a vague manner, to indicate any strong affective reaction of the personality.

Actually, in every affective reaction there is also a stronger ego feeling which cathects more intensely that ego boundary with which we apprehend the object in question, on which the stimulus from the object impinges. In reactions of diminished affectivity this ego boundary is less cathected with libido. This statement seems to be self-evident, but is substantiated only by the fact that it is possible for the object no longer to be apprehended with any affect at all, when estrangement ensues because the ego boundary has been completely deprived of libido.

The term "ego boundary" shall not designate more than the existence of a perception of the extension of our ego feeling; I was misunderstood by some who thought I implied that a boundary surrounds the ego like a belt, and that this boundary is rigid. The opposite is true. These boundaries—i.e., the range of functions of the ego which, invested with ego feeling and thus cathected by libido, still belong to the ego—are always changing. But a person senses where his ego ends, especially when the boundary has just changed.

I wish to anticipate a second objection which would rest on an obvious misunderstanding. My investigation calls special attention to the ego *boundary* by starting from its perception by oneself. However, I am not at all of the opinion that ego feeling exists only peripherally. The sensation of the ego *boundary* is more easily perceived because the latter changes almost continuously, while simultaneously all of consciousness is filled with ego feeling. In my opinion, it exists from the very beginning, though at first vague and poor in content.

It is not only as a metaphor that I here refer to the impressive undulations of the cleaving ovular cell, or to the change in the whole body of the amoeba while it emits or retracts a pseudopod. At the beginning of life, the living substance reacts as a whole. This impression became most clear to me many years ago, when I observed highly organized protozoa. After a granule of starch has passed the gullet, the big nucleus immediately loses its brightness, while the whole protoplasm, fibrils and vacuoles, is simultaneously set in motion; at once the food dissolves in the protoplasm—a primordial picture of the alimentary orgasm postulated by Radó.³

This unity disappears in body and mind because, with progressing adaptation, division of labor proceeds in the formation of tool-units. The specialized organs must themselves be protected in their function from disturbing stimuli, and have to protect the whole organism from continuous disturbance through their independent absorption of such stimuli as are adequate to them. But if Freud ascribes to the ego the function of unifying the manifold component events, he implies that this achievement is aimed at the restitution of a state which previously was permanent. This is in agreement with the ultimate aim which Freud postulated for all drives; namely, to re-establish a former state of things, either directly or indirectly. The detours constitute differentiation and evolution.

The term ego "boundary" should therefore imply that, in contrast, ego feeling is a totality. Accordingly, the libidinal cathexis which constitutes the ego feeling must likewise be centrally coherent.⁴ Ego libido actually corresponds to the amoeba which Freud used as a simile. The existence of a multiform ego boundary, which at any given moment differs in degree of cathexis of its various parts, in no way contradicts the inner coherence of

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³S. Radó, "Die psychischen Wirkungen der Rauschgifte," *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, XII (1926), 498.

⁴Figuratively speaking, the ego has a mental center to which all mental ego functions connect; however, the connection of ego function with the id is not established through the mediation of the nucleus of the ego, but occurs according to the various drive components of the id which supply the ego functions with mental energy.

the ego. We must maintain both concepts because there exists estrangement, not only in regard to the external world, but also in regard to many mental processes, including: all cognitive processes such as remembering, thinking, reasoning, and judging; affective attitudes such as hoping, fearing, wishing, worrying, grieving; and thought processes which influence the imagined or real external world, such as deciding, beginning, terminating, commanding and obeying. The various instances of estrangement—i.e., those which are not complicated by a deeper psychotic or neurotic disturbance—prove that these normally affective strivings and experiences may continue consciously in the individual, without impinging on the libido cathected boundary of the ego, or, more precisely, without the boundary of the libido cathexis of the periphery of the ego reaching them. (Non-psychoanalytic psychology expresses the difference with the words: The feelings become sensations). That this is not a question of *loss* of affect we recognize by the facts: first, such a patient acts partly as if he still had the affects; and secondly, he misses them and states that he himself (that is, his ego) has changed and that for this very reason he no longer feels his affects.⁵

We may ask next whether we are justified in calling the libidinal cathexis of the ego boundaries “narcissistic.” “Erogenicity of the ego” or simply “ego libido” might be just as correct. The first of these terms seems to be consistent but has the disadvantage of blurring the antithesis between ego and the “erogenous zones.” Furthermore, we associate with “erogenous” the idea of organ pleasure of a specific nature, while the erogeneity of the ego, inasmuch as it feeds the ego feeling, appears to be particularly desexualized and general. We had better reserve the expression “erogeneity of the ego” for the ego which is sexualized, in antithesis to the ego during the waning of sexuality.

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⁵H. Nunberg, (“Über Depersonalisationszustände im Lichte der Libidotheorie,” *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, X [1924], 17) and myself (see “Narcissism in the Structure of the Ego,” Chapter 2), have adduced arguments in proof of the fact that the specific ego feeling rests on libidinal cathexis and not on cathexis with another kind of drive energy; for the sake of continuity I refrain from enumerating further arguments here.

Freud says: "It is possible that for every such change in the erotogenicity of the organs there is a parallel change in the libidinal cathexis in the ego." ⁶

However true it is that the ego must have an erogenous cathexis in order to be felt as ego, and much as the term "Eros" is enticing for this use, I consider it more advisable to employ the term "ego libido." The term has generally been used in the sense of narcissism, but is not quite identical with it. Since it is a question, not only of terminology, but of factual doubt, I wish to quote a passage by Freud in which he characterizes or defines the concept of narcissism. In his paper, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," in which he clarifies these most difficult problems he had just come to comprehend, Freud states: "Originally, at the very beginning of mental life, the ego's instincts are directed to itself and it is, to some extent, capable of deriving satisfaction for them on itself. This condition is known as narcissism and this potentiality for satisfaction is termed auto-erotic . . . At this period, therefore, the ego-subject coincides with what is pleasurable . . ." ⁷

In this characterization the stress is laid on the satisfaction experienced in one's own ego (mind and body, individuum) in contrast to the external world. The context motivates this emphasis. Thus, although "the ego's instincts," mentioned at the beginning of the passage, certainly include the libidinal cathexis which feeds the ego feeling, it is not certain that a definition of ego feeling would include the autoerotic satisfaction which, according to the subsequent words, are part of narcissism. We shall come back to this point later.

In any case, the healthy ego feeling is a pleasurable feeling, but does not have the character of a state of special satisfaction, nor, to be sure, that of a state of special dissatisfaction. In general, it becomes an actually pleasurable feeling only through intensification originating in the id, or through the addition of libido cathexes which had not previously been part of the ego. At any rate, the passage quoted is not in disagreement with the use of the term narcissism for the function of the ego libido to

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⁶ Freud, "On Narcissism," *Collected Papers*, IV, 41.

⁷ Freud, *Collected Papers*, IV, 77f.

which we turn our attention.⁸ I said before that the simile of the amoeba is especially fitted for the ego feeling; Freud used the same simile several times in order to make narcissism understandable. Also, Freud's comment that "narcissism is the libidinal complement of egoism" applies to the ego feeling as well, the lack of which makes a person so unable to enjoy anything that he is truly characterized by the words: "*Und er weiss von allen Schätzen sich nicht in Besitz zu setzen.*"⁹

However, we establish complete accordance between our conception of ego feeling and the above quoted characterization of "narcissism" if we realize that the ego feeling is fed precisely by that part of the ego libido which constitutes narcissism, without, however, being autoerotically satisfied. Such a state of lack of satisfaction does not need to bear the character of displeasure, but has the quality of an *agreeable fore-pleasure* because, from the economic point of view, it is a matter of quantities which have been fragmentized by distribution. That is to say, the term "agreeable fore-pleasure" actually does full justice to the quality of the experience of healthy ego feeling.

