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ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN HEALTHY AND PATHOLOGICAL NARCISSISM*

When Freud discovered ego libido and introduced the concept of narcissism, a new field was opened for psychoanalytic investigation. However, this new concept has increased the difficulties of understanding theory and terminology. It also demanded of the psychoanalysts that they revise what they had learned unless they were to rest content with word-knowledge and faith in authority. Previously it had been easy to consider the basic distinction between the ego drives and the sexual drives as the basis of the dynamic conception of, for instance, the neuroses. Now the ego itself became a libidinally cathected agency, and the concept of "narcissism" replaced Bleuler's "autism" which had hitherto served to designate the pathology in introversion and estrangement from objects. However, "autism" indicates that the goal of the strivings or of the concern lies in the inner world of the individual, ordinarily of the sick one; while the term "narcissism" refers to the goal *and* origin of the cathexes not only in autistic processes and states but in others as well. It implies that the cathexis is of libidinal nature, and that it is not only turned toward the inner world but that it has pertained to the ego from the very beginning, and emanates from it.

As a result of this new conception, Freud's theory of instincts no longer can distinguish non-libidinal drives from libidinal ones by their derivation from the ego. Rather, they must be

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* From papers read in Oxford (1929), Lucerne (1934) and Prague (1935).

differentiated by their goal which, genetically and observably, appears partly as even destruction of the ego—as death. Logically, there should be a term, analogous to libido, for the cathexes supplied by this drive. Accepting the theory of the death instinct, I propose the term *mortido* for the energies of these cathexes; Edoardo Weiss, to avoid any commitment regarding acceptance of the death drive, has preferred the term *destrudo*.¹ Obviously, the latter term, in its turn, is prejudicial in the sense of the assumption that the only originally destructive tendencies are those that were turned toward the external world, and that they are the ones which attempt to destroy the inner world by their redirection toward the latter. Since the decision in this alternative will not be up to psychoanalysis, but to bioanalysis or even to pure biology, no argument need arise in regard to this terminology. It is not lack of precision if, often, several of our terms are applicable to the very same phenomenon. The psyche has been divided analytically only for better conceptual comprehension; the phenomena themselves cannot be partitioned into sections and labelled accordingly. This is why, for example, someone who misunderstood analysis needed the complementary synthesis; the misunderstanding consisted in mistaking the term “psychoanalysis” for dissection of the analysand’s psyche into its component parts, while it actually refers to the kind of intellectual work in which analysand and analyst are engaged.

Hence, in discussing our topic, we shall not expect opposite terms to always have antithetical meanings in the same sense, but they must permit correct distinction of the differences in the processes to be distinguished. For instance, when Freud differentiated the erotic type from the narcissistic one, this did not contradict the libidinal nature of narcissism; the word “erotic” in this case was used in its common everyday sense.²

The characterization of this “narcissistic type” does not imply that it is pathological or abnormal, but it does imply the qualification that it is never met with in pure form. In a discussion

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¹ See E. Weiss, “Todestrieb und Masochismus” (Death Drive and Masochism), *Imago*, XXI (1935), 396.

² Freud, “Libidinal Types,” *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, I (1932).

on this subject, Freud cited Falstaff as a specimen of nearly pure narcissism; this figure, however, because almost too normal, is rather a borderline case of normalcy and would hardly be considered an ideal in real life. In the description of the "narcissistic type" the emphasis is on self-assurance, which is the basis of activity and particularly the reason why aggressions can imperturbably be directed against the outside world. Thus a strong narcissistic cathexis has here been recognized as the normal, useful, and necessary countercathexis by virtue of which object cathexes are asserted with active energy. We may say that ego libido supplies our normal countercathexis to our normal object cathexes. It is partly freely displaceable or fixated, and partly has been absorbed in the character structure.

Here, and in other constellations, narcissism and ego libido are antithetic to Eros and to object libido; likewise, the narcissistic injury is antithetic to the suffering resulting from frustrated object libido. If, however, from here on one were to insist on using the terms rigidly in their dictionary sense, then narcissism could never be said to relate to an object, be it a "something in the external world" or an object representation. In reality, a great deal of ego libido is anaclitic toward the ego drives, in the old sense, and thus is not only connected with the ego but also turned toward the object or the object representation. This expresses, in terms of the libido theory, what the psychologists, especially Schilder, have said about the ego being contained in the act. Accordingly, there is narcissism which has nothing to do with objects, and another kind which does have an object; or, more precisely, one may be narcissistic either without object cathexis or, as for instance in narcissistic object choice, precisely with libidinal object cathexis but without any subsequent transformation of narcissism into object libido. In either case one remains completely within the range of the normal and healthy. As I discussed in more detail in an earlier paper, all secondary narcissism has as its object the ego, or what has been incorporated into or enclosed by the ego.³ Here the antithesis between object libido and narcissism no longer lies in the relatedness to an object, but in the nature of the

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³ See "The Ego as Subject and Object in Narcissism," Chapter 15.

object, namely, whether it is a part of the external world or of the ego; the strict distinction becomes untenable—quite in consonance with the actual psychic happening—if, and to the extent that, the ego encompasses parts of the external world. Once, however, we have come to distinguish ego cathexis from object cathexes, we shall commonly use the term narcissism precisely for that ego cathexis which enters into relationships with the external world and with the object representations; in fact, it is only important to recognize and to emphasize that these cathexes are of ego libidinal nature, since it is self-evident that the ego is cathected with ego libido to the extent to which libido pertains to it. In instances of narcissistic behavior which puzzle us, we have the task of separating the healthy and normal from the pathological and abnormal.

Although narcissism was first recognized in its pathological form, it is unquestionably not a pathological residue of the past but the normal essential means for establishing the living psychic coherence of the ego. Thus it was described by Freud as a *normal* reservoir of libido. Subsequently, many psychoanalysts emphasized the pathological features in narcissism, partly in order to interpret correct Individual Psychological findings from the point of view of the libido theory. The pathology of all narcissistic attitudes, the narcissistic cathexes, the narcissistic injury, was emphasized once more in the sense of “autism.” It was said frequently that the narcissistic cathexis would interfere with the interest in treatment and recovery, that it would frustrate any interest, or that excessive narcissism would render transference more difficult or impossible; the technical prescription of Reich was to destroy the “narcissistic armor.” However correct all this was and still is, the statements were much too general to lead to explanatory connections. Besides, we should not forget that every anxiety, every feeling of shame, every feeling of guilt, is a narcissistic process and that a narcissistic component is inherent in every instance of sadomasochism, masochism, and exhibitionism; hence, that the term “narcissistic” ordinarily merely replaces a known specific concept by a general one. A distinction must also be made between normal narcissism and those narcissistic relations characteristic for the psychoses. In the latter, the return to the fixated narcissis-

tic stage makes futile the application of psychoanalysis as developed technically for the transference neuroses.⁴ In the case of psychoses it is a matter of a different comprehension of reality on the part of the patients; also their unconscious conflicts have hampered their ego development or met with an ego which was maldeveloped for endogenous reasons. The pathological narcissism of the psychotic will not be the subject of this paper. Here I want only to discuss individual criteria for the distinction between pathological and normal narcissism. I hold this to be useful, because the concept and the term "narcissism" should not unjustifiably become restricted to the realm of pathology.

In all probability we gain during every psychoanalytical treatment a sure and nuanced impression of the extent to which the narcissism shown by any patient may be considered normal or pathological, and, in the latter case, whether the pathology lies in its increase or in its use. We also notice any abnormal decrease of narcissism below the level which we expect

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⁴Even today, (i.e., 1936—E.W.) Freud himself has a very skeptical attitude toward the analytical treatment of psychoses, and therefore toward my communications concerning good results in incipient and advanced schizophrenia. But experience time and again confirms the fact that the schizophrenic patient transfers as quickly as, and no less reliably than, neurotic, and some healthy, persons. His transference, though, is dissolved immediately if one adheres to the technique of analysis of the neuroses. If one avoids this, the psychotic is—in principle—analysable by virtue of his transference. Nor is his more intense and deviant narcissism an impediment; it simply forces the analyst to enter into the deviant comprehension of reality. The increase in narcissism affects only one part of the ego, or, more precisely, the infantile, restricted ego. Often there are several infantile ego states existing facultatively at the same time; these must be recognized in order that one may establish contact with them, as one does with a child. Many newer—that is, more lately acquired,—stages and contents have lost their narcissistic cathexes in part, or even completely, and have become material accessible to psychoanalysis, while the unconscious has become more accessible and yields, without resistance, much material no longer repressed. Both object libidinal and narcissistic cathexes are transferred in varying proportions; the latter in most cases through the renewal of earlier identifications. The analysis of the self-observation of a secondary narcissistic nature which has the abnormal mechanisms as its object gains a major value. At any rate, every analysis of psychoses leaves behind a strong impression of pathological narcissism.

in the normal individual. Such a decrease is characteristic in states of estrangement in which, however, secondary narcissism in the form of self-observation so frequently sets in compensatorily that some analysts mistakenly still consider it as the reason for the estrangement. There also exists a neurotic soberness and coldness which derives from lack of narcissism; this is found in incipient psychosis, unless anxiety is in the foreground, and also in neurotics with very minor states of estrangement.

