

## Chapter III: The Repression and the Return of Bad Objects (with special reference to the 'War Neuroses,')<sup>1</sup> (1943)

### 1. The Importance of Object-Relationships

In the earlier phases of his psychoanalytical thought Freud was chiefly concerned with the nature and the fate of impulse—a fact to which the formulation of his famous libido theory bears eloquent witness. Thus it came about that modern psychopathology was founded essentially upon a psychology of impulse; and Freud's libido theory has remained one of the corner-stones in the edifice of psychoanalytical thought, albeit this theory is now generally accepted only with such modifications as were introduced by Abraham in deference to developmental considerations. It was always foreign to Freud's intention, however, to convey the impression that all the problems of psychopathology could be solved in terms of the psychology of impulse; and in the later phases of his thought—from a time which may be conveniently dated by the publication of *The Ego and the Id*—his attention was predominantly directed to the growth and the vicissitudes of the ego. Thus a developing psychology of the ego came to be superimposed upon an already established psychology of impulse; and, whatever developments the psychology of the ego may have subsequently undergone in psychoanalytical thought, the underlying libido theory has remained relatively unquestioned. This is a situation which I have lately come to regard as most regrettable. Unfortunately, the present occasion does not permit of an examination of the grounds upon which I have reached this opinion; and it must suffice to say that I have been influenced by clinical and psychotherapeutic,

---

<sup>1</sup> Originally published in *The British Journal of Medical Psychology*, Vol. XIX, Pts. 3 and 4, and now republished with minor amendments.

no less than by theoretical, considerations. My point of view may, however, be stated in a word. In my opinion it is high time that psychopathological inquiry, which in the past has been successively focused, first upon impulse, and later upon the ego, should now be focused upon *the object* towards which impulse is directed. To put the matter more accurately if less pointedly, the time is now ripe for a psychology of *object-relationships*. The ground has already been prepared for such a development of thought by the work of Melanie Klein; and indeed it is only in the light of her conception of *internalized objects* that a study of object-relationships can be expected to yield any significant results for psychopathology. From the point of view which I have now come to adopt, psychology may be said to resolve itself into a study of the relationships of the individual to his objects, whilst, in similar terms, psychopathology may be said to resolve itself more specifically into a study of the relationships of the ego to its internalized objects. This point of view has received its initial formulation in my paper entitled 'A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses'.

Amongst the conclusions formulated in the above-mentioned paper two of the most far-reaching are the following: (1) that libidinal 'aims' are of secondary importance in comparison with object-relationships, and (2) that a relationship with the object, and not gratification of impulse, is the ultimate aim of libidinal striving. These conclusions involve a complete recasting of the classic libido theory; and in the paper in question an attempt is made to perform this task. The task to which I shall now turn is that of considering what are the implications of the view that libido is essentially orientated towards objects for the classic theory of repression. The importance of this task would be difficult to exaggerate; for what Freud said in 1914 still remains true—that 'the doctrine of repression is the foundation-stone upon which the whole structure of psychoanalysis rests'<sup>1</sup> (albeit I should prefer to see 'theory' substituted for 'doctrine').

## 2. The Nature of the Repressed

It is to be noted that, in directing his attention predominantly to problems regarding the nature and fate of impulse in the earlier phases of his thought, Freud was concerning himself essentially with the repressed. On the other hand, when in *The Ego and the Id* he

---

1 *Collected Papers* (1924), Vol. I, p. 297.

- 60 -

turned his attention to problems regarding the nature and growth of the ego, his concern was deliberately transferred from the repressed to the agency of repression. If, however, it is true to say that libido (and indeed 'impulse' in general) is directed essentially towards objects (and not towards pleasure), the moment is opportune for us to turn our attention once more to the nature of the repressed; for, if in 1923 Freud was justified in saying, 'Pathological research has centred our interest too exclusively on the repressed',<sup>1</sup> it may now be equally true to say that our interest is too exclusively centred upon the repressive functions of the ego.