This discussion was necessary in order to show that we have used the term "narcissism" for the investment with ego feeling without transgressing the conceptual content intended by the discoverer of narcissism, although his definitions proper always include also the relation to the ego as love *object*, as, in the most incisive instance, in the phrase: "*loving oneself*, which for us is the characteristic of narcissism."¹⁰

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⁸The following passages from Freud's *Collected Papers* also justify my use of the term "narcissism": first, from "The Libido Theory," V, 133, "The libido of the self-preservative instincts was now described as *narcissistic libido* . . ." (but not the continuation, ". . . it was recognized that a high degree of this self-love constituted the primary and normal state of things."); and second, from "One of the Difficulties of Psychoanalysis," IV, 349, "The condition in which the libido is contained within the ego is called by us 'narcissism' . . ." (but, again, in the conclusion of the sentence the object relation of the ego is stressed).

⁹Goethe, "Faust," Act V, Scene 5. Literal translation: "And he does not know how to take possession of all treasures." Bayard Taylor translation (New York: The Modern Library, Random House):

"And he knows not how to measure
True possession of his treasure."

¹⁰Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," *Collected Papers*, IV, 76.

I was thus justified in introducing the term "ego feeling" (*Ichgefühl*)¹¹ into psychoanalytic literature in my paper, "Narcissism in the Structure of the Ego,"¹² but I might just as well in this context speak of "ego libido" or of "objectless narcissism." The latter term would also indicate the drive-dynamics in the ego feeling, viz., that it constitutes the stage of fore-pleasure of the libido.

It may seem amazing to speak of "objectless narcissism," since it has become customary to consider and designate object libido and narcissism as absolute antitheses. But they are not antithetic conceptually, because certain types of narcissism, disregarding the ego feeling, always have the ego or parts of it as their object. In actual antithesis to each other are "object cathexis" and "ego cathexis"; the first term indicates that the object, and the second that the ego, is that which is cathected by the libido, that which is experienced with pleasurable desire. It is the purpose of the present paper to describe this antithesis.

We come nearer to what I believe to be the correct conception of the observed material if we make an assumption in regard to the origin of the ego feeling which differs somewhat from Freud's view. Assumptions which are arrived at non-psychoanalytically are permitted with regard to these problems as they have not yet been investigated by psychoanalytic methods and, perhaps, may never be investigable by this method.

It is Freud's basic assumption that ". . . it is impossible to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego can exist in the individual from the very start; the ego has to develop . . ." ¹³ This assumption derives from the non-unitary nature of the "id." I hold, however, that an ego feeling is present from the very beginning, earlier than any other content of consciousness. This hypothesis corresponds to that of many philosophers and

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¹¹This word (the German original) appears in Freud's paper "Mourning and Melancholia," *Collected Papers*, IV, 155: "The melancholiac displays . . . an extraordinary fall in his self-esteem (*Ichgefühl*), an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale."

¹²See Chapter 2.

¹³Freud, "On Narcissism," *Collected Papers*, IV, 34.

psychologists¹⁴ and to the view shared by many biologists that a germ of consciousness—I would like to call it a rudimentary ego feeling—pertains to every protoplasmic organism, even the lowest one, and thus to every living being.

I should like to adduce two more observations as indirect argument for the assumption that an ego feeling exists from the very beginning. It sometimes happens that for a short time we lack conscious ideational content; nevertheless we sense our bodily ego and also, distinctly, a psychic ego feeling. The latter is empty of mental and emotional functions. Since these are certainly gradually acquired, it is unlikely that the psychic ego feeling alone would remain preserved if it had not been present from the very beginning, though undistinguished from the mental content. In addition, self-observation shows that in the process of falling asleep or of fainting the psychic ego feeling is the last to disappear. The fact that it vanishes last speaks in favor of the view that it was present at the first. In consciousness it was always connected with a content of sensations, later of representations as well; and while these changed, a psychic ego feeling must have been present as a continuum in the changing state. This ego feeling first creates the ego by encompassing all experiences and experience traces, and then, due to the libidinal cathexis which is continuously fed by the drives, it waxes with the ego.

Finally, an argument from biology supports the view that the erogeneity of the ego is present from the beginning. We know that those chemical influences, which later feed the libido functions as hormones, act in a formative way on the whole organism prior to birth; there is no reason why they should not also furnish to the psyche, from its awakening, the libidinal element which manifests itself in the ego feeling.

The gradual build-up of the ego occurs through the new acquisition of entire groups of experience-representations and their memory traces, which are drive-cathected from the id; they derive from internal and external impressions or from reactions to them. These are standardized partly in a hereditary and

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¹⁴T. K. Oesterreich, *Die Phänomenologie des Ich in ihren Grundproblemen*, (The Phenomenology of the Ego in its Basic Problems), Leipzig, 1910.

partly in an acquired way, and the ego, in spite of their dependence on the individual forces of the id, disposes them in given order, integrates them, and attaches them to itself. The ego feeling, the primary ego libido, encompasses every such new acquisition. The expansion of the ego boundaries consists in this process of annexation along with ego feeling, and we have only to recall the familiar phenomenon of regression in order to understand the manner of their later pathological shrinking.

This time of ego development is the period in which primary narcissism rules. For, while the incorporation into the ego proceeds, each ego state achieves autoerotic satisfaction by way of the newly acquired functions and representations. In other words, while the ego comes into being and grows, pleasure is derived from ego-felt experiences, of which those that are actually autoerotically accentuated—first of all those of one's own body, but also those of the visual and auditory perceptions—are, in accordance with the pleasure principle, more strongly cathected with ego feeling. In the ego feeling of the adult the erogenous zones still show themselves to be particularly sensitized. However, the entire ego, too, is the object of this primary self-love, in as much as the entire body is enjoyed entirely, in the many movements performed with autoerotic pleasure and in the pleasures of touching and looking which begin early. It is more difficult to obtain a clear idea of the primary narcissistic cathexis of the mental functions, which to the adult appear wanting in libido, what we call "dry." However, the observation of the ego pleasure with which children make a game of them, and the fact that neurotics and psychotics invest a great deal of libido in these functions, do not leave any doubt that they, too, are cathected with both ego feeling and primary narcissism. The states of depersonalization mentioned above confirm this view.

We understand now why "primary narcissism" at its peak, with its strong id derived drive and pleasure energy, very much overshadows the simple ego feeling. One's own ego feeling as such becomes perceptible only upon the repression of the autoerotic experiences and experience traces, with the predominance of the interest for objects. But even for the adult ego feeling

is so much obscured by autoerotic, and even more by object libidinal contents of consciousness, that only in the case of variations and disturbances could it attract the attention of self-observing persons and of the researcher.

In so far as "primary narcissism" in the child encompasses his own individuality, we can—once our attention has been directed to it by Freud's discovery—convince ourselves directly of its existence through observing the behavior of the infant. The fact that in the child narcissism is even more clearly apparent than in animals and also, probably, than in primitive man, is due to the circumstance that the human offspring is spared for a long time from the danger of the external world and the continuous fear of it, because the human being has, of all creatures, the longest period of dependency. Observation of a spoiled pet, however, will also disclose unequivocally narcissistic behavior.

In so far, however, as primary narcissism encompasses the external world, we cannot observe it but can only deduce its presence. It is therefore more difficult to conceive this part of the libido doctrine as reality-description, and it is usually held to be mere theory. For in the adult's conception of the external world, the object cathexes so much outweigh primary narcissism that the latter can be experienced only in states of devotion and rapture, the highest degrees of which we call ecstasy and mystical union¹⁵—where, as some philosophers express it, the "realm of freedom begins" and the *principium individuationis* with the laws of causality seems to end.

Yet Hanns Sachs' paper on narcissism, the first to follow Freud's presentation, dealt with that type of narcissism which refers to objects of the external world, and the repression and projection of which lead to the animistic conception of the world as found in primitive man. In the stage of primary narcissism, the child and primitive man behave in a different way

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¹⁵In her paper, "Zufriedenheit, Glück und Ekstase," (Contentment, Happiness, and Ecstasy), Helene Deutsch has pointed out the re-establishment of a narcissistic unity and the expansion of the ego and its boundaries. *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, XIII (1927), 410-19.

than later, after the establishment of the ego boundary, when the objects of the external world are *felt*,¹⁶ not merely recognized, as being outside the individual. In the first place, children experience some of the changes happening to external objects as if they had happened to themselves, and therefore react with anxiety and anger, with pleasure and distress, although "nothing has happened to them," according to the adult's conception. Secondly, however, they are independent of the happenings of the external world because they have the capacity to substitute for it their continuously cathected representations of that world, which are experienced with full ego feeling.