The abnormal increase in, or investment of, narcissism shows itself, in general as well as in specific instances, in the behavior not only of an analysand but of any person. For example, it would be interesting to discuss in detail how few people are able to extend a greeting or a hand-shake in welcome or in farewell, not narcissistically, but with mere object cathexis, as one would expect an individual with a normal attitude to his fellow men to do automatically. In the neurotic analysand these little "symptomatic mannerisms" are multiplied and intensified in a very characteristic way. We see the same phenomenon in many other symptomatic signs; in even greater measure we hear it in the cadence of inflection and accentuation of his voice, either in whatever he says or in only individual sentences or specific themes as determined by complexes; a mere slowing-down of the pronunciation often betrays the intrusion of a second, more narcissistically cathected ego boundary upon the one previously active. With certain individuals, one can discern in every drawl a second and a third innervation, emanating from what the speaker wishes to "represent." Increased narcissism is discernible in the manner of judging events which are in themselves unimportant; in the manner of reaction to the arising mental contents, especially to repressed material; and above all in the interpretation of the attitudes of the environment toward the patient, particularly those of love objects, and vice versa. It is evident to everyone, except to the patient himself, that the inability to judge objectively is nearly always caused also by, and can be considered an objective criterion of, narcissism. Both W. Reich and the school of Individual Psychology have found general viewpoints which often permit a correct distinction and have made many detailed observations.

In order to evaluate narcissism—be it only according to our

impressions—we also must investigate, as always in matters of economy of libido cathexis, whether the individuals in question have a different total amount of libido available. In fact, it has always been assumed to be so. The expression “character, full-blooded personality,”⁵ as also the term “sensuality” as used by many authors, has in the layman’s language always designated a particularly great amount of available libido. For the analyst such an assumption is complicated by his knowledge that there also exist libido quantities which are fixed or repressed, or which have become unavailable through organic repression or other structuration, and that it is precisely these quantities that determine the strength of the personality and character; whereas the “free” surplus of libido is what becomes manifest to observation of others and of oneself. Yet the existence of these maximal quantities of libido can be concluded only indirectly and theoretically.

Psychoanalysis therefore resorts only rarely to the assumption of a larger or smaller quantity of total libido; its practice and theory deal with the change in the investment with, and cathexis of, libido, and with the dynamics and economy, not with the statics and quantity. When Freud published the distinction between narcissistic and erotic individuals, he probably did not have the total quantity of libido in mind but the manner of its investment and its comparative increase in one or the other direction. In any case, he has expressed his opinion that certainly the proportions of the libido distributed to the ego, to the object world, and to the superego are constant for every individual only within broad limits; if that is the case, the borderline between normal and pathological increase or investment should also differ in individuals of different types. Accordingly, Eidelberg may be on the right track in ascribing specific dispositions for specific neuroses to the libidinal types.⁶ It is furthermore understandable that the interest in quantity of libido has induced younger analysts to examine experimen-

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⁵ In German, “*Natur, Vollnatur.*”—E.W.

⁶ Eidelberg, “Zur Theorie und Klinik der Perversion” (On theory and treatment of perversion), *Jahrbücher f. Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, L. (1933).

tally (Bernfeld and Feitelberg⁷) or theoretically (Eidelberg) the possibility of finding methods to measure libido quantities.

Presumably no analyst doubts the existence of great constitutionally determined differences in libido quantities. We do not know specifically whether the quantity of narcissism also varies constitutionally. If we further probe the role of constitution, the narcissistic psychoses are but evidence for the fact that a given libido quantity proved insufficient to supply both narcissism *and* object libido. Surplus as well as deficit of libido may obstruct the normal distribution and investment, and thus either may cause a predominance of narcissism. It may be, moreover, that it is the necessary compensatory mechanisms of counter-cathexis which operate excessively in constitutional surplus, whereas they fail to operate in constitutional deficit, and that only in this way does the pathology and abnormality of the libido distribution become evident; even an explanation of the opposite consequence is conceivable in these complicated economic relationships. In addition, the factor of constitutionally determined quantity would explain their higher rate in certain ethnic groups or human types, whereas the factor of the conditionally determined libido quantities would explain the more than merely apparent higher rate of neuroses, specifically of narcissistic neuropsychoses, at the critical periods in everyone's life.

Despite the scanty result, the above discussion was presented for the sake of completeness. Now we return to our topic, which is at least more accessible psychoanalytically, namely, to the theoretical elucidation of the distinction between normal and pathological narcissism according to its manifestations. My previous studies have opened an access to the direct observation of narcissism, inasmuch as I discovered an index of normal narcissistic ("middle voice") cathexis in the "ego feeling." We also learned, from certain symptoms appearing in a variety of psychic processes and functions, to recognize increases as well as decreases in the ego feeling, that is, in narcis-

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⁷ Bernfeld and Feitelberg, "Ueber psychische Energie, Libido und deren Messbarkeit" (On psychic energy, libido, and their measurability), *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, XVI (1930).

sistic cathexis, and thereby the existence of different "ego boundaries." Topographically, the ego boundaries are the carriers, one could even say the mental organs, of narcissism, although the sensations, urges, and excitations stemming from the narcissistic libidinous processes pertain to a variety of erogenous zones and functions. Accordingly, a pleasurable ego feeling is the "certificate of origin" of the narcissistic cathexis of a bodily or mental ego boundary; in the former case narcissism is, as a matter of fact, an expansion of the autoerotism from which it stems; the quantities of libido which constitute narcissism are probably smaller in normal ego feeling than were those of the original, permanent autoerotic cathexes.

The term "ego boundary" should be understood in its literal sense to mean that we feel how far the ego extends, or, more correctly, the point beyond which the ego does not extend. As regards the bodily ego feeling, this means that the ego boundary does not always coincide with the body boundaries—it may either not fill them up or may extend beyond them. The latter situation is well illustrated by the driving motorist who always extends his bodily ego to the fenders of his car. Through boundaries of the mental ego feeling, on the other hand, we become aware of the fact that we experience emotions, thoughts, perceptions of all kinds, memories, and our own speech and motion as entering into the ego area from the outside, and that they belong to the ego and continue to pertain to it until they are in turn replaced by others.

With this we would have done no more than describe in different words entering into consciousness, continuing in it, and disappearing from it, were it not for the following phenomena: first, in the case of deficient libido cathexis of the ego boundaries, psychic experiences are conscious as usual and yet estranged; and, secondly, normally much which becomes conscious remains in consciousness as part of the external world and separated from the ego, whereas other contents by becoming conscious are absorbed into the ego. The difference is due to the fact that there is a variety of ego boundaries, but only one boundary for entrance into consciousness. Thus a phenomenon may connect with the ego only at the intellectual boundary, while lacking contact at all other ego boundaries; thus it is rec-

ognized and considered as belonging to the external world, although it occupies the intellectual ego boundary of the moment. A third reason which compels us to distinguish consciousness from the ego boundary implying inclusion in the ego lies in the fact that in us are a great number of various non-conscious ego states, with a variety of contents and boundaries, which may become conscious but which preconsciously or unconsciously always share in influencing our feelings and thoughts. Briefly, there are unconscious and preconscious ego boundaries, and therefore we must not identify consciousness with ego boundary.

The uniformity of a character rests on the existence of some firmly established, invariable ego states, in which the main boundaries are unchangeable as to their content and extent; it also rests on the manner in which they are cathected with libido—they become conscious as a result of various impressions, particularly on occasions arousing analogous affects. The more such invariable ego states have been formed or predisposed in a person; the more these reaction-foundations of the ego nonetheless attach new contents and reaction-directions to individual ego sectors and their ego boundaries; also, the easier certain individual non-typical ego states enter consciousness from the past in a reality-adjusted selection—the richer is the individuality.

There is a great deal of narcissistically invested libido stored up in all these ego states, with their actually or potentially ready attitudes, reactions, contents, and boundaries. These are, as was mentioned above, the counter-cathexes which permit the ego to cathect objects with sufficient stability and to endure frustrations from them. What we call “inner resources,” “to be at peace with oneself,” and “equanimity” rest on these narcissistically gratifying inner cathexes in the ego states which though past, are ready to be awakened. The analysis of resistance is directed particularly toward these ego states, insofar as they are not normal ones, and actualizes them in the transference situation. Psychoanalysis concerns itself with these ego states methodically, although it apparently aims at evoking unconscious material indiscriminately. The attention given to the arising ego states corresponds, therefore, to the importance of

the uncovering in general as well as to the significance of the uncovered material. Hence considerable narcissistic participation and satisfaction may become manifest upon the emergence of each new layer and may seem to be even more intense in appearance than it actually is, without being pathological. Gradually more and more object interest is established, free of, or accompanied by, but little narcissism. This makes the points of excessive narcissistic cathexis more conspicuous. The existence of such excessive narcissism can be recognized from the circumstance that on seemingly quite unimportant occasions the person's interest in his own current or previous ego is manifested apart from his direct object interest; frequently it occurs so far in advance of object interest that the reason for the special narcissistic investment becomes understandable only later.