In the course of his discussion upon the repressive functions of the ego in *The Ego and the Id* Freud makes the following statement: 'We know that as a rule the ego carries out repressions in the service and at the behest of the super-ego.'<sup>2</sup> This statement is of special significance if object-relationships are as overwhelmingly important as I have come to regard them; for, if, as Freud says, the super-ego represents 'a deposit left by the earliest object-choices of the id',<sup>3</sup> that endopsychic structure must be regarded as essentially an internalized object, with which the ego has a relationship. This relationship is based upon a process of identification, as Freud so justly points out. The identification of the ego with the super-ego is, of course, rarely, if ever, complete; but, in so far as it exists, repression must be regarded as a function of the relationship of the ego to an internalized object which is accepted as 'good'. At this point I feel driven to make the confession that my last quotation from Freud was a phrase deliberately torn from its sentence in order to enable me to make a point. Quotations torn from their context are notoriously misleading; and I therefore hasten to make amends, now that the mutilation for which I am responsible has served its purpose. The complete sentence reads: 'The super-ego is, however, *not merely* a deposit left by the earliest object-choices of the id; it also represents *an energetic reaction formation against those choices*' (present author's italics). In the light of the full quotation it now becomes doubtful whether the relationships of the ego to internalized objects can be exhaustively described in terms of a relationship between the ego and the super-ego. It will be noted that the super-ego remains a 'good' object to the ego, whether the identification is strong and the ego yields to the appeal of the super-ego, or whether the identification is weak and the appeal of the super-ego is defied by the ego. The question accordingly

---

1 *The Ego and the Id* (1927), p. 19.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

- 61 -

arises whether there are not also 'bad' internalized objects with which the ego may be identified in varying degrees. That such 'bad' objects are to be found within the psyche the work of Melanie Klein can leave us in no doubt. The demands of a psychology based upon object-relationships will, therefore, require us to infer that, if the clue to the agency of repression lies in the relationship of the ego to 'good' internalized objects, the clue to the nature of the repressed will lie in the relationship of the ego to 'bad' internalized objects.

It will be recalled that, in his original formulation of the concept of repression, Freud described the repressed as consisting of intolerable memories, against the unpleasantness of

which repression provided the ego with a means of defence. The nuclear memories against which this defence was directed were, of course, found by Freud to be libidinal in nature; and, to explain why libidinal memories, which are inherently pleasant, should become painful, he had recourse to the conception that repressed memories were painful because they were guilty. To explain in turn why libidinal memories should be guilty, he fell back upon the conception of the Oedipus situation. When subsequently he formulated his conception of the super-ego, he described the super-ego as a means of effecting a repression of the Oedipus situation and attributed its origin to a need on the part of the ego for an internal defence against incestuous impulses. In accordance with this point of view, he came to speak of the repressed as consisting essentially of guilty impulses and explained the repression of memories as due to the guilt of impulses operative in the situations which such memories perpetuated. In the light of the considerations already advanced, however, it becomes a question whether Freud's earlier conception of the nature of the repressed was not nearer the mark, and whether the repression of impulses is not a more secondary phenomenon than the repression of memories. I now venture to formulate the view that *what are primarily repressed are neither intolerably guilty impulses nor intolerably unpleasant memories, but intolerably bad internalized objects*. If memories are repressed, accordingly, this is only because the objects involved in such memories are identified with bad internalized objects; and, if impulses are repressed, this is only because the objects with which such impulses impel the individual to have a relationship are bad objects from the standpoint of the ego. Actually, the position as regards the repression of impulses would appear to be as follows. Impulses become bad if they are directed towards bad objects. If such bad objects are internalized, then

- 62 -

the impulses directed towards them are internalized; and the repression of internalized bad objects thus involves the repression of impulses as a concomitant phenomenon. It must be stressed, however, that what are primarily repressed are bad internalized objects.