Hence, in the stage of predominant primary narcissism the ego boundary coincides with the child's entire conceptual world, from which current consciousness singles out a small part which in its context does not yet correspond to reality. We may suppose that the mental processes of this period occur in the form of primary processes; the occurrence of displacement, condensation, and substitution by the opposite is amply demonstrated later on by the individual use of words and by neologisms. But even at this early stage the distribution of the intensities of libido cathexis corresponds to the interest in the external world. That which the child desires more strongly and frequently, early and consistently obtains the correct designation, and such a designation becomes more solidly rooted whenever a need is satisfied. Therefore, just as with primitive man, a kind of reality integration can take place in spite of the narcissistic cathexis of the external world, because the narcissistic cathexis is not diffused equally over the entire conceptual world, but, depending on the strength of autoerotic satisfaction of the erogenous zones achieved by an object, a stronger cathexis is concentrated on the representations of this particular object. The repetition and more intensive cathexis of the desired and the vital object representations are at this stage still quite in accordance with the pleasure principle.

Thus, from the very beginning, the primary ego feeling also includes the external world, which expands steadily through

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¹⁶Compare "Some Variations in Ego Feeling," Chapter 1.

new experiences. Its various sections, that is, their representations, are cathected with narcissism, not equally, but in varying intensity, as are the parts of the body. Nevertheless the object cathexis is of a purely narcissistic nature and not yet that of object libido. Those things which are more intensively cathected narcissistically assume the character of objects only through the union of the libidinal desire with the function of the self-preservative drives. But their representations are felt as *belonging to the ego*, although the objects are desired as means of satisfaction by the self-preservative drives and by the libido. Only when the small child feels the *ego distance of the object*, has primary narcissism lost its exclusive validity for the function in question. For instance, as long as both the representation of the mother's breast and the delight of sucking are *cathected with ego feeling*, it is true that the pleasure of sucking and the appeasement of hunger are longed for, and the breast is sought as the means to these ends; but, although the mother's breast is actually craved, it is not yet external to the ego feeling. Only when it is experienced as alien, as *withdrawn from the ego feeling*, does it receive an object libidinal cathexis. The concept of the ego feeling in this way facilitates understanding of primary narcissism as it is applied to the representations of the external world.

Hence in primary narcissism there are no object cathexes uncathected by ego feeling. Whatever seeks satisfaction and whatever gives satisfaction—the former being the subject, the latter the object, of the libido—is bodily, and is in its mental representation cathected with ego feeling, that is, with integrated ego libido. As long as the child does not yet have a representation of his own ego, the ego exists only as subject, and only as subject experiences itself in its parts. Primary narcissism may therefore be designated as the subject level of the ego.

The development of object cathexes *outside* the ego puts an end to the exclusive dominance of primary narcissism. However, we must not imagine this period of narcissism as ending with a particular event—as the textbooks of history imply in, say, separating antiquity from the Middle Ages. The external world is not suddenly discovered as something separate from the ego and thereby, also, the ego as something different from the exter-

nal world. The object level of the ego has to be delimited for every individual relationship. At first, one object after another is laboriously acquired as such; in the case of more intense drive excitation—for instance, in affect due to a deprivation—the primary narcissistic cathexis may quantitatively overshadow the object cathexis to such an extent that any kind of “objectivity” is bound to disappear.

Before discussing the role of the ego feeling of the individual at the object level, I would like to draw attention to a difference between the ego libido transformed into ego feeling and the primary narcissism, a phenomenon which can be clearly observed also in the adult. Breuer first formulated the hypothesis that we have to distinguish between resting and mobile cathexes. Otto Gross advanced the same basic idea in his doctrine of the primary and secondary function.¹⁷ In his metapsychological writings Freud acknowledged Breuer’s idea as representing deepest insight.¹⁸

So far we have discussed ego feeling separately from its autoerotic reinforcement in the stage of “primary narcissism.” The question arises whether these two components are not also different from each other with regard to rest and mobility. The observation of the adult teaches that the ego feeling in the ego boundary concerned increases whenever attention or volition is directed toward an object. If we have assigned the character of fore-pleasure to the ego feeling, the mobility of the libido cathexis becomes understandable because with every such increase the tension of fore-pleasure increases and seeks satisfaction (end pleasure). On the other hand, we have taken for granted that it is precisely the autoerotic satisfaction by which very important portions of the ego are more strongly cathected with narcissism. It does not make any difference whether a drive increase from the id or a stimulus from the outside disturbs this state of satisfaction directly or over various preconscious or unconscious routes. In either case the fore-pleasure factor in primary narcissism, and thereby the ego feeling of the

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¹⁷O. Gross, *Die Cerebrale Sekundärfunktion* (The Cerebral Secondary Function), Leipzig, 1902.

¹⁸Freud, “The Unconscious,” *Collected Papers*, IV, 121,

ego boundary in question, will be enhanced. Therefore, we may surmise that in every mental act the movable cathexes derive from the fore-pleasure tension of the unsatisfied libido, and the resting ones correspond to the satisfied quantities of libido.

Yet this distinction cannot be the correct dynamic explanation of Breuer's view, because the libido must certainly lose its energy with satisfaction. The cathexes do come to a state of rest following their satisfaction, but they cease to exist, they do not continue as "resting" ones. The autoerotic satisfactions—and similarly, later, the object libidinal ones—thus only result in points of rest in the fluctuations of libido. As points of rest, however, they have a special significance: namely, since once obtained, satisfaction is sought again from the same representations and processes, these points of rest will always be cathected anew with libido which seeks satisfaction. The libido will appear as "resting" only inasmuch as it does not flow out in other directions but finds its gratification at these points. Therefore we can speak in general of *apparently* resting cathexis whenever no greater amount of libido flows out from a psychic element, or vanishes upon satisfaction, than flows toward that element. ("Element" is used as a general term for every kind of individual mental apparatus or mental process which is cathected with libido).

The observation of the ego boundary allows further conclusions in regard to the problem of resting and mobile cathexes. We know that in general, in the waking state, the entire ego boundary remains constantly cathected with ego feeling. Hence we may conclude that, on the whole, a certain amount of unsatisfied libido (of the fore-pleasure type) remains in the resting state, although unsatiated. This amount is quite different for different individuals and for different elements and functions in the same individual. Only if this lasting cathexis undergoes an increase will it have the tendency to flow off. This is a general assumption underlying the libido theory and it is confirmed once more through the observation of the ego feeling.

In order that more than this measure of libido be maintained in the resting state, its flowing off and its satisfaction must be prevented. Observation of the ego boundary in deper-

sonalization shows that object libido is prevented from flowing off if the ego boundary withdraws from the objects in question or from the libidinally cathected functions. Thus we see that one way of maintaining libido in the resting state is the withdrawal of the encountering libido cathexis, which in depersonalization is recognizable in the divestment of the ego boundary of ego feeling. May I point out here that Freud postulated the same mechanism for the origin of repression, insofar as in this phenomenon the cathexis is withdrawn by the preconscious.

According to Freud there are still other mechanisms which prevent the libido from flowing off; however, they do not belong to the present subject. The preceding discussion was important for this topic because it showed that the withdrawal of the ego boundary—more precisely, the withdrawal of the ego feeling—prevents the flowing off of the libido which had cathected the representation abandoned by the ego. In the analysis of the states of estrangement and depersonalization, I found (as did Reik and Sadger later) that terror and anxiety experiences bring about the states of estrangement, i.e., the withdrawal of the ego boundary. We may, therefore, assume that primitive man was forced to detach his ego from the external world and to abandon primary narcissism only laboriously and under the pressure of the frightening external world. The child follows the same development, but it is substantially facilitated by the powerful protection of father and mother.

What role can we ascribe to the ego libido (the ego feeling) and to the ego boundary in later development? In our discussion we shall distinguish the relationship of the individual object cathexes to the ego boundary from the total development of the ego boundary. According to Freud, this development consists in the transformation of the pleasure ego into the reality ego and, again, the transformation of the latter into a purified pleasure ego as a reaction to the intrusion of the object.¹⁹ As far as I was able to think through this part of metapsychology, the acquisition of the object cathexes corresponds to the first process, and the abandonment of the previous ego boundaries corresponds to the second process.