Thus we find an unusual narcissistic investment of the ego in the ego, and also a particularly intense narcissism in the ego states themselves; often the investment is very emotional, full of self-pity, pathos or self-flattery and obvious self-aggrandizement—affects which may be covered up by compensatory opposite affects but will be noticeable nevertheless. Narcissism is manifest in such affects, and the fact that it becomes manifest in the affect is evidence that it is no longer of a normal kind. Affects have this in common with object interests; they appear in the relation of the ego to a stimulating something. In the case of object interests the ego enters into relationship with a libido cathected object; in the case of affects, with a libido cathected process of the ego itself. The object interest may take a simple and immediate course with stronger or weaker libido cathexis and corresponding consumption of cathexis, or this course itself may thereby be the object of the ego's interest; in the latter case a narcissistic process of cathexis, and its satisfaction, or frustration, was added to the object libidinal one.

We shall not designate every such narcissistic concomitant process as abnormal, much less as pathological, because in this way we would earmark as exceptional what is the norm among many people. However, the mentally healthy and normal people enjoy their narcissistic satisfaction, if at all, only after the act. They are so preoccupied with the object and the over-

coming of difficulties that they have no libido left for self-inspection. For Faust, "to be self-pleased" signifies the end; the fact that he rejects it so strongly proves, however, how great the temptation is. It is almost impossible to perform the "know thyself" only with inwardly directed object interest devoid of interested subject-love. Hence we shall establish the overcoming of narcissism in object libidinal interests and struggles as an ideal goal, but not as the norm. It is a different matter with narcissism that becomes manifest in affects and appears as the kind of sentimentality described above.

The relation of the affects to the drives has not yet been elucidated psychoanalytically. MacDougall's theory postulating that the affects are specific reactions of the psyche to the various drives is justified in principle; in particularities, the pertinence of its application will depend on the pertinence of the underlying theory of drives. According to Freud, the affects are centrifugal processes; this does not mean that Freud did not know or recognize the centripetal, sensitive nature of the affects; the passages in question clearly speak of both directions of the processes of discharge of excitations. But since the centrifugal direction was not yet universally known at that time—nor is it today—it was emphasized in Freud's writings. In another place Freud designated the affects as normal processes parallel to hysterical attacks. Analytically, we often speak (as Grüninger did first⁸) of affect cathexes as we do of libido cathexes, of economy, displacement, investment, or repression. Recognizing that there are changing ego boundaries cathected with libido, viz., with different kinds of libido, we understand better, economically, topically, and dynamically, the nature of the affects. We must add here that ego boundaries may also be cathected, totally or in part, with *mortido* (*destrudo*).

Affects always develop between two ego boundaries acting on each other, and differ according to the kind of drive cathexis of the ego at these boundaries: it may be libido of different

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⁸U. Grüninger, "Zum Problem der Affektverschiebung" (On the Displacement of Affects), Zurich, 1917; *Internat. Zeitschrift f. Psychoanalyse*, VII (1921).

kinds, active or passive, *mortido* (or *destrudo*) of different kinds, active or passive: at specific ego boundaries, one of which may pertain to a previous ego state which is entering consciousness—that is, to the more adolescent or infantile ego. Therefore, affects are the mutually developing sensations which the drive cathexis of the ego arouses in the drive cathected ego. In this way we understand the manifold nuances of affects of the same kind, their manifold mixture and shading, their displaceability, and the simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal nature of the discharge of their excitation. We must assume that they arise precisely at the ego boundaries because, frequently, the affects are subject to specific and very peculiar sensations of estrangement. The affect of shame, for instance, arises if a sexually, and especially an exhibitionistically, cathected ego boundary acts on an ego boundary cathected with anxiety. Grief develops if an ego boundary cathected with *mortido* (or *destrudo*) acts on one which is cathected with object libido. Freud once interpreted hatred as the relation of the (total) ego to the object, and added that the drive itself could not hate.⁹ Therefore we should supplement our definition of such affects as are directly concerned with the external world with the statement that an affect may also develop if an ego boundary is affected by an object cathexis. But on closer scrutiny we find that hatred is one of the cases in which the affect-exciting object brings the current ego boundary—cathected with aggression, with active *mortido*—into relationship with previous ego states in which the ego boundaries have been cathected in the same manner; for hatred always “rises”; it is already prepared, and merely renews itself in the current ego state. Other ego boundaries with libidinal cathexes may complicate the feeling of hatred for the object concerned. Ambivalence, too, becomes possible by diverse cathexes of two ego boundaries.

Although anxiety and terror are so intimately tied up with feelings of estrangement (as terror arouses estrangement which, on the other hand, precedes or accompanies intense feelings of anxiety), and although so many authors considered them the causes of estrangement, I find no statement and remember no

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⁹ Freud, “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes,” *Collected Papers*, IV, 79f.

experience of my own to the effect that anxiety itself was estranged. This is so because anxiety develops *in* the ego,¹⁰ not at the ego boundary. This is not true for fear, nor is it true for the bodily sensations accompanying full-fledged anxiety; for both, feelings of estrangement may exist. It might be justifiable to subsume anxiety under the unitary conception of affects, because one sees anxiety develop in the total mental ego when the bodily ego comes under the sway of imminent death or under the full impact of the death drive. However, there are no peripheral boundaries between bodily ego and mental ego at which the ego cathexes would act upon each other as they do at different boundaries of the mental ego. Therefore, wherever relations between bodily ego and mental ego have to be described—as, for instance, in conversion and in the somatic components of anxiety and of other affects—one first has to do justice to the complicated topographic relationship between mental ego and bodily ego, which demands particularly careful observation. However, I shall not consider this my task here, although the subject matter of narcissism would require the previous solution of this problem for the very reason that narcissism is genetically connected with autoerotism, and that, in its manifestation as perversion, its object is one's own body.

We have not transgressed our topic by discussing the affect of anxiety. The interrelation between anxiety and libido—narcissistic as well as object libido—is as important clinically as it is theoretically. If there is no narcissistic cathexis, the reaction to sudden danger will be apathetic terror and paralysis, but not the very peculiar sensation of anxiety in which the ego feel-

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¹⁰Likewise, it is striking that estranged persons do not complain that their will is estranged, although they complain about its disturbance, withdrawal, and intractability, and objectively it often appears to be more disturbed than are the affects, concerning whose estrangement the patients complain so much and so variously. Thus, this experience, unless it is based on insufficient observations which will have to be corrected, would indicate that the function of volition pertains to the total ego, and not to the ego boundaries, as I pointed out in another paper ("Ego Feeling in Dreams," Chapter 3). The motor activity—as executive organ and executive function—must be clearly distinguished from volition (function) and organ.

ing, on the contrary, is greatly increased. Thus anxiety is the best example to illustrate the way in which libido cathexis and mortido cathexis merge in the unity of an affect.

On the other hand, the affect of guilt feeling, in its pure form, is experienced in an entirely different manner. Consequently, it will not do to designate the feeling of guilt (and also, frequently, the feeling of shame) as social anxiety, whereby the feeling of guilt is considered predominantly anxiety in the face of punishment (and shame predominantly anxiety in the face of depreciation and abandonment). Since we speak here of "anxiety in the face of something,"¹¹ it is apparent that, properly, we are dealing with the addition of fear. Via the genetic and experiential engrams, the fear of punishment has become tied up with the entirely different affect of guilt, both unconsciously and consciously. In the case of strong guilt feeling, the true affect of anxiety also occurs regularly for unconscious reasons—among them, probably, those assumed in *Totem and Tabu*, the objections of the professional anthropologists notwithstanding. It is the biological task of the ego to act throughout in the interest of the individual; likewise the ego enjoys as its own success all success and pleasure which the individual gains from the ego's achievement, and it painfully experiences the failures as its own misfortune, and the counter-attacks of others, insofar as they are retaliation, as its own punishment. But not every feeling of guilt contains components of anxiety and punishment. For example, one may have feelings of guilt for not having yielded to an upsurge of hatred, without any motivation for social anxiety or fear.

The feeling of guilt demonstrates clearly that affects develop as feelings of tension between two ego states. In fact, it was this particular affect which first made me aware of this topographic condition. In relation to an object representation, two ego states join; in the case of an unconscious feeling of guilt, both are past ego states; in the case of conscious guilt feeling, one is the current ego state and one (or several) stem from the past. The instinctual cathexis of the current ego state differs from that of the past. If the difference increases to the point at

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¹¹In the German original, "*Angst vor etwas.*"—E.W.

which they become antithetic, and if a significant relationship and a significant reaction are concerned, the feeling of regret is transformed into guilt feeling. We are used to applying the term guilt feelings only when the antitheses of the cathexes are subjected to ethical judgment—that is, when social condemnation and fear of punishment augment the antitheses. However, close scrutiny reveals that the same type of affect, although of lesser intensity, springs from every kind of antithetic behavior, given subjective significance and reaction. As soon as one's own past behavior no longer has one's own approval, a slight feeling of guilt is experienced, side by side with intellectual self-judgment.

If the antitheses in question are accentuated morally to a high degree, as is the case whenever an intense feeling of guilt arises, and if, in particular, an ego attitude of love or hate has yielded to an opposite one, there is a strong feeling of unbalance, of unadjustability, of inability to reach a solution, of the antithesis of cathexes; we experience as guilt feeling, with regard to the past reaction, the state of tension generated by this incompatibility. The intellectual labor which dissects the reaction in its details, its motivations, its justifications, its inevitability or omission, its good and bad consequences, again brings the subject matter, in all details, into contact with both ego states; this is brought about by every intellectual act, regardless of whether the past reaction constituted an act or an omission, and even if either were no more than intended or contemplated. The unbalanced state is in itself tormenting; the reproaches of the superego exacerbate it; both lead to the well known end-state of the need for punishment, the compulsion to confess, to self-condemnation and readiness for atonement—a state which externalizes the unbalance toward the external world and thus liberates the ego from the inner dissension inherent in the feeling of guilt.