### 3. Repressed Objects

Once it has come to be recognized that repression is directed primarily against bad objects, this fact assumes the complexion of one of those obvious phenomena which are so frequently missed, and which are often the most difficult to discover. At one time I used frequently to have the experience of examining problem children; and I remember being particularly impressed by the reluctance of children who had been the *victims* of sexual assaults to give any account of the traumatic experiences to which they had been subjected. The point which puzzled me most was that, the more innocent the victim was, the greater was the resistance to anamnesis. By contrast, I never experienced any comparable difficulty in the examination of individuals who had *committed* sexual offences. At the time, I felt that these phenomena could only be explained on the assumption that, in resisting a revival of the traumatic memory, the victim of a sexual assault was actuated by guilt over the unexpected gratification of libidinal impulses which had been renounced by the ego and repressed, whereas in the case of the sexual offender there was no comparable degree of guilt and consequently no comparable degree of repression. I always felt rather suspicious of this explanation; but it seemed the best available at the time. From my present standpoint it seems inadequate. As I now see it, the position is that the victim of a sexual assault resists the revival of the traumatic memory primarily because this memory represents a record of a relationship with a bad object. It is difficult to see how the experience of being assaulted could afford any great measure of gratification except to the more masochistic of individuals. To the average individual such an experience is not so much guilty as simply 'bad'. It is intolerable in the main, not because it gratifies repressed impulses, but for the same reason that a child often flies panic-stricken from a stranger who enters the house. It is intolerable because a bad object is always intolerable, and a relationship with a bad object can never be contemplated with equanimity.

It is interesting to observe that a relationship with a bad object is felt by the child to be not only intolerable, but also shameful. It may

- 63 -

accordingly be inferred that, if a child is ashamed of his parents (as is quite often the case), his parents are bad objects to him; and it is in the same direction that we must look for an explanation of the fact that the victim of a sexual assault should feel ashamed of being assaulted. That a relationship with a bad object should be shameful can only be satisfactorily explained on the assumption that in early childhood all object-relationships are based upon identification.<sup>1</sup> This being the case, it follows that, if the child's objects present themselves to him as bad, he himself feels bad; and indeed it may be stated with equal truth that, if a child feels bad, it implies that he has bad objects. If he behaves badly, the same consideration applies; and it is for this reason that a delinquent child is invariably found to have (from the child's point of view at any rate) bad parents. At this point we are confronted with another of those obvious phenomena which are so rarely noticed. At one time it fell to my lot to examine quite a large number of delinquent children from homes which the most casual observer could hardly fail to recognize as 'bad' in the crudest sense—homes, for example, in which drunkenness, quarrelling, and physical violence reigned supreme. It is only in the rarest instances, however, (and those only instances of utter demoralization and collapse of the ego) that I can recall such a child being induced to admit, far less volunteering, that his parents were bad objects. It is obvious, therefore, that in these cases the child's bad objects had been internalized and repressed. What applies to the delinquent child can be shown to apply also to the delinquent adult—and not only to the delinquent adult, but also to the psychoneurotic and psychotic. For that matter, it also applies to the ostensibly 'normal' person. It is impossible for anyone to pass through childhood without having bad objects which are internalized and repressed.<sup>2</sup> Hence internalized bad objects are present in the

---

1 The fact that all object-relationships are originally based upon identification was recognized by Freud, as may be judged from his statement: 'At the very beginning, in the primitive oral phase of the individual's existence, object-cathexis and identification are hardly to be distinguished from each other' (*The Ego and the Id* (1927), p. 35). This theme is developed at some length in my paper entitled 'A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses', and indeed forms the basis of the revised psychopathology which I envisage.

2 This would appear to be the real explanation of the classic massive amnesia for events of early childhood, which is only found to be absent in individuals whose ego is disintegrating (e.g. in incipient schizophrenics, who so often display a most remarkable capacity for reviving traumatic incidents of early childhood, as is illustrated by a case to be quoted later in this paper).