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¹⁹Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," *Collected Papers*, IV, 78.

The ego boundary withdraws from objects whenever the child experiences disappointments from them, whenever he finds that they are not subservient to his wishes, and whenever he undergoes pain, grief, anxiety, and even fright from them. The process is hereditarily determined to such an extent that I do not know whether the most accurate observation of the healthy person will be able to point out external causes. Perhaps the nightly interruption of the ego feeling in sleep, which is so easily observable, is sufficient to bring about the *gradual* change of the ego boundary in the healthy person. In any case it plays a significant role. In pathological cases, such as in all kinds of transitory or permanent estrangement, the traumatic origin is demonstrable; the estrangement is noticed suddenly, whether it ensues following a single frightening experience or a chronic severely injurious one.

In addition I should like to note, diverging somewhat from Freud, that—speaking in the image chosen by him—the development of object cathexes cannot be merely a matter of pseudopods which the narcissistic libido-reservoir, like an amoeba, extends toward the objects. The process must always be one in which the total ego libido withdraws from the objects leaving behind only object cathexes. It withdraws from the objects which had been narcissistically cathected in early development, as well as from those acquired only later upon transitory contacts, at a time when the ego boundary had already withdrawn to leave the external world as a whole lying outside, and only parts of that world, though large ones, remain narcissistically cathected and pertaining to the ego. *Object cathexes ensue when the ego boundary again withdraws from the object representations, that is, from the memory traces of the object engrams.* Then, on the one hand, we have the ego which is cathected with total ego libido and, in contrast, the individual object representations in increasing numbers, which are ordinarily cathected with small quantities of libido but, nevertheless, can be cathected from the id with strong intensities. Psychoanalytic experience indicates that these object cathexes, isolated from the ego, have their own regular vicissitudes of libido and that, for instance, repression, the failure of which leads to symptom formation, concerns these representations.

Self-observation, with which many communications of other authors are in agreement, necessitates a new assumption in the libido theory. Observation of the ego feeling confirms the fact that the *libido of the ego boundary* (recognizable as ego feeling) and the *libido of the object representations* again fuse, at least in all psychic acts which are fully experienced. Thereby they either achieve satisfaction (for instance, that of simple recognition), or they induce, in the case of incomplete satisfaction, further conscious and preconscious psychic processes with or without contact with the ego boundary (that is, with or without further contribution on the part of the ego libido). Whether such unions of ego libido and object libido may also occur without our conscious awareness is, I emphasize, an important psychoanalytical problem.

In every unification of ego libidinal boundary and object representation, a transitory enlargement of the ego boundary ensues; hence my discussion of the further relationship of ego libido and object libido reverts to Freud's conception of the encompassment and abandonment of objects. (The individual object representation is, of course, only the simplest example; the process usually occurs in an analogous manner in complicated processes and functions.) The only difference between my view and that of Freud concerns the origin of the object cathexes.

In all conscious unions of ego libido and libidinal object cathexis, not only do we have awareness of the processes but we also feel the vividness and reality of the perception or of the thinking, or of the affect as well. As, for a particular ego boundary, the intensity of ego libidinal (primary narcissistic) cathexis may vary from the most vivid ego feeling (at its highest degree in mania or enthusiasm) to the divestment in estrangement, so also the satisfaction and the sensation of full experience may occur in all degrees of intensity. What Schilder designates as "ego distance" and "ego nearness" of a process cannot be explained in terms of extent of separation from the ego; neither can a process be conscious to a varying degree. Instead, the libido intensity of the ego boundary is variably great. The fact of becoming conscious is contained in every union of ego libido and object libido. However, there is more in it than a mere becoming conscious, because conscious awareness is maintained

even in the case of complete estrangement. Since the ego feeling is a feature of the ego's being permanently conscious, the difference between a process which is conscious and one which is fully egotized could be only a quantitative one. More likely there are two distinct functions operating on the ego boundary, one concerning also the core of the ego, and thereby causing the quality of being conscious, and the other causing only the ego boundary feeling.

Thus we have presented the issue by stating that the narcissistic cathexes recede from the external objects, and also that, more and more, the thinking functions and the affective reactions develop and occur preconsciously outside the ego feeling, though always and in every ensuing experience to be encompassed anew by the ego boundaries and by consciousness.²⁰

What, however, happens to the old narcissistic boundary of the ego while the field of the object cathexes, which are encompassed at any given time by the ego boundary, is enlarged and with it the extent of the ego boundary itself? The answer cannot be derived theoretically but can only be gleaned from experience. One thing is certain: No rational division, as it were, occurs between the cathexes of the ego and of the object representations, nor do bodily and psychic elements and the external world each obtain their own specific cathexis.

If development took such an orderly course, the problems which keep us occupied could be resolved in a few sentences. Indeed, the old associationist psychology would not have had to be enlightened at all by psychoanalysis. It would have been adequate to distinguish representation, sensation, perception, feeling, etc. and their further combinations and integration. The stabilization of integration would keep everything functioning in well devised channels which could be investigated from physiological or experimental psychological points of view. The psychic agencies thus developed would awaken each

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²⁰By comparison with later papers and with personal communications, it is apparent that here Federn had not yet formulated the concept that the ego feeling encompasses the preconscious. True, the single contents of the preconscious are not conscious at every moment; but the conscious feeling of disposing of the preconscious material is in agreement with Federn's later formulations.—E.W.

other, keep each other in suspension, let each other sleep, and also work against each other (for instance, if contradictory messages were to arrive) so that they could act also as inhibitory functions. But, by and large, they would not only accomplish the tasks assigned to them in an orderly manner but would also get the better of the "mob" of drives, unless somewhere an official fell ill or the communication system between the offices failed to operate. Behold the mental picture of the microcosm of the mind, as it was originally drawn after the contemporary European governmental organization by the old academic psychology.

Psychoanalysis has destroyed all vestiges of this idyll. In pursuing the comparison it would be interesting to investigate to what extent the mental picture it has created of the mind corresponds in turn to the social order at the time of its origin. Here we want to stress only two novel features in the new representation of the mind (I do not call it a picture because there are too many dimensions to it). In the first place, continuing to speak in terms of the simile, we understand that there are *public*, *private*, and *concealed* processes; and secondly, we consider that from the drives upward, and perhaps even among the drives themselves, there is stratification which is, however, neither uniform nor permanent.

Obviously, and on the surface, the ego feeling separates the external world from the ego, and the psychic ego feeling sets off the body from the psyche. Clandestinely, as it were, the narcissistic cathexes with ego feeling of many representations of the external world persist, they change and develop, they are given up and again are newly invested. Most deeply hidden, even from one's own consciousness, the entire world of primary narcissism remains extant, as dreams and psychosis reveal; for, the primary narcissistic ego (which comprised external world and individual) is repressed and becomes unconscious in its totality. The infant's image of the world and ego feeling have become completely unconscious in the adult, but evidence their existence by the fact that they may return in psychoses. I believe this is a new conception since usually only repression of the object representations and their elaborations are discussed.

Thus, in the establishment of the new ego boundary three things occur:

- (1) The external world is *egotistically* grasped through the object cathexes: reality adaptation of the ego (of the reality ego) to the world.
- (2) The external world is *egocentrically* encompassed by the ego through narcissistic cathexis: annexation of the representations of the world to the ego in conformity with the individual's wishes.
- (3) The previous ego is repressed: unconscious continuation of the *ego-cosmic* ego.

This pictures side by side, in Freud's words, the reality ego and the purified pleasure ego—and also, not mentioned by Freud, the continued existence in the unconscious of the primordial ego which encompassed the world and the ego narcissistically and which Trigant Burrow has designated as the "preconscious."²¹ We shall discuss the latter when we examine the ego feelings and ego boundaries which delimit the superego. Here we shall deal with the relation of the conscious ego boundaries to each other and to the object cathexes.