Such antitheses of attitudes occur even in early childhood whenever the child in his current ego state adopts the attitudes of his educators; they also occur later on, whenever he identifies himself with them. Gradually all ego states of these identifications merge into the superego, which has sharp boundaries to-

ward the "ego," the latter being only partially influenced by identification. Edoardo Weiss has published observations according to which the superego may originate in a traumatic manner. This can only mean that feelings of guilt which have arisen as a result of intense conflicts, rather than chronic and minor ones, are retained in memory and that the strengthening of the superego is experienced as contrition. Accordingly, whether the superego develops before the Oedipus period seems to be a sham problem; feelings of guilt exist much earlier, but only gradually and much later does the superego obtain its sharp boundaries toward the ego, which have been prepared by the same cathexes as the ego's. From then on feelings of guilt develop, as a rule, between the interacting boundaries of the superego and the ego.

The feeling of guilt, no more than anxiety, is not merely an unsettled conflict of aggressive tendencies between superego and ego, or between two ego states. The contacting boundaries must also be partly cathected with libido. Without this libidinal component, we find the self-hatred of melancholia instead of the normal feeling of guilt, or—as in pathological mourning—an indifferent, estranged guilt feeling. In this respect the feeling of guilt may be counted among the narcissistic affects.

The topography of the development of affects between two ego boundaries, as discussed above, makes it clearly understandable that both centripetal and centrifugal discharge of excitation pertain to the affect; my own use of this term is orientated toward the ego, while Freud in using it wanted to emphasize the fact that, in analogy with motor activity, the affects discharge excitations into the somatic system, that is, to the muscles, blood vessels, and glands, both ductless and secreting. Precisely this typical consequence of increase in affect, which, as a matter of fact, can be controlled or reduced completely or partially (controlled in motor activity, reduced in innervations of vessels and glands), agrees with our conception of the affects. In the encounter of ego boundaries, drive cathexes are freed or are turned from the resting state to discharge, and if their energies have not been used up in the psychic experience, they are transferred into the somatic system.

Therefore, the readiness for excitation and discharge of affects also depends upon the state of libidinal tension, bodily as well as mental—in toto, as well as in particular instinctual areas.

It is also quite evident that the affects, like the drive processes, are partially “resting” and in tension, and partially are mobile, increasing and discharging. As the ego meets with itself at drive cathected boundaries, these not only receive, like sense organs, the stimulus of the impression of the other drive cathexis, but there occurs also a sort of libidinal satisfaction—under inadequate conditions if the drive cathexes differ in kind, under adequate conditions if they are of the same kind. In the former case the affect is a complicated one, frequently somewhat confusing, and in spite of its libidinal nature it is somewhat painful and tormenting; in the latter case it is simple, either pleasurable or unpleasurable, and is self-increasing. Every discharge of an affect contains a component of pleasurable satisfaction, because libido quantities are merged and dissolved, and an element of unpleasure, inasmuch as cathexes are not in agreement with each other. The solution of drive cathexes in the affect is not complete; a new sensation¹² comes about, different from each participating drive cathexis, precisely the peculiar affect itself; it still contains excitation energy which im-

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¹²Every affect is a characteristic sensation apart from topography, dynamics, and economics. It is the specific mode of sensation of the manner in which the adjustment at the ego boundaries occurs, whether it fails or succeeds, is rapid or delayed, expands or shrinks, and depending precisely upon the specific, highly differentiated types of drive cathexes involved. Every affect has its course of discharge, in which the ego boundaries often change—particularly if, in the affect, a libido adjustment occurs between them. In the affects one can find again the justification for the first economic theory of pleasure and pain. Actually the feeling of guilt with its unsettled tension is exclusively tormenting; this is not true for anxiety of minor degree, and certainly not for compassion. The latter arises between one’s own ego and an ego boundary which includes the pitied individual; the tension of the unpleasurable feeling dissolves in pathos, pity, *Weltschmerz*, depending on whether the other ego is included in one’s own, whether one’s own ego loses itself in the other, or whether the ego boundaries expand to a universal extent. The pleasurable nature of the affects depends on the qualities of the drives which cathect the ego boundaries; this is particularly clear in the feeling of shame, the pleasurable component of which stems directly from sexuality.

parts itself to the entire ego in so far as the latter does not regulate and curb its expansion.

The fact that the affects come into being at the ego boundaries does not mean that the drive cathexes—similar perhaps to electric tensions—are only peripheral excitations. It is always the entire ego, or individual functions or parts of it, which are libidinally cathected; the term “ego boundary” merely serves to express the concept that the cathexis unit which constitutes the ego always has a sharp delimitation, including specific functions and contents and excluding others. The fact that there exists a precise ego feeling also speaks against Schilder’s theory of varying “ego nearness” and “ego distance” in normal mental life. In any case, we are justified in speaking of the affect cathexes of an ego boundary, although this seems to contradict the interpretation, given above, that the affect in general arises only from the encounter of drive-cathected ego boundaries. Every affect is a phenomenon that has arisen dynamically and contains energies of cathexis which at any given moment imbue the ego within its boundaries with a specific quality of feeling and excitation, and which continue to act at the same or other boundaries so that further affects can arise by a new encounter of an ego boundary cathected affectively or instinctually—there is no end to the possible complications. The surplus energies flow off into the somatic system. When we consider that the affects arise from an encounter of the ego with itself, we understand that the study of narcissism had to lead us to this examination of the affects; we understand also that in non-analytical literature many manifestations of narcissism are described in terms of the affective qualities of self-complacency, coquetry, vanity, and pride, while the ubiquity and significance of the libido extant in the ego is not recognized. Jung’s classification of character structures into introverted and extraverted types did justice to the significance of narcissism.

We now return from the examination of the affects in relation to narcissism to the behavior of the patient when in analysis former ego states emerge. It is normal that more or less strong affects arise at these occasions; sometimes they take time to become manifest and intense, at other times they erupt so suddenly that they then take hold of the rest of the

ego more or less intensively, totally or partially, only to fade away again or to be disposed of in some other manner. The ego participates in each such dramatic occurrence, either joyfully or with suffering, and defending itself with libido cathexes which either continue to exist in an unsatisfied state or are satisfied and come to rest. In the case of increased narcissism, however, the ego is, in addition, particularly concerned with the process of disposing of the affects and participates in it narcissistically; it is up to our subjective judgment to determine which degree of narcissistic participation has to be considered as pathological. To the individuals concerned, this participation is so natural and such a matter of course that they become aware of the abnormality of their behavior only by having their attention directed either to less narcissistically cathected processes in their other fields of experience or to the conduct of other, less narcissistic persons. Increased narcissistic investment is unhealthy in several ways: it increases affectivity, and with it subjectivity as well, in a diffuse, useless manner; it falsifies all kinds of conceptions; it consumes libido which should benefit reality adjustment and the objects; it prevents relationships with other persons; it offends these others, while both sides, unless analyzed, fail to understand the causes or to know correctly the reasons; increased narcissism makes people experience everything doubly, as it were, and thus it produces an abnormal life rhythm. We shall come back to this later in discussing the distinction between normal and pathological narcissistic phantasies. On the other hand, however, strong participation in one's own experiences, affirmation of one's own affective reactions, and satisfaction with one's own personality—that is to say, attitudes we must call narcissistic—are useful and healthy bases for relations with the external world, as we have pointed out before in general; specifically, they are the narcissistic counter-cathexes to the multitude of object libidinal attachments.

I started here from the observation of narcissistic behavior during analysis because this situation frequently permits us to comprehend, to examine, and even to simply notice the details of the cathexis processes; otherwise we evaluate our impressions only through empathy or according to our background of experience. However, narcissistic behavior during

analysis does not differ from that which is constantly demonstrated in life in general and, of course, also in our own lives, provided we observe or analyze ourselves in a sufficiently objective manner. When we find the narcissistic reaction to be exaggerated or different from that which we expect in normal behavior, we should not immediately think of unchangeable anomalies of character, constitutionally or otherwise endogenously determined, but of reactive anomalies, the particular genetic causes of which we must discover; they are partly complex-determined, in Jung's sense, and partly typical and general reactions to typical and general influences since early childhood.

The fact that an individual acts out his experiences excessively in a narcissistic manner may betray a kind of ego weakness—in fact, paradoxically, it may indicate a lack of normal narcissistic counter-cathexes. In addition, such behavior frequently is the continuation of the general behavior of the parents toward the little child who was not permitted to develop, nor to experience his development, naively. This behavior of the environment is perpetuated, not only in the superego, but also in the ego in the form of self-observation. I am referring to this familiar constellation, which is not an original psychoanalytical insight, only in order to point out that we may use the term “ego weakness,” which for a time was applied so liberally, also in regard to the behavior of the ego boundaries insofar as it is typical for the individual; moreover, we may be able more precisely to characterize the specific kind of ego weakness. Whether the excess of narcissistic reaction described above could be designated as ego weakness is a problem I leave undecided; it may signify a continuous readiness and an excessive preponderance of the ego which need not have developed as a reaction against one's own weaknesses, as the typical Adlerian mechanism would have it.¹³

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¹³Nor will intense affectivity revealing itself in violent affective reactions be judged as ego weakness by common standards. Not everyone will agree with Nietzsche who designated as “robust” that conscience which does not react easily, however brilliant and broad in meaning this paradox may be.