- 64 -

minds of all of us at the deeper levels. Whether any given individual becomes delinquent, psychoneurotic, psychotic or simply 'normal' would appear to depend in the main upon the operation of three factors: (1) the extent to which bad objects have been installed in the unconscious and the degree of badness by which they are characterized, (2) the extent to which the ego is identified with internalized bad objects, and (3) the nature and strength of the defences which protect the ego from these objects.

#### **4. The Moral Defence Against Bad Objects**

If the delinquent child is reluctant to admit that his parents are bad objects, he by no means displays equal reluctance to admit that he himself is bad. It becomes obvious, therefore, that the child would rather be bad himself than have bad objects; and accordingly we have some justification for surmising that one of his motives in becoming bad is to make his objects 'good'. In becoming bad he is really taking upon himself the burden of badness which appears to reside in his objects. By this means he seeks to purge them of their badness; and, in proportion as he succeeds in doing so, he is rewarded by that sense of security which an environment of good objects so characteristically confers. To say that the child takes upon

himself the burden of badness which appears to reside in his objects is, of course, the same thing as to say that he internalizes bad objects. The sense of outer security resulting from this process of internalization is, however, liable to be seriously compromised by the resulting presence within him of internalized bad objects. Outer security is thus purchased at the price of inner insecurity; and his ego is henceforth left at the mercy of a band of internal fifth columnists or persecutors, against which defences have to be, first hastily erected, and later laboriously consolidated.

The earliest form of defence resorted to by the developing ego in a desperate attempt to deal with internalized bad objects is necessarily the simplest and most readily available, viz. repression. The bad objects are simply banished to the unconscious.<sup>1</sup> It is only when repression fails to prove an adequate defence against the internalized bad objects and these begin to threaten the ego that the four classic

---

<sup>1</sup> Here I may say that, in explaining the process of repression to my patients, I find it useful to speak of the bad objects as being, as it were, buried in the cellar of the mind behind a locked door which the patient is afraid to open for fear either of revealing the skeletons in the cupboard, or of seeing the ghosts by which the cellar is haunted.

psychopathological defences are called into operation, viz. the phobic, the obsessional, the hysterical, and the paranoid defences.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, another form of defence by which the work of repression is invariably supported, and to which special attention must now be directed. I refer to what may be called 'the defence of the superego' or 'the defence of guilt' or 'the moral defence'.

I have already spoken of the child 'taking upon himself the burden of badness which appears to reside in his objects'; and, at the time, I spoke of this process as equivalent to the internalization of bad objects. At this point, however, a distinction must be drawn between two kinds of badness, which I propose to describe respectively as 'unconditional' and 'conditional' badness. Here I should explain that, when I speak of an object as 'unconditionally bad', I mean 'bad from a libidinal standpoint', and that, when I speak of an object as 'conditionally bad', I mean 'bad from a moral standpoint'. The bad objects which the child internalizes are unconditionally bad; for they are simply persecutors. In so far as the child is identified with such internal persecutors, or (since infantile relationships are based upon identification) in so far as his ego has a relationship with them, he too is unconditionally bad. To redress this state of unconditional badness he takes what is really a very obvious step. He internalizes his good objects, which thereupon assume a super-ego role. Once this situation has been established, we are confronted with the phenomena of conditional badness and conditional goodness. In so far as the child leans towards his internalized bad objects, he becomes conditionally (i.e. morally) bad *vis-à-vis* his internalized good objects (i.e. his superego); and, in so far as he resists the appeal of his internalized bad objects, he becomes conditionally (i.e. morally) good *vis-à-vis* his super-ego. It is obviously preferable to be conditionally good than conditionally bad; but, in default of conditional goodness, it is preferable to be conditionally bad than unconditionally bad. If it be asked how it comes about that conditional badness is preferred to unconditional badness, the cogency of the answer may best be appreciated if the answer is framed in religious terms; for such terms provide the best representation for the adult mind of the situation as it presents itself to the child. Framed in such terms the answer is that it is better to be a sinner in a world ruled by God than to live in a world ruled by