As we pointed out earlier, the ego boundary becomes continually more mobile and encompasses increasingly more functions and more representations. The release of the external world from the ego feeling has had as its goal its conquest and mastery; for this purpose all abilities and skills of mind and body are applied, and to the extent to which they are conscious, and not estranged, the ego feeling encompasses them. Thus, at the stage of the reality ego and the purified pleasure ego, the ego boundary, in regard to the latter, becomes much more multiform and richly structured than it had been at the stage of total narcissism. With the maturation of body and mind, both the bodily and the psychic ego boundaries expand gradually. Pathological cases reveal that, not only in early development, but also later on, entire ego boundaries with their corresponding narcissistic cathexes may be repressed, since in exceptional cases such mid-developmental ego states are main-

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²¹The term is quoted in English in the German text, in order to indicate the special meaning in which Burrow uses the term.—E.W.

tained. Moreover, what we call fixation is a state correlated with a more rigid formation of a specific size and boundary of the ego. As we learn from cases of exhibitionism and masochism, if a specific component drive accentuates a particular ego boundary, this boundary will be more strongly cathected. As it is not possible then to enlarge it by slow development, repression is needed in order to progress past such stages. (Freud has spoken analogously of the peace-ego and the war-ego of the war-neurotics.) From a certain age on, which differs individually, such spells of repression in regard to the ego boundary cease completely and it undergoes further changes only gradually with newly acquired functions: the person remains the same. The basic experience that an amnesic period is brought to a close by specific events is therefore due, not only to the repression of interconnected object representations, but also, and mainly, to the repression of one drive-component and of the ego boundary which is cathected by that component in a characteristic manner. As stated above, this is the case especially in regard to the mental functions, but at times also in regard to the body and its functions.

Such a strongly fixated ego boundary often is not repressed because it and its cathexis has become unpleasant, just as primary total narcissism could not become devoid of pleasure; rather, the displeasure is due to the circumstance that *two narcissistic ego boundaries cannot co-exist without confusion*. Adults who quickly and frequently fall back to earlier ego states, with other ego boundaries, evidence insecurity and shame which make them highly uncomfortable. As a matter of fact, the repression from consciousness becomes necessary precisely because the individual could not consciously relinquish the previous sources of pleasure. It is probable that only a distressing external event can inaugurate and make possible the repression of the object representations concerning this event and the associated ego state and boundary. The postulate that object and ego cathexes are usually repressed simultaneously is in agreement with our general observation, stated above, that in every psychic occurrence object cathexis and cathexis of the ego at the ego boundary concerned are united.

Here we are in a position to indicate more precisely which

is the "ego boundary concerned." In every experience, the object representation, with its libido cathexis, unites with the narcissistically cathected representations of the same object which pertain permanently to the ego. The question raised previously—"What happens to the narcissistic ego boundary with the acquisition of object cathexes?"—we have answered by saying that it persists and it changes further. It is true that the newly acquired object cathexis has arisen because the narcissistically cathected ego boundary receded from the resistant or painful objects, or because the ego boundary only transitorily encompassed the new perception with ego feeling, so that the object representation could remain extant without ego feeling but invested with new object cathexis (stemming from the id). However, in accordance with psychoanalytic experience, in this case, too, nothing gets lost that has once been acquired. The fact that a new experience which remains extant as an object representation was gained with a withdrawn or immediately withdrawing ego boundary does not prevent the old representations, stemming from an earlier time and cathected with ego feeling, from persisting in memory; therefore, for the same object we now have two imprints (*Niederschriften*), as Freud called them in another connection, or engrams, in the sense of Semon. The one is narcissistically tinged, indistinct and does not accurately correspond to reality, except in the mind of geniuses, and even there it is always mixed with infantile elements; the other is fairly correct, recently acquired, and very accessible to rectification by new experience. Both unite in the experience because both are called into consciousness currently by a *perception* or by a *word image* which belong to both. *The more the narcissistic representation, or group of representations, corresponds in content to the object libidinal one, the more easily is the libido satisfied in their realization and unification.*

I know that this entire presentation will be difficult to accept. But self-observation makes it possible to distinguish, as they arise, the ego cathected contents from the object representations; the differentiation is easier in the wish invested mental processes than in the conceptual ones because the contents of the former are more strongly cathected with ego libido. Attached

to both are libido quantities which are unified in the experience. Once one has observed the process as it occurs in wish invested groups of representations, one recognizes the same process in everyday thinking or acting. "Comprehending" means that a new representation element is invested with ego libido and assigned to an existing, orderly group. If there is no stronger, i.e., narcissistic, cathexis in the preconscious when an object representation arises, only the ego feeling (libido cathexis) of the ego boundary, as we now know it, is experienced as it flows to meet the emerging representation. If the ego feeling, too, is missing, estrangement ensues, as has been discussed before. Thus, the *narcissistically cathected* representation is *not the same* as the representation *cathected with object libido*.

Summarizing, we may state: The ego libido continues as a unity throughout the whole life in the ego feeling and in the cathexes which stem from autoerotism and strengthen the ego feeling. But this is possible only because the representations thus cathected no longer have the character of reality which they had at the stage of the exclusive domination of primary narcissism. They have surrendered it to the object impressions which impinge upon the ego boundary from the *outside*. For this purpose the memories of that stage at which they still had the character of reality, the memories of what I called above the "*ego-cosmic ego*," had to be *repressed*. From the economic point of view, this complicated development was possible because there was a corresponding decrease in the libido supplied by the id to the old narcissistic cathexis, in its totality, as the libido needs of the real objects increased to the same degree.

Thus we see how both the central ego libido, with its changing boundaries, and the object cathexes, which build up in isolation, continuously evolve in this entire developmental struggle of reality adaptation versus the archaic, pleasurable narcissistic ego formation. The contiguity of the libido cathexes is interrupted by the isolation of the object cathexes and by the processes of repression. But we know that pathologic and physiologic alterations in the economy (sleep, dream, psychoanalysis, ecstasy) can restore the discontinued contiguity for a shorter or longer period.

Our exposition has also shown that every fully experienced

(not estranged) mental process unites currently, in a transitory way, the cathexes separated through the developments described: those of the reality ego, whose boundary is turned toward the apprehension of reality, that is, toward perception and motility, including speech; those of the purified pleasure ego, whose narcissistic boundary was described earlier; and those of the object representations. Thus, actually, reality adaptation must have disrupted, in every direction, the original narcissistic libidinal unity in such a way that it can be restored only through *cathexis displacements* which are *adapted* to the external world. Based upon the observation of the ego boundaries, another insight is gained which surprisingly demonstrates, even in the complex mental acts, the correctness of Freud's definition of the drive—that it tends to restore a previous state of things.

As we saw, the repressed "ego-cosmic ego" is not included in this restoration of the narcissistic unity, for an understandable reason. In the "ego-cosmic ego," reality and representation are *not* differentiated; therefore the adaptation of the mental contents to the reality of the current happenings of the external world, as conveyed by the external perceptions, would be disturbed by this "ego" and possibly by other spontaneous representations which are conceived of as real by the "primordial ego." If the "primordial ego" were not permanently repressed, the whole task of development—i.e., the correct reproduction, both permanently, and at any given moment, of the occurrences of the *external world* by the pictures and concepts of the *mental* occurrences—would be continuously confused and disturbed by unfamiliar, archaic, and early infantile representations regarded as real.

If, therefore—in the dream and in mental diseases—the repression of the "ego-cosmic ego" is lifted partially, phantoms actually enter the mature ego which developed later; they have the character of a physiologic regression to an early stage of the ego. Consequently, we can well understand that in a mentally diseased person hallucinations and delusions about himself and other people may emerge, while he still adjusts to the real world with his *remaining normal ego boundaries*. The ego boundaries in the dream and in the psychoses have not yet received attention, or certainly not enough. The

awakening of the "primordial ego" in the dream is implied, though not *expressis verbis*, in Freud's metapsychological studies, in his theory of dream, and in other writings. There it is described as regression (historical and physiological); consequently, the concept presented here hardly differs from that of Freud.

Moreover, I would not have proffered this explanation, which seems fantastic at first sight, were it not for the interest we must take in the cooperation of the repressed "ego-cosmic ego" in the formation of one of the great agencies of the ego—namely, the "superego." Both primary and secondary narcissism and the roles of the ego as subject and object in the superego must be delineated with as much precision as possible.