However, we are in a position to gauge the lability and stability of the ego boundaries, and we shall speak of ego weakness whenever the former excessively outweighs the latter. On the other hand, one can recognize an abnormal ego rigidity or ego weight in excessive stability. An ego formation in which the ego boundaries can change rapidly and easily but remain stable at any time if a standpoint must be held or defended, should be considered ideal. Although these differences have been repeatedly described by the characterologists, I discuss them here because in order to understand them one must pay attention to the ego boundaries and the narcissistic counter-cathexis.

We find, then, different resistances toward internal and external influences upon the ego in each individual at different times and states of readiness, and constantly in different individuals. We have discussed the internal influences in another context, although not exhaustively; the external ones derive chiefly from other individuals or from the ideas of others, principally in the same manner as we learned from Freud's group psychology. There are persons who at any time expand their ego boundaries to include every new impression; hence they are ready always to absorb new and different objects into the ego—in other words, to cathect them with ego feeling, with narcissistic libido—and to thus engage in always new identifications. To such uninhibited expansion of the ego boundary there is not always a corresponding equally rapid and uninhibited withdrawal. Individuals with a steady and solid ego boundary are unable to understand those with a soft and mobile boundary. The possibility of absolute resistance of the ego boundary is evidenced by the existence of the group of professions from the executioner down and upward to Tamerlane and his like. The consent of the superego to such activities—the moral question, that is, which does not concern us here—is made possible by the division of responsibilities in the social order. In contrast, the compassionate character, sensitive as a mimosa, is never able to keep his ego completely to himself. A brilliant physician and analyst has called such persons "identification-acrobats."

The resistance of the ego boundaries—the durity of the ego

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It seems self-evident that the ego, this mighty and always ready cathexis center, must have a specific biological task, and hence be more than the psychologically artificially isolated area common to the functions of body and mind. To identify this task would almost seem to me superfluous and banal, were it not that I remember my own amazement at the result when I clarified the question for myself, and had not as brilliant a thinker as Rudolf Goldscheid¹⁴ urged me to put it down in writing. The ego has the biological function of attending to the interests of the living being it regulates (that is, defense, attack, nourishment, housing, and so forth up to the sexual, to love, and to the most refined individual cultural needs) and must attend to them automatically and unconditionally, though, in civilized society under restraint by the superego and in directions imposed by all the tendencies previously absorbed into the ego. For biological reasons, the family ties, which derivate from nest-building and parental care in animals,

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¹⁴Austrian social-philosopher (1870-1931).—E.W.

belong among the interests of the individual, and therefore attending to them belongs among the spontaneously accepted ego functions. This biological function of the ego undoubtedly demonstrates that egoism is the necessary and justified basis of all individual existence. This formula corresponds with actual observations and exempts us from the hypocrisy of disowning egoism and yet being continuously obliged to practise it, and it also removes the incompatibility of egoism with altruism, doing away with the frequently sophistical arguments of whether in the last resort altruism is nothing but a kind of egoism. Thus, the biological function of narcissism, which Freud designated as the libidinal process parallel to egoism, also becomes evident.

The ego has to accomplish difficult tasks; due to the cathexis of the ego functions with libido, the ego obtains narcissistic pleasure premiums in all its functions. In the animal, and in simple conditions of human society, the individual's strength and capacity just suffice to carry out the task of biological self-assertion; accordingly, the ego has cathected with libido only the egoistic biological functions, in the narrow sense. In fact, this accomplishment appears to be a sufficiently large and difficult task to many persons in culture and society; hence the obduracy with which they defend themselves against any expansion of their ego boundaries constitutes for them a natural and normal act of self-protection. With the expansion of opportunities for achievement through cultural development in all directions, the individual, in community with others and participating functionally in community achievements, has also acquired abilities which go far beyond those of the single individual. Accordingly, the ego boundaries could expand, and functions which far exceed the narrow self-interest could likewise obtain their narcissistic cathexis and be invested with the narcissistic pleasure premium. Consequently, that individual appears harmonious who has well balanced the compass and amount of his interests, abilities, and narcissistic cathexis. Thus the theory of narcissism and its application for the understanding of the ego becomes, if not a new starting point, a new foundation for understanding social integration and integrative ability.

For the purpose of our topic, we recognize that lability of the ego boundaries, unless it is tied up with special achievements and abilities of the individual, must involve conflicts and shortcomings which may lead to neurotic disturbances. On the other hand it may originate as a consequence of neurotic conflicts and as compensation for object libidinal deprivations. Yet lability of the ego boundaries is certainly partly also constitutionally predisposed; we find it, as a rule, in markedly infantile individuals, and also, particularly, in those who are bisexual. Masochism, which is causally and probably also constitutionally determined by infantilism and bisexuality, makes for greater passivity and easier destructability, hence for greater mobility of the narcissistic cathexis of the ego boundaries. The bisexual disposition permits more rapid identifications with individuals of the same sex, also because it interferes with the heterosexual object libidinal relations. In woman, a predominantly masculine disposition interferes with the normal sexual use of feminine passivity and thus predisposes to a masochistic attitude of the ego and, thereby, to lability of the ego boundaries.

As we stated earlier, readiness for identification is a consequence of cultural development. It is unquestionably true that civilization offers a relatively great protection against the severe adversities of life—cold, hunger, and enemies who threaten death, castration, and slavery. By such protection a softening of the resistance of the ego boundaries became permissible and was achieved. On the other hand, only the further progress of civilization has permitted, and also effected, the restriction to the individual ego of the familiar ego boundary expanded to the group ego, which existed phylogenetically through long periods of time. The existence of this group ego, however, did not indicate a weakness of the ego boundary, but a permanent and very resistant expansion of the ego, encompassing the homogeneous mental ego feeling and probably also the bodily ego feeling. Therefore we may state that civilization gave rise, first, to the resistance of the ego boundary in the group ego and, later, to the resistance of the ego boundary in the individual ego, and that finally it permitted the special expansion of the ego and a particular lability of its

boundaries to certain individuals—of whom some have been soft-hearted, kind, and humanitarian, and others only weak. On the other hand, we witness again and again regressions to the ego boundaries of a group ego, though an expanded one, which always prove particularly resistant.

Another kind of ego weakness is to be distinguished on principle from the lability of the ego boundaries; we became aware of it, too, through the concepts which have been presented here: ego feeling, ego boundaries, and narcissistic counter-cathexis. We are referring to a process which is responsible for the stability or lability of the ego attitudes. As a rule we may consider this process as normal, if the total ego remains in psychic equilibrium—that is to say, does not lose its narcissistic cathexes—in spite of the occurrence of a special achievement, for instance, an intense affective engagement. It is pathological, on the other hand, if almost the entire ego feeling—that is to say, a surplus of narcissistic cathexis—is concentrated on these boundaries, and the entire ego submits without resistance to the affective engagement. Naturally this does not apply to unusually grave events. But even under such circumstances, it will make a difference whether the ego has been affected only secondarily or whether, as it were, it suffers in its structuring cathexis which is felt to maintain the ego. We find two terms for affects of the same kind in linguistic usage, depending on whether the affects have overwhelmed the total ego or whether its stability has remained intact. For example, Freud once suggested, without ever coming back to the question, that anxiety and fear are distinguished by the fact that fear has an object while anxiety is an objectless mental state. This is not so. The most significant difference lies in the circumstance that anxiety takes hold of the total ego, and fear only of a part of the ego at that boundary which is turned toward the feared object. In fear, the sensation of danger exists only at the ego boundary threatened by that danger. The seizure of the total ego by the feeling of danger, or, as I stated earlier, by hallucinated terror, interferes with observation of the direction of the object from which the danger threatens. Furthermore, a feeling of fear may be intense without becoming anxiety, and a feeling of anxiety may have low

intensity; yet the latter is anxiety, because the entire ego has been seized with a feeling of danger, though only a faint one. Another difference between fear and anxiety runs parallel to this one. If one compares both feelings, both contain the conception of terror; Adler, too, described anxiety as hallucinated danger. But anxiety is the feeling of a *flight inhibited* by the conception of terror, fear the feeling of *self-defense inhibited* in the same way. The anxious person therefore experiences, "senses," the threat of danger always as coming from behind; the person in fear has the threat before his eyes, actually or mentally. Thus anxiety may join fear or fear may join anxiety, or the one may transform into the other.

The same antithesis between seizure of the entire ego and of only one part of the ego is expressed in the word pairs: "rage and anger," "agony and pain," "grief and sorrow," "temper and mood," and perhaps also in "expiation and penitence," "revenge and retaliation," and "passion and love." Whether the ego participates only at one ego boundary or in its entirety is the difference which decides whether something merely happens to the ego or whether something overwhelms it. In the first case the ego can resolve the imposed affect-excitation within itself, with the aid of the other ego boundaries; in the other case, the overwhelming excitation must first have taken its course.