---

<sup>1</sup> The nature and significance of these defences, as also their relationship to one another, are described in my paper entitled 'A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses'.

the Devil. A sinner in a world ruled by God may be bad; but there is always a certain sense of security to be derived from the fact that the world around is good—‘God's in His heaven—All's right with the world!’; and in any case there is always a hope of redemption. In a world ruled by the Devil the individual may escape the badness of being a sinner; but he is bad because the world around him is bad. Further, he can have no sense of security and no hope of redemption. The only prospect is one of death and destruction.<sup>1</sup>

## 5. The Dynamics of the Influence of Bad Objects

At this point it is worth considering whence bad objects derive their power over the individual. If the child's objects are bad, how does he ever come to internalize them? Why does he not simply reject them as he might reject ‘bad’ cornflour pudding or ‘bad’ castor oil? As a matter of fact, the child usually experiences considerable difficulty in rejecting castor oil, as some of us may know from personal experience. He would reject it if he could; but he is allowed no opportunity to do so. The same applies to his bad objects. However much he may want to reject them, he cannot get away from them. They force themselves upon him; and he cannot resist them because they have power over him. He is accordingly compelled to internalize them in an effort to control them. But, in attempting to control them in this way, he is internalizing objects which have wielded power over him in the external world; and these objects retain their prestige for power over him in the inner world. In a word, he is ‘possessed’ by them, as if by evil spirits. This is not all, however. The child not only internalizes his bad objects because they force themselves upon him and he seeks to control them, but also, and above all, because he *needs* them. If a child's parents are bad objects, he cannot reject them, even if they do not force themselves upon him; for he cannot do without them. Even if they neglect him, he cannot reject them; for, if they neglect him, his need for them is increased. One of my male patients had a dream which aptly illustrates the central dilemma of the child. In this dream he was standing beside his mother with a

---

<sup>1</sup> Here it is interesting to note how commonly in the course of a deep analysis patients speak of death when the resistance is weakening and they are faced with the prospect of a release of bad objects from the unconscious. It should always be borne in mind that, from the patient's point of view, the maintenance of the resistance presents itself (literally) as a matter of life and death.

bowl of chocolate pudding on a table before him. He was ravenously hungry; and he knew that the pudding contained deadly poison. He felt that, if he ate the pudding, he would die of poisoning and, if he did not eat the pudding, he would die of starvation. There is the problem stated. What was the denouement? He ate the pudding. He incorporated the contents of the poisonous breast because his hunger was so great. In the light of this dream the reader will hardly be surprised to learn that among the symptoms from which this patient suffered was a fear that his system was being poisoned by intestinal toxins which had so affected his heart that he was threatened with heart failure. What was really wrong with his heart was, however, eloquently revealed in another dream—a dream in which he saw his heart lying upon a plate and his mother lifting it with a spoon (i.e. in the act of eating it). Thus it was because he had internalized his mother as a bad object that he felt his heart to be affected by a fatal disease; and he had internalized her, bad object though she was for him, because as a child he needed her. It is above all the need of the child for his parents, however bad they may appear to him, that compels him to internalize bad objects; and it is because this need remains attached to them in the unconscious that he cannot bring himself to part with them. It is also his need for them that confers upon them their actual power over him.