I know that many psychoanalysts believe such investigations to be more or less skillful mental acrobatics, and see in Freud's concept of the superego no more than an excellent formula for integrating reactions, which were formerly examined separately, on the basis of their common denominator, demanding and inhibiting. Other psychoanalysts take just the opposite position, regarding the superego as if it were another person who had lodged himself in the psyche as a kind of dragonnade, and they find no cause for wonder at the formation of such a foreign body; on the contrary, they are glad to have obtained in the "superego" a scape-goat, as it were. Other authors, however, notably Alexander, Fenichel, Glover, Jones, and Odier, have worked hard to reach an understanding of the formation of the superego. Clear and meaningful though Freud's presentations are, one has to work through them to fully acquire their significance.

To the extent to which I was able to observe others and myself, I recognized Freud's concept of the superego as a description of reality and did not consider it merely a theoretical formulation.

First let us cautiously draw conclusions from self-observation of the ego feeling in regard to the subjective delimitation of ego and superego. Every such conclusion must be drawn with great circumspection, since both one's own observations and the observations of others are always subjective. Once the ego feel-

ing as an object of self-experience arouses more psychological interest, we shall collect more material for comparison and also be able to utilize more correctly the earlier communications; for whatever has been described in the literature of all schools as self-knowledge, self-contemplation, and self-education refers to the relation of superego to ego. One thing is certain: be it demanding, prohibiting, or permitting, the superego, in its conscious as well as in its unconscious operation, always deals in the first place with the ego. In the process, both experience "moral" pleasure or displeasure, according to the gratification or non-gratification of the libido invested by the superego in the ego and vice versa. I am inclined to believe that the superego itself does not have any executive power at its disposal. Yet the libidinal attachment of the ego to the superego is so great that pleasure may become bliss and displeasure torment. Under the influence of this pleasure and displeasure, the ego accepts the superego's orders according to the latter's libidinal cathexes, and it experiences its own executive function as its "Thought." However, I am not sure yet whether "I must" implies an executive power of the superego. The structure of the superego is probably different in different character types. The superego may also deal with other persons not directly, but through identification of the ego or the superego, or both, with the "egos" and "superegos" of the other person.

What do we feel in regard to the ego boundary turned toward the superego? Ego and superego are separated by a particularly sharp boundary. This statement suggests a curious and extremely important implication of the ego feeling. We clearly experience the fact that the ego feeling can cathect a boundary which borders, not on the external world, but on an inner world, or, more precisely, on another boundary of the ego. We remember here that cases of depersonalization have furnished us many examples of pathological states in which an internal process of the ego is experienced as estranged. Thus we see that a particular type of estrangement occurs if the ego feeling (the ego libidinal cathexis) recedes from an ego boundary which borders on another ego boundary rather than on the external world.

This curious finding, arrived at not by speculation but via the self-observation of persons suffering from estrangement, leads us to new insight into the nature of affects. In the estrangement of the inner world, which is a form of depersonalization, the patient no longer senses his affects as connected with his ego. Therefore, according to our conception, we may conclude that many or all *affects* operate *between two ego boundaries* which touch on each other. Thus, to formulate a theory of the affects it will be necessary to examine the individual affects with regard to this kind of special localization, and to determine in general the function of the affects in the libido economy which, as we have seen, operates at the ego boundaries.

Let us now return to the problem of the ego boundaries between ego and superego. There are specific functions (considering, deliberating, affirming, denying, praising, blaming, and the like) which in the healthy person are strongly cathected with ego feeling, whatever their object. If these functions have the self as object, the ego also feels itself as an object of such self-preoccupation. With others as objects, it is the ego, as well as the superego, which usually exercises these functions. Probably different people behave differently in regard to the self as object. The ego of a simple, naive person leaves occupation with the self to the superego to a larger extent than does a contemplatively or scientifically inclined self-observer.

One would think that in the process of self-supervision the ego might well feel itself to be the object of supervision by the superego; in the other functions mentioned above, however, the object, is not truly the ego itself but rather the *representations* which one has formed of the ego. More precisely, they are object cathexes—that is, the cathexes of representations of the ego, of the qualities of the ego, and of the judgments about it. So far, this seems correct, even self-evident. However, in clear recognition that a good part of secondary narcissism has such *representations of the ego*, one's thoughts about one's ego, as its object, I wish to draw attention specifically to the fact that, not only is the cathexis of such object representations which refer to oneself particularly

intense, the ego also feels itself as object of the functions²² (in a way similar, say, to that in which an animal notices or senses if one speaks of it). In other words, ego boundaries come in contact. It is a special task of self discipline to ignore or eliminate the sensation of being the object of one's self-observation if one attempts to know and guide oneself.

Such internal contact, however, by no means exists only between ego and superego, but it occurs at all the various boundaries which are cathected with ego feeling, as soon as the ego or a part thereof becomes the object of one of its functions. Again, it is through the organization and higher development of the psyche that narcissism ceases to be autoerotism and turns into a distinct libidinal relation of a subject to an object; both lie inside the ego but seem most frequently to be differentiated functions or parts of the ego. To avoid the misunderstanding that I do not recognize, nor accept theoretically, the antithesis between ego libido and object cathexis, I would like to emphasize once more the difference between true object cathexis and the cathexis of the ego as the object of narcissism. The object cathexes are isolated libido quantities invested to a varying degree of stability in the representations of concrete objects and in other elements; the narcissistic cathexis is a stronger cathexis of an ego boundary, but is always contiguous to the total ego libido of the entire ego.

Let us recall here that Freud considered the relation of the ego to itself described here, to be the original one, both for narcissism as a whole, for the "loving of one's self," and for the component drives of sadism and scopophilia. From this relation evolves the active and passive attitude toward the object (loving and being loved, the pleasurable tormenting and

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²²In this paper I intentionally use the general term "function" because, for the sake of comprehensibility, I wish to avoid discussion of non-libidinal forces both in and outside of the ego. I have two reasons for this: In the first place I do not yet know enough about the relation of libido to the other drives to discuss it systematically; and secondly, such a systematic discussion would be incomprehensible to the reader, or at least could not become a living reality for him, as long as the new findings and conclusions have not yet been accepted by him.

being tormented, pleasurable looking-at and displaying oneself). We differ from this conception in that only with the higher development of the ego can we imagine a proper "loving oneself." Prior to this, in the stage of pure psychic autoerotism, which is the original expression of primary narcissism, we recognize only the sensation of craving for pleasure and its satisfaction in one's own person, not yet a *directing* of the libido toward oneself. Stemming from the early autoerotic total experience, the libidinal unity and the pleasurableness in the ego feeling persist; utilizing the psychology implicit in classical Greek grammar, the thought may be expressed by saying that primary narcissism has the character of the "middle voice" and that only later, after the ego meets with itself time and again in innumerable relationships, does it reach a "*reflexive*" form. We may express the situation more precisely, on the basis of studies of estrangement, by saying that the ego feeling cathects from two sides innumerable (preconscious) processes which occur outside the ego.

For instance, what we call self-complacency always requires a concentration of ego feeling at a boundary with which the individual encompasses his own qualities, functions, and achievements. In the person who is self-complacent, insecurity develops if the ego boundary which functions as object is as strongly cathected as the one which functions as subject of narcissism. As mentioned before, the lasting simultaneous cathexis of several ego boundaries on reaching a certain degree of intensity and extension results in confusion. Some cases of *embarrassment neurosis* and of *blushing* have this mechanism.

If I have succeeded in accustoming the reader to the concept of ego boundaries contacting each other, I can now answer the question concerning the narcissistic cathexis of the superego. According to what has been said, it is clear that as soon as the organization of the ego develops the functions of moral evaluation, demand, and rejection, these functions will operate between two ego boundaries, affectively and narcissistically, so that whenever the superego goes into action these functions become cathectable with ego feeling from two ego boundaries. If, however, this statement described the process of cathexis exhaustively, the special emphasis of the superego would prop-

erly characterize no more than a special task of the ego; it would not, as Freud really wished, designate the specific double-structure of the ego in the broader sense. Indeed, this doubleness could be simulated by the fact that the delimitation of ego feeling comes to awareness with particular conciseness and distinctiveness between the ego and the functions comprised by the superego.