Identifications are differentiated in the same manner; they may involve the entire ego or only one part of it. The mechanism operative in either kind of identification is probably a different one. Only the identification involving the entire ego deserves the name "introjection of the object," which was introduced by Ferenczi;¹⁵ this kind of identification stems from unconscious oral or intestinal incorporation, or from unconscious phantasies of return into the womb. These ego expansions go deep and far back into the past. Those occurring

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¹⁵In later discussions with the editor, Federn rejected Ferenczi's term "introjection," since nothing is "thrown" into the ego in the phenomenon of identification. He preferred to call this phenomenon "internalization of an object." The expansion of the ego cathexis over an object is what Federn would call "egotization," which is the translation of Federn's term *Verichtung*, or *Einichtung*.—E.W.

later, ordinarily through identification, rest directly on the extension of the ego boundaries, mental and bodily, so that they now include the other person within themselves. The same phenomenon also occurs in every object relation or interest in an object, but then in only a transitory manner at the ego boundary which exists at that time. In the case of identification, the expansion of the ego boundary is lasting and occurs at a steadily increasing number of ego boundaries. This is a slow process of gradual union which takes place repeatedly, but each time involves only part of the ego. Fixated in infantile development and unconsciously, the feeling of belonging to the loved persons repeats itself in these identification processes; it always implies an extension upon them of the ego feeling, that is, of the narcissistic cathexis of the ego; the expansion of the bodily ego feeling of the child who snuggles close to the protecting figure, or who is held and carried by him, is also repeated.

Fusion with another person through clinging and embracing occurs with strong libidinal cathexis, which contains genital, sensual, and tender urges, tactile and muscular libido (for instance, from the clinging drive described by Hermann), and other components. Through the inclusion of his person in the ego of the loved person with whom he thereby feels identified, as one, the small child feels not only fearless and protected, but also of increased bodily size and freed from the experience of the weakness of his ego. And yet even such early identifications are determined by purpose and are partial, unlike the first ones which involve the entire ego. On the other hand, it is probable that every total identification is based on the phylogenetically fixated unity of the individual with the universe—that is, the primary narcissistic cathexis unity, which, as we pointed out earlier, may be renewed at the occasion of the expansion of the ego boundaries into the group ego. It may be assumed that the formation of a strong superego is partly predisposed phylogenetically; yet the extremely great differences among individuals in regard to the strength and totality of the superego in its action on the ego suggest the assumption that in ontogenesis, too, there is a wide variation in the depth at which the mechanism operates and in the strength of ca-

thesis in the identifications which contribute to the formation of the superego.

I have not hesitated to speak, repeatedly, of satisfied and unsatisfied narcissism; this distinction, which does not appear in either Freud's first paper, "On Narcissism: An Introduction,"¹⁶ nor in his later writings, was forced upon me by the observation of narcissistic behavior. (However, I am no longer the only one aware of it, and I need not draw others' attention to it.) To distinguish whether narcissism is healthy or pathological it is doubtless most important to know that its satisfaction is possible, the manner in which it occurs, and then, in the individual case, to ascertain the success in achieving satisfaction and on what this success is contingent—knowledge, as it were, of the conditions for successful love in narcissistic cathexes. Nevertheless, one feels a resistance to using the same term for the satisfaction of object libidinal desire and of narcissistic tension. It is also noteworthy that long before we were interested in the possibility of satisfaction of the narcissistic need, the lack of that satisfaction and the disappointment in, and denial of, narcissistic pleasure was widely known; for a time it seemed to be an almost fashionable interpretation in psychoanalysis. Everyone was pleased if he had found a "narcissistic injury" to have been pathogenic. The consequences of failure of narcissistic satisfaction had attracted attention earlier than the ordinary state of satisfaction; as indeed, it is usually only the lack of something to which we are thoroughly accustomed that makes us aware of its existence.

The difficulty is due somewhat to an obscurity of the terminology and, remotely, to a difficulty in understanding the libido theory, but essentially it is due to the nature of the narcissistic cathexes, to the ego libido itself. The difficulty in terminology I mentioned before: it is assumed that the concept of narcissism implies the lack of an object, whereas libidinal satisfaction implies the union with, the reaching of, an object; or, again, in autoerotism it implies the increase of fore-pleasure up to the achievement of end-pleasure, if in the absence of an object, yet at an erogenous zone through an erotic

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¹⁶Freud, *Collected Papers*, IV, 30 ff.

or sexual process by which the goal of the sexual drive is reached. However, narcissism is autoerotism raised to the mental level; its subject—and in secondary narcissism its object as well—is the ego, or a part or a function of the ego, and, as we discussed above, the ego boundaries are analogous to the erogenous zones in bodily libido processes.

At this stage of theoretical conceptualization of the libido we are faced, as always at the point of transition from the bodily to the mental field, with an insuperable difficulty: as soon as we want to replace by specific terms the very general expressions which are hardly more than figurative illustrations, we either have to apply to the mental field concepts suited for somatic phenomena, or vice versa. The use of the term “erogenous zones” to describe the mental experience of the ego boundaries,¹⁷ must not induce the reader to misunderstand my presentation as implying that somatic-libidinal processes occur at the ego boundaries in the same manner as at erogenous zones. However, we know of processes and states in the mental ego—sensations of exaltation and satisfaction in the mind—whose analogy to erotic and sexual occurrences has always been demonstrated by language, poetry, music, and philosophy, and whose actual connection with sexuality has been discovered and demonstrated by psychoanalytic libido theory, descriptively and genetically, clinically and in normal psychology. It will be a further task of psychoanalysis and biology to find out to what extent and detail the mental processes parallel the bodily ones, and how many somatic phenomena may and must be transposed to the mental level—how far we may get, as a matter of fact, if we apply *the libido theory to the limit*.

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¹⁷I am well aware of the fact that the expression “ego boundary” also has a too geographical and bodily implication; this has been a considerable obstacle to the acceptance of my findings. However, we do not speak as mind to mind, but as beings oriented by the senses, and we have to be satisfied with designations which orient three-dimensionally. The reader of good will, whose resistance has been overcome, will succeed in translating terms correctly to the corresponding mental experience as intended by the author, and thus he will be able to follow the subsequent progress of our understanding.

From the heuristic point of view, it is enticing to push the transposition far, but this is of scientific value only in so far as facts become known which cannot, at present, be interpreted otherwise.

Such a fact is the existence of ego libido which allows us, like Narcissus, to gain pleasure from our own ego and, also, to injure ourselves or to suffer narcissistically as a consequence of object libidinal frustrations or disappointments. The ego libido constantly pervades the ego. Its lack creates the obvious impression that the individual finds no true satisfaction either from himself or from objects; whereas an increase of ego libido makes the individual excitable to the point of hypersensitivity and joyful tension. We must assume, furthermore, that ego libido can be satisfied through fulfillment of the claims on one's own ego, i.e., approximating the ego ideal, and that it can be injured to the point of loss of ego libidinal cathexis, if, time and again, such satisfactions fail to materialize; but we must not assume that this satisfaction is comparable to that in object erotism, because we do not know of any process which corresponds to that of sexual union with the object.

The obvious—but, as far as I know, not yet explicitly formulated—interpretation for all these phenomena seems to me to be that ego libido, from simple ego feeling to most intense narcissistic tension and self-absorption, always maintains the character of *fore-pleasure*. This corresponds to the essential nature of autoerotism, from which narcissism stems and to which it is analogous. Nevertheless, autoerotism can reach end-pleasure, in imitation of normal sexuality. The mental ego lacks adequate organs for this purpose. Whenever a person tells us of an ecstatic, mystic, or artistic exaltation of libidinal satisfaction to an orgasm-like state, we usually learn of simultaneous autoerotic end-pleasure. It is not impossible, of course, that processes similar to end-pleasure and orgasm exist in the mental field also. (See Radó's "alimentary orgasm," and W. Reich's explanation of epileptic seizures.) I myself am inclined to assume that all wish fulfillments are attended by cellular processes which, with the union of female and male elements and energies, belong among the sexual ones. But this

pursues the libido theory to the limits; the idea is not demonstrable, it is, in the sense of Plato, only *alethes doxa* (true belief), and not *episteme* (real knowledge).

If we stay within the framework of established and verifiable knowledge, we may say that the narcissistic cathexis achieves no more than fore-pleasure which actually does not constitute full satisfaction. Therefore, we have agreed with, and simultaneously explained, the view of Freud and later authors that it is not correct to speak of satisfaction of narcissism. However, after this clarification, we are justified in using the term if we take into account that fore-pleasure also provides a certain amount of satisfaction. As a matter of fact, civilized mankind lives, to an extraordinary degree, in a state of somatic fore-pleasure tension, due to the cultural restriction of sexual gratification which has resulted from the substitution of the rut periods of the animal world by a perenniality of the sexual drive. People find much and intensive satisfaction, or rather—since that term is incorrect—much pleasure in this state. Fore-pleasure, which in the normal sexual act increases progressively until end-pleasure is reached, may last a short or long time at any stage. Hence, one may also speak of more or less pleasurable satisfaction of fore-pleasure. The same is true for narcissism, which may, in certain persons, provide pleasure in different affective experiences and, as we know, at different ego boundaries, at variably or perpetually different levels. The ease with which some people in most uninteresting occupations live is based on healthy narcissism. Sublimation, too, rests essentially on the substitution of ego libido for autoerotism, on the subsequent inclusion, into the mental ego as well as the bodily ego, of the aim of the drive which is to be sublimated, and on the cathexis, with mental ego feeling, of the achievements which become valuable by sublimation; the mental ego feeling incorporates into the function the libidinal component which stems from the sublimated drive. Thus we understand that the fore-pleasure tension contained in narcissism should be conducive to all processes of sublimation; sublimation is its permissible investment, resolution, and reversal to the object in accordance with cultural demands.

Obviously, in the case of narcissism, we should not speak of direct satisfaction if the fulfillment of narcissistically cathected desires, the realization of narcissistic attitudes, and the confirmation of narcissistic self-elevation occur through others. Rather, it is merely the condition under which, at any given time, the level of fore-pleasure may become and remain high, which depends on all of these and on other similar opportunities and fulfillments. Now we are able to add a theoretical interpretation to the impression, mentioned early in this paper, that in practical work with patients we are able spontaneously to spot normal and non-normal expressions of narcissism. The higher the level of fore-pleasure cathexis which must be reached and maintained, the more numerous are the conditions which have to be fulfilled, and the greater becomes the danger of failure. Hence ensue unrest, commotion, and search for restitution of the missed feelings of fore-pleasure.

The lowering of the level of libido is an unpleasant experience; it is understandable that other opportunities for libidinal cathexis are sought through further libidinal excitation; the ego boundaries become labile; moreover, the unsatisfied libidinal cathexis more readily expands to include the entire ego. We do not know how autoerotic libido is converted into ego libido, nor what enables ego libido to maintain a higher or lower permanent level of fore-pleasure in the form of narcissistic cathexes. We can only assume that in this kind of fore-pleasure—as in somatic autoerotic processes—libidinal excitation, and thus libidinal energy, is consumed and that the cathexis level is always re-established anew by the body (through glandular hormones and sexual stimuli) and by the mind as well (through object libidinal stimuli and through object libidinal cathexes which seek and find satisfaction), and that thus a certain degree of fore-pleasure is always re-established. To this purpose narcissism also directs the investment of object libido. In addition, it is understandable that whenever fore-pleasure must be maintained at a permanently high level, the readiness for anxiety will be greater; in fact, we can observe this in pathologically increased narcissism. This constellation creates a vicious circle as anxiety probably uses up libido and allows the ego boundaries to be-

come more labile; and in turn, anxiety probably increases the libidinal cathexis. We can further see the difference between healthy and pathological narcissism in the circumstance that for the former it is sufficient to establish and to maintain a comparatively low level of fore-pleasure, and the level may be raised at any given moment that the conditions are fulfilled; one may guess that in addition there is no need of excessive libido displacement or, possibly, of undesirable libido cathexes such as, for instance, excessively perverse ones, or ones that are conflictual in regard to their object. The maintenance of a sufficient amount of countercathexes of a narcissistic and object libidinal nature toward the displacements and increases may also be mandatory. The permanent narcissistic level which is experienced as well-being in the ego feeling is probably relatively high in normal narcissism.

We have expressed in the intricate language of the libido theory what the novelists are able to render far more vividly by describing restless, self-searching, and excitable talk and behavior, or what, in psychological and medical books, is communicated in a few sentences in the descriptions of certain psychopaths. The psychoanalyst, indeed, should not see his task as consisting in the observation and description of these modes of behavior, but rather in the understanding of the dynamics involved and of the relationships with the rest of the libidinal economy. Therefore, it seemed to me of practical importance to emphasize that narcissism is fore-pleasure, and to make it clear that, first, such narcissistic fore-pleasure varies on a scale from the beginning of excitation to end-pleasure and, secondly, that the degree of satisfaction depends on this, as well as on the intensity and extension of the libido cathexes. All of this does not transcend the teachings of Freud concerning the goal inhibited drives. Clearly such drives may remain fixated to intermediate goals in the ego and only indirectly approach the object, or they may remain fixated to external objects and thereby indirectly approach a goal set in the ego. Whatever, in the form of resistance, inhibits the achievement of the goal may, through this goal inhibition, itself become the libido cathected intermediate goal; frequently this is the road to sublimation.

The original goal has been renounced for good; the new goal appears more beautiful and more desirable, but is unattainable. Just as the handsome shepherd-boy's love was not satisfied by any other object and he perished because he found the object in himself, so in the same way this tragedy is repeated, though less violently, in every narcissistic love; occurring between two ego boundaries, it seeks fulfillment in vain in the reflection in the mirror. By turning away from the original goal, it has *lost the opportunity of full satisfaction*. This, however, is precisely the reason why narcissistic love accomplishes so much for cultural and individual aims; at the same time, anaclitic to other instinctual aims, it achieves with these a kind of gratification and end-pleasure. The conditions for this achievement, which so far have been discussed theoretically and in general terms, we shall now discuss in detail.

When Freud, in 1908, read his paper "The Relation of the Poet to Day-Dreaming,"¹⁸ he had not yet developed the concept of "narcissism." The significance of the facts on which this concept rests, however, had already been recognized by him. He described the way in which object interests and ego exaltation, as goals of daydreaming, become tied up with unconscious infantile wishes. The concept of narcissism as a germinating idea is expressed in the following passage: "It seems to me, however, that this significant mark of invulnerability very clearly betrays—His Majesty the Ego, the hero of all daydreams and all novels."¹⁹ The conclusion, presented here, that narcissism of every kind is fixated at the fore-pleasure stage, adds significance to Freud's opinion that the aesthetic pleasure in the appreciation of poetry acts as a *fore-pleasure premium* which in turn facilitates the understanding of the dynamics underlying the effect of writing. The temptation of fore-pleasure creates in the reader the same kind of narcissistic mood that induced the poet's phantasies and motivated him to write.

Independent of theory, we may investigate the problem of the conditions for satisfaction, in phantasies of love, greatness, and

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¹⁸Freud, *Collected Papers*, IV, 173.

¹⁹*Op. cit.*, 180.

ambition, which always unite contents and goals that are clearly narcissistic and those that are directed toward the object. What can be recognized in the conscious phantasies must also be valid for the narcissistic cathexes, as we may assume that there is always an unconscious content tied up with them which corresponds to the satisfaction of drive, libido, and affect in the cathexes in question.

The mood of fore-pleasure, as discussed before, is clearly recognizable in all conscious phantasies; the *first* alluring pleasure stimulus, it draws the individual into the mood of reverie. This is the direct derivative of the autoerotic pleasures with which the small child, and probably even the infant, innocently combines his phantasying. The more this innocence is interfered with by outside influences (exerted partly by education and partly by the experiences upon the return to the world of objects), and later by the superego, the more additional conditions have to be met so that the pursuit of the narcissistic phantasies may prove uninterruptedly pleasurable and satisfying to a sufficient degree.

The narcissistic phantasy²⁰ is slanted more and more toward real tasks, interests, relations, desires, and activities. These inter-

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²⁰In the strict sense of the term, narcissistic phantasies are those in which, not only experiences are imagined with narcissistic emphasis, but the person of the daydreamer himself is experienced in these situations. In hysteria this kind of phantasy formation is so characteristic that a hysterical individual may experience all of life only indirectly, with a phantasy ego. His object libido is only feigned; he does not possess it in his own person but only through assigning it to the imaginary figure which he makes live his life. Freud has called attention to the fact that the hysterical identification rests on claims held in common. Vice versa, one may also find—always, I surmise—that the ego figure of these phantasies has arisen through identification with persons in whom the desired claims are fulfilled. This kind of phantasy formation is in great part unconscious and uncovered only by analysis. Such phantasies permit us to understand well, from the economic point of view, why object libidinal gratification may satisfy narcissism—since only by this means can identification reach the goal of fulfillment of the desires and claims, so that only the phantasied object libidinal satisfaction transforms the phantasied ego person into the ego ideal which is narcissistically desired.

ests have a goal, and, in order to reach it, more and more complicated and intellectually demanding ways and detours are devised. These are goals of self-preservation, of enrichment, of self-assertion, of social achievements for others, of gaining friends and adherents, up to the phantasy of leadership or discipleship. The more actual intellectual work is accomplished in the procedure, the more the processes and the difficulties are laboriously combined in accordance with reality, and the paths toward the goal examined critically, even scrupulously, in the light of reality, the more does phantasy turn into useful planning and pondering endowed with a normal narcissistic component. Nevertheless, imagination and planning are to be considered narcissistic phantasies whenever the intellectual work is based on an unreal premise in regard to the position and opportunities of the daydreamer which, however, is accepted as real, though the further elaboration of the plan may then be ever so precise and even creative. In this kind of phantasying, the narcissistic satisfaction may become so great that the fore-pleasure approximates end-pleasure in intensity; moreover, it is always contingent on the phantasied achievement of the goal to which the narcissistic striving for pleasure has attached it.