Thus, the superego would be sheathed, as it were, in the ego, but would be no more than a specially developed group of functions of the ego, sharing its center with the ego's other peripheries. This connection could become so tenuous that, as has been said, a double structure would be simulated. We are aware of the grandiose antagonism of ego and superego, which Alexander²³ has made impressively vivid by calling it reciprocal overtrumping and outwitting, and which led Nietzsche to speak of the "self-hangman and self-judge." Thus in the case of a stronger libido cathexis (primarily a sadistic one), the boundary between ego and superego leads to division in the ego, so that one becomes aware in oneself of that double structure which appeared questionable at first.

Could such doubleness perhaps come about merely by the excessively strong libido cathexis of this group of functions? This renders the corresponding ego boundary oversensitive to frustration, while at the same time the conditions for satisfaction are particularly difficult since for this purpose self-evaluation would have to acknowledge all *ego ideals* as achieved by the real ego. Disappointment, the absence of satisfaction, would cause the two boundaries to be permanently experienced as cathected with libido, creating irritation, pain, and agonizing bitterness on the one side, and a state of stirred-up emotionality on the other. The most grandiose projection of this libidinal cathexis tension is Dante's *Inferno!*

There are narcissistic injuries of another, not a moral kind, the infliction of which the ego cannot overcome; it remains painfully encroached on itself. The discrepancy between an ego created in fantasy and the actual person can be profoundly

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²³F. Alexander, *Psychoanalysis of the Total Personality*, (Washington, D. C.: Nervous & Mental Disease Monograph Series, No. 52, 1930).

injurious to narcissism, and yet the sensation of ego unity does not get lost, except in cases of hysteria, i.e., under abnormal conditions; the ego feeling maintains the unity between the real egocentric ego, its fantasies, and the reality ego.

The superego alone is separated so definitely from the ego that such sadism can break out between them. Not until severe psychoses develop can the superego dissolve in the ego. We do not speak here of deficient arrangement of the functions of the superego. In the normal person harmony is established through a certain reciprocal moderation and yielding; in the obsessional neurosis we see the neurotic detours to this objective; in mania the libido cathexis of the ego is increased to such an extent that by comparison the superego is cathected weakly and is incapacitated; in melancholia the opposite obtains; in pathological senescence the superego frequently loses the supply of libidinal cathexis from the id earlier than does the ego.

Thus, I conclude from my conception of the superego that the strict supervision on the one side, and the intense fear of this supervision on the other, must greatly accentuate the boundary between ego and superego, but that the two are distinct entities from the very beginning, and, hence, that the double structure actually exists.²⁴

He who remembers some of his own dissonances and arguments between superego and ego, especially he who has experienced the torments of self-reproaches of a striving personality, has learned that the ego feeling vacillates between ego and superego in a peculiar manner, to be experienced in no other situation, and that one cannot simultaneously be ego and superego—if one may use the expression. In order to change from one ego feeling to the other, one must pass, as it were, through a void, empty of ego feeling. One has lost the sensation of one's ego before one gains that of one's superego, and vice versa. How can this be explained?

One must assume that the ego and the superego actually

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²⁴Latin grammar, as teacher of psychology, reminds me of a rule which I learned almost fifty years ago. It is certainly peculiar that precisely those words denoting functions of the superego (*piget, pudet, paenitet, taedet atque miseret*) are inflected not in the first but in the third person, as being of unknown origin, i.e., arising from the depth of the unconscious.

correspond to *two* ego feelings, that is, to *two unities of ego libido*, each homogeneous in itself, but not with the other; they do not have in *consciousness* a central contiguity. The fact that such contiguity neither is, nor can become, conscious (thus, that it is not preconscious either) does not exclude the assumption that, individually, ego and superego peripherally cathect common contents with libido, that both have an analogous distance from, and potential connection to, the object cathexes and the reality ego.

Freud resolved the riddle of conscience by uncovering the superego and by deriving the unconscious superego from identification with the commanding and prohibiting persons of childhood. We must assume that this identification develops with particular intensity and particularly early and that it can be traced back to the time of the primary narcissistic unitary ego. Since at that time the ego still reigned supreme, the inhibiting and commanding persons were also cathected with ego feeling (every command is, as a matter of fact, only a prohibition of doing differently and of omitting). As was discussed before, the primary narcissistic ("ego-cosmic") ego formation was repressed because it was in disagreement with reality adaptation; I now supplement and delimit my earlier exposition by adding that a portion of narcissistic ego cathexis remained unrepressed—that portion which concerned the parents, primarily the mother. The latter repression was omitted for the same reason that the former took place: because the maintenance of the parental agency in the ego not only did not contradict but rather corresponded to reality adaptation. However, a separation ensued between *that* ego which left the parents outside of its ego feeling and *that* ego which had absorbed the parents in itself. The latter became the superego. This explains the particular egotism, as it were, of the superego, and also shows that the findings of various psychoanalysts (Klein, Rank, Jones, Clark, Burrow) in regard to the formation of the superego in the period *prior* to the Oedipus stage do not contradict the Freudian doctrine. The particular strength of the superego could thus be ascribed not only to the phylogenetic and ontogenetic impact of the father's sadism but rather to the power of both parents *and* to the supreme omnipotence with which pri-

mary narcissism once invested the child. Hence philosophy and the introspection of the righteous man lets Kant ascribe the same reality, and pay the same devotion to the categorical imperative as to the starry sky. Both were once experienced with the same ego feeling. But while the character of "egoticity" of the external world, being useless, sank down into the unconscious, that part of the external world which had so early begun to dominate the ego, being useful, continued to be maintained and invested with ego feeling; however, this part was not in the egocentric ego but had another center. In order to avoid confusion, the representation of the original persons was repressed; only the inhibiting and direction-giving power remained in consciousness. This nucleus represented psychically no more than the first inhibitions; therefore it was enlarged by many identifications until a useful, often an excessively strong, superego was formed.

I think it may be comprehensible now why ego and superego should have two ego boundaries so sharply separated from each other. A concept of the superego as an abstract formulation for functions which belong together has to be rejected.

While we have found an ego boundary between ego and superego in the normal person, curiously enough we are unable to establish the existence of such a boundary between mental and bodily ego. Perceptions of one's own body may, of course, become estranged if its parts are objects of seeing, hearing, and so forth. One's own voice is very frequently estranged. In psychoses of a hypochondriac type the ego feeling can be missing from a great variety of organs and functions. Schizophrenic patients often know more about their ego boundaries than do normal persons, just as they understand symbols for which the healthy person has no conscious interpretation. For instance, they are often aware of the depth of their bodily ego feeling. A patient of mine advanced this as the reason for his inability to use the organs which lacked ego feeling: "I will again be able to breathe right when I shall feel myself from tip to toe." Yet he did not complain of estrangement! Similarly, the healthy person has no feeling of estrangement when, in the process of slowly falling asleep, the bodily ego feeling disappears before the mental ego feeling. This fact does not contradict my earlier

explanations. Estrangement develops only if (preconscious) functions which operate outside the ego no longer reach the ego. Decreases in the ego feeling proper (not in the boundaries) are not noticed as such; one has to concentrate one's attention on the phenomenon.

These discriminations should enable us to differentiate exactly between estrangement and depersonalization. (Occasionally the two terms are used indiscriminately.) If a process which takes place outside the ego reaches it from the preconscious without being invested with ego feeling in the process of becoming conscious, the sensation of estrangement is experienced. If representations which ordinarily pertain permanently to the conscious ego, those of the body in particular, lose their ego feeling, depersonalization ensues. That occurs in the phenomenon of splitting in abnormal awakening and in hysteria, as I have discussed previously. Then the body is felt as belonging solely to the external world, outside of the ego, and bound only by memory to the (historic) ego; it is really depersonalized, yet it is not experienced as estranged but as a new phenomenon never yet experienced. This extreme degree of depersonalization, which I described as only a transitory stage in awakening, came about because at that moment not even the reality ego had been established. The exact investigation of depersonalization proper will therefore permit certain deductions also in regard to the reality ego, just as the observation of estrangement enabled us to make inferences in regard to the "ego-centric" ego, as we called the narcissistically cathected ego. We may conclude that bodily and psychic ego feeling are subjectively a unity, divisible only through observation of the withdrawal of the ego feeling from the body. Thus the body has a three-fold position: it is part of the ego (not only known to be so objectively, but also experienced subjectively); it lies between ego and external world, because its organs mediate the impressions of the external world; and it is a part of the external world, because via the organs which are turned toward the external world, impressions of the body as object also impinge on the mental ego. This three-fold psychological role of the body seems to be important for the understanding of conversion. Incidentally, three groups of *Weltanschau-*

ung correspond to these functions: the idealistic, the monistic, and the materialistic; they are types of self-concepts. The fact that the idealistic mode, more than the others, makes a person happy is due to the circumstance that it re-establishes the primary, narcissistic conception and that it also meets one of the most powerful desires of secondary narcissism—namely, to love and exalt one's own body. Actually the entire ego libido derived the name "narcissism" from this beloved object. This name was most appropriately chosen to convey the idea, disturbing initially, that the antagonistic ego drives obtain libido from the sexual drive.