Again we can observe the fusion of narcissistic and object libidinal striving. Their joint course toward a goal which satisfies both is found in all, or at least most people's actions and accomplishments and creative activities. In action, the cathexis of the object libidinal striving is more intense than in phantasy and thought, but the satisfaction of the object libido is often conditional upon the simultaneous satisfaction of the preformed narcissistic phantasies (Adler's "graph of life" and "role playing"). These phantasies are partly unconscious; Freud followed them to surprising depths in the analytical exploration of people who founder on success. In addition I wish to point out that the narcissistic premium is not conscious in many object-libidinally cathected actions because the narcissistic cathexis has taken a detour via the identification by means of the ego expansion; these vicissitudes of libido have been discussed frequently in another context. Precisely in practical proceedings, the deficiency in narcissistic components becomes evident in

soberness and in the matter-of-factness which is often a necessity rather than a virtue, since in these instances, not only narcissism is missing, but adequate object libido as well.

A third type of gaining satisfaction in narcissistic phantasy is usually considered the only one in discussions of narcissism. It is probable that it constitutes a regular unconscious element in phantasying. If it is conscious, it is rather ridiculous and has preserved the greatest measure of the infantile state of being in love with oneself. The entire phantasy then consists of what we before designated as the premise. Regardless of any opportunity, let alone practicability of fulfillment, the reverie indulges in timeless sham events, actually substituting for the present. The time factor, especially, distinguishes the moderate kind of phantasy, described above, from the absurd, almost purely narcissistic kind which concentrates on pleasures and self-flattery in the images of life; in the former, being slanted toward reality, at least the time necessary for reaching the goal is gauged correctly. It was from a young and otherwise exceptionally talented American that I heard the crudest consolation, and greatness, phantasy of the second kind. Skipping all intermediary links, he phantasied over and over again that during his lifetime a colossal statue was erected on an island, depopulated expressly for this purpose, in his honor as the greatest ex-president of the United States. The more the phantasy indulges in self-flattery, the more it draws on exhibitionistic instead of normal object libido, so that there probably is always an element of unconscious exhibitionistic phantasies active which, as a residue of earlier exhibitionistic masturbation, were repressed in part and in part underwent an inadequately sublimated psychic elaboration.

The danger of such phantasy activity—that is, of pathological narcissism—lies in the circumstance that such individuals become so spoiled through the easy achievement of a high degree of fore-pleasure that they lose the capacity for real and complete achievement. At every attempt they digress from the preparatory stage into gaining narcissistic fore-pleasure. That probably everybody playfully retains a “Reservation for the Pleasure Principle,” and may do this with impunity, was pointed out by Freud.

We may now summarize the characteristics which distinguish healthy narcissism from the pathological type:

1. Healthy narcissism is employed as counter-cathexis to the object strivings and for their support (for example, hope, ambition), but not as their substitute. The more narcissism functions as such a substitute, the more pathological it becomes.

2. The ego boundaries are resistant in normal narcissism; the ego is sufficiently stable due to the adequate narcissistic counter-cathexes.

3. The affects are resolved without sentimentality, though with intensity—that is, without renewed investment of narcissism.

4. The level of the fore-pleasure satisfaction resulting from the narcissistic cathexes is not too high; whereas the level of such fore-pleasure inherent in the permanent ego feeling is in general as high as possible.

5. The satisfaction in conscious and unconscious narcissistic phantasies is conditional on real object libidinal discharges, although the converse conditionality is not lacking. In pathological narcissism the latter predominates (this belongs in the context of “1.”).

6. The contents of conscious and unconscious narcissistic phantasies are more in accord with reality, less infantile, and cathected by fewer perverse infantile sexual components.

7. The latter point is further confirmed by the fact that the promise magically established in these phantasies becomes more grandiose and more impossible in the same measure as the contributory narcissistic attitude deviates from normality.

I think that we are not enough puzzled by the fact that it is possible to experience and enjoy something completely impossible as reality in the absence of any constitutional tendency to insanity, outside of a fugue or any other abnormal state of consciousness. The simultaneous achievement of pleasure can be explained satisfactorily by the conscious and unconscious connection with autoerotic libido processes. The problem, however, lies in the phenomenon that the character of reality is achieved in consciousness, not nearly but completely, though limited to one's own subjectivity and hence valid for one's own

ego exclusively. This problem is solved by my assumption that those phenomena are experienced as real which meet an ego boundary from outside; they are experienced as mentally real if they impinge only on a mental ego boundary, and as completely real if a bodily ego boundary is also involved. Phantasy is content with the mental reality and can afford to be so because daydreaming excludes objectivity.

However, the exclusion of objective validity from phantasies does not mean that wish phantasies are not fed by any object libido. Although we explained at the beginning of this paper why rigid antitheses do not exist between the two forms of libido investment, we shall now attempt to clarify the lack of any antithesis in the essential nature of, and the presence of such antithesis in the use of, ego libido and of object libido.

The character of fore-pleasure in narcissism, which we have demonstrated, emphasizes an important distinction, but does not denote an absolute difference between the two types of libido investment. Object libido also brings abundant fore-pleasure, and narcissism, if it becomes a bodily perversion or mental self-absorption, also achieves a satisfaction of the type of end-pleasure.²¹ Economically we have formulated the difference, though only a relative one, in the maintenance of the stages of fore-pleasure; dynamically both are libidinal forces; mortido enters into the service of both, or it opposes both. An actual distinction can be found only in regard to topography. In the first place, there are separate object representations which are cathected with object libido, in contrast to the unitary, although continuously variable, ego, which is cathected with ego libido but also invests object libido in the objects or in their representations (egoism) and invests ego libido in the ego or in parts of the ego (narcissism). What occurs in all egoistic desires and actions is that ego and object (or object representation) meet at the ego boundary immediately. On the other hand, in narcissistic desires, the ego, as object of narcissism and

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²¹The peculiar kinds of self-absorption of the religious, especially of the Buddhist, meditation all but abolish the difference between the two forms of libido, the antithesis between ego and object being in part overcome and in part ignored.

simultaneously as subject of egoism, is once more inserted between ego and object. Hence object libido²² is also—immediately—concerned with the ego; narcissistic libido is also—only indirectly—concerned with the object. From the genetic point of view, taking the dynamic, economic, and topographic aspects into consideration, it is unthinkable that there could exist any object libido not invested by the ego in an object, according to conscious and unconscious needs and experiences; that is, on the basis of numerous ego situations (including hereditary engrams). On the basis of other needs, experiences, and ego situations, the investment and, even more, the satisfaction are inhibited by the ego and superego. All this is true also for the investment of narcissistic libido.

Hence we see that it is not narcissism which determines the ego structure, but the ego structure which determines what has to be designated as ego libido and what as object libido. Overcoming narcissism therefore does not mean to let craving and acting emanate from the id, but only to renounce the multiple participation, or at least the interpolation of ego participation. For many years the child simply renews previous ego situations with all narcissistic and object libidinal reactions on meeting with the same or a similar object. Maturation, as well as trauma and education, results in a decrease of the narcissistic cathexes and in as immediate as possible investment of object libido in objects, so that previous ego situations are not renewed in their entirety, nor is each individual one renewed. The object representations are subject to the same development.

If this is so, this investigation may lead us to understand and to appreciate the work of *consciousness* in one particular area.

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²²It is also erroneous to designate as narcissistic the desire to be loved. It corresponds to pure object libido of a passive nature. Only if it does not relate to the object immediately, whether in reality or in phantasy, but is interpolated as love phantasy between ego and object, is it narcissistic. Freud rightly considers the high increase in object libido an impoverishment of the ego of the person in love; but this is correct only so far as it concerns immediate object libido which cathects one ego boundary more than all the others. In most instances, through being in love, the entire ego of the lover receives more narcissistic cathexis, which must be conceived of as normal counter-cathexis.

We have found the same difference between normal and abnormal processes for the entire ego, for its parts, and for the phantasies: as a rule, ego libido is invested as counter-cathexis to object libido. The less close is the tie of ego libido to object libido, the more normal becomes the investment of both. We have demonstrated that this separation is never completely successful. We may now pursue further this difference between normal and abnormal into the individual conceptions and memories of the external world. As I demonstrated elsewhere,²³ starting from a different point of departure, two kinds of experience-traces of objects are preserved in our preconscious and unconscious memory: those connected with the experience situation (or, more precisely, with the situations in which we met with the object) and others which contain only the object. Accordingly, the former pertain to the ego *and* to the object and have the object representation included within the ego boundary—more precisely, the ego boundary is expanded over the object. The purer are our object representations, the more our thinking becomes objective and free from subjectivity and from the dominance of the ego. The pure object representation, in turn, is freed from the narcissistic component, left by its inclusion within the ego boundary. We know that this liberation occurs through the introduction of the time factor, and through the comparison of several ego situation memories which contain the object and which are separate from each other in time. This task, however, is achieved exclusively through *conscious* thinking; otherwise one does not progress beyond object memories which are tied up with, and falsified by, the ego and which are always narcissistically cathected. Conscious thinking, of whatever content, but particularly of formerly narcissistically cathected content, results in objectivity and correct conception of reality, since it leaves behind pure object representations.

This function of consciousness also clarifies the effect of working through in psychoanalysis. It frees a person from pathologically invested narcissism which falsifies reality.

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²³ Federn, "Die Ichbesetzung bei den Fehlleistungen" (Ego Cathexis in Parapraxes), *Imago*, XIX (1933).