I have termed the turning of the libido from the outside toward one's own body as secondary narcissism, on the assumption that the beautiful Greek boy, with the awakening of love, first sought external objects, and only secondarily became the victim of the beauty of his own image. He thought he could at last embrace a beauty worthy of himself, then found himself and death. But, if we analyse it, should this kind of narcissism be designated as "secondary"? Did it re-establish the stage of loving oneself which is reached in early childhood? Rather, had not the beautiful boy remained at this earlier stage? Otherwise his self-image would not have appeared more attractive to him than some shepherd or shepherdess! Freud, however, designated "loving oneself" as the first stage of instinct-vicissitude; hence, certainly, as "primary." From what has been said, it follows that in the Freudian sense "primary" and "secondary" relate only to the history of the processes which lead to a particular cathexis, not to the kind of dynamics with which I have dealt here. We may say that primary narcissism is always objectless, that it is the source which feeds the ego feeling in the form of objectless, but always object-ready, libidinal striving, and that any investment in objects in narcissism is secondary. With the latter comment I depart from Freud's terminology but not from his views.

When I originally gave the lecture on which this paper is based,²⁵ the following were among my theses: 1) *primary nar-*

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²⁵An abstract of this lecture, containing thirteen theses, appeared in *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, XIV (1928), 572.

cissism is of ego libidinal nature, *secondary* narcissism is of object libidinal nature; and 2) the ego boundaries are not rigid, but are, at any given time, determined by the circumstance that psychic processes impinge upon the unitary primary-narcissistic cathexis; the unitary ego feeling is maintained through a contiguous narcissistic cathexis.

I must modify the first thesis, in regard not to content but to terminology. The term "secondary narcissism" was applied by Freud to the turning back toward the ego, or toward groups of representations or functions pertaining to the ego or having the ego as content, of a quantity of libido which had previously been turned toward an external object. I do not feel entitled, and it would also cause confusion, to use the term "secondary" to indicate object relations in narcissism, although the facts which are designated by the word "secondary" in both the first and the second sense coincide with each other not entirely and not in all cases.

I can formulate the thought of my first thesis more correctly in the following way: a) the ego feeling is maintained by objectless ego libido, which corresponds to the fore-pleasure of the drive; b) narcissism begins as "*middle voice*" and becomes "*reflexive*" libido. In later development, too, "middle voice" and "reflexive" narcissism are to be differentiated.

With this formulation I use new terms for newly emphasized qualities, and the term "secondary" remains reserved to indicate a preceding and different investment of a narcissistic cathexis.

We may ask now, in what way does an *object* cathexis become a secondary narcissistic one? This may be the result of the expansion of the ego feeling to cover object representations. As a matter of fact, this is a transitory occurrence in every kind of topical psychic process. Once libidinal satisfaction or tension reduction of any other kind has been achieved, object and ego cathexis may have changed in character: the ego libido may encompass more elements of object representations than previously, and may do so permanently, or the opposite may obtain. The process is repeated innumerable times. For instance, identification comes about when the ego feeling permanently encompasses the entire group of representations concerning a

person. Such transformations also take place unconsciously. On the other hand, as I stated above, ego libido may recede from representations and functions, so that even later in the topical experience they are less intensely cathected than before. Identifications may be relinquished. Thus, if the ego libidinal cathexis has decreased and the experience is reactivated by external perception or unconscious internal stimuli, the previously familiar object or the pertinent memory assumes the character of "strangeness." The beloved person actually impresses us as strange if we suddenly "do no longer care" for him; that is, if we have divested his representation of the ego libido with which it was formerly cathected. That the object cathexis may continue to exist for a long time regardless of such a changed situation is shown by psychoanalysis, which deals with unconscious and preconscious object cathexes. In cases in which object cathexes were repressed, or have faded because of libido displacement, the vague narcissistic image may be maintained for a long time. There is only a quantitative difference between the experience, known to everyone in everyday life, that a person previously loved may suddenly appear strange, and the other extreme of pathological estrangement. In his paper on "Neurosis and Psychosis," Freud raises the question as to: ". . . what that mechanism analogous to repression may be by which the ego severs itself from the outer world."²⁶ The divestment of the ego boundary of ego libido, and the resulting estrangement, proves to be the answer to this question. It plays a role every day in all detachments from non-repressible objects. There is an entirely different way in which object cathexes may be transformed into narcissistic ones which cannot be observed directly, but can be deduced, in the narcissistic neuropsychoses and the psychoses. Here the libido has been withdrawn from the objects by the id, and we now find increased ego libido, after an *unconscious* transformation of libido quantities.

It is certainly easier to influence the former process. The fact that detachment and new attachment of object cathexes may result from change of the ego boundary makes the curative

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²⁶Freud, *Collected Papers*, II, 254.

effect of re-experiencing and remembering in psychoanalysis understandable. But where the libido is withdrawn from the external world by the id, psychoanalysis is helpless; actually, psychoanalysis can effect renewed attachment of object cathexes only if sufficient external ego boundary is still cathected strongly and permanently enough. Therefore, therapeutic results are not possible in severe melancholia or mania, nor in the catatonic, where ego libido is concentrated on inner processes.

If it is true that frequently narcissistic "images" of the objects exist in addition to the object cathexes, and that the ego and superego have ego boundaries which are separate, which, however, cathect some of these images jointly and more intensively with ego feeling and narcissism, then Jung's "complex theory" obtains support. Unconsciously all "imprints" are connected through numerous associations, through memory traces of experiences, through repressed experiences from earlier ego states with different ego boundaries, and also by way of the id, through the memory traces which the development of the libido, and especially of the individual component drives, left behind. Together they form the *complex* which, viewed from the side of the ego, encompasses a variety of internal and external ego boundaries; and which, considered from the world of objects, represents a variety of objects and persons of the external world. In the topical experience all these various cathexes are gratified or tension is reduced some other way, via the contact of the object representations with the ego boundary. Therefore, it makes good sense to speak of complex-readiness, complex-satisfaction, complex-effect, and so on. Since complexes are for the most part unconscious, they are not accessible to self-observation, the scientific use of which was implicit in the theme of this article. But the doctrine of the complexes is pertinent in this context, and we see that it is a construction which correctly renders reality.

In conclusion I should like to emphasize: This exposition is a description of reality insofar as it deals with the ego boundaries and with the dynamics of narcissism. The assumption of the balance of cathexes of the ego boundary and of the object representations is an hypothesis which enlarges upon Freud's the-

ory. I feel that new findings demand theoretical supplementation. However, I suppose that by now I have imposed more than ample new ideas upon the reader.

If to some readers these findings seem strange, I should like to offer a theoretical explanation for this sensation based on these very communications. To experience an act as satisfactory, the cathexis of the object representations and the narcissistic cathexis of the pertinent ego boundary must agree. However, there is no narcissistic cathexis as yet for new impressions, unless one succeeds immediately in establishing identification, as may happen in the case of a captivating lecturer. Ordinarily, new ideas need a certain length of time to obtain libido from the ego feeling of their public, on the one hand, and as object representations on the other. Only then is the reality-ego capable of distinguishing critically whether the concept of reality as presented was correct. In simpler words, in the face of new ideas there is no comprehension without empathy; if this is lacking, prejudice clings to the old ideas.