## 6. Guilt as a Defence Against the Release of Bad Objects

After this digression it is time that we turned our attention once again to the moral defence. The essential feature, and indeed the essential aim, of this defence is the conversion of an original situation in which the child is surrounded by bad objects into a new situation in

which his objects are good and he himself is bad. The moral situation which results belongs, of course, to a higher level of mental development than the original situation; and this level is characteristically a 'civilized' level. It is the level at which the super-ego operates, and to which the interplay between the ego and the super-ego belongs. It is the level at which analytical interpretations in terms of guilt and the Oedipus situation are alone applicable; and it would appear to be the level at which psychotherapy is often rather exclusively conducted. That psychotherapy should be exclusively conducted at this level is undesirable; for, as should be clear from the preceding

- 68 -

argument, the phenomena of guilt must be regarded (from a strictly psychopathological standpoint, of course) as partaking of the nature of a defence. In a word, *guilt operates as a resistance in psychotherapy*. Interpretations in terms of guilt may thus actually play into the hands of the patient's resistance. That the more coercive and moralizing forms of psychotherapy must have this effect is obvious; for a coercive and moralizing psychotherapist inevitably becomes either a bad object or a super-ego figure to his patient. If he becomes simply a bad object to the patient, the latter leaves him, possibly with intensified symptoms. If, however, he becomes a super-ego figure to the patient, he may effect a temporary improvement in symptoms by supporting the patient's own super-ego and intensifying repression. On the other hand, most analytically minded psychotherapists may be expected to make it their aim to mitigate the harshness of the patient's super-ego and thus to reduce guilt and anxiety. Such an endeavour is frequently rewarded with excellent therapeutic results. Nevertheless, I cannot help feeling that such results must be attributed, in part at least, to the fact that in the transference situation the patient is provided in reality with an unwontedly good object, and is thereby placed in a position to risk a release of his internalized bad objects from the unconscious and so to provide conditions for the libidinal cathexis of these objects to be dissolved—albeit he is also under a temptation to exploit a 'good' relationship with the analyst as a defence against taking this risk. An analysis conducted too exclusively at the guilt or super-ego level may, however, easily have the effect of producing a negative therapeutic reaction; for the removal of a patient's defence of guilt may be accompanied by a compensatory access of repression which renders the resistance impenetrable. There is now little doubt in my mind that, in conjunction with another factor to be mentioned later, the deepest source of resistance is fear of the release of bad objects from the unconscious; for, when such bad objects are released, the world around the patient becomes peopled with devils which are too terrifying for him to face. It is largely owing to this fact that the patient undergoing analysis is so sensitive, and that his reactions are so extreme. It is also to this fact that we must look in no small measure for an explanation of the 'transference neurosis'. At the same time there is now little doubt in my mind that the release of bad objects from the unconscious is one of the chief aims which the psychotherapist should set himself out to achieve, even at the expense of a severe 'transference neurosis'; for it

- 69 -

is only when the internalized bad objects are released from the unconscious that there is any hope of their cathexis being dissolved. The bad objects can only be safely released, however, if the analyst has become established as a sufficiently good object for the patient. Otherwise the resulting insecurity may prove insupportable. Given a satisfactory transference situation, a therapeutically optimal release of bad objects can, in my opinion, only be promoted if caution is exercised over interpretations at the guilt or super-ego level. Whilst such interpretations may relieve guilt, they may actually have the effect of intensifying the repression of internalized bad objects and thus leaving the cathexis of these objects unresolved.<sup>1</sup> It is to the realm of these bad objects, I feel convinced, rather than to the realm of the super-ego that the ultimate origin of all psychopathological developments is to be traced; for it may be said of all psychoneurotic and psychotic patients that, if a True Mass is being celebrated in the chancel, a Black Mass is being celebrated in the crypt. It becomes evident, accordingly, that

the psychotherapist is the true successor to the exorcist, and that he is concerned, not only with 'the forgiveness of sins', but also with 'the casting out of devils'.

## 7. A Satanic Pact

At this point I must resist the temptation to embark upon a study of the mysteries of demoniacal possession and exorcism. Such a study could not fail to prove as profitable as it would be interesting, if I am justified in my view that it is in the realm of internalized bad objects rather than in the realm of internalized good objects (i.e. the realm of the super-ego) that we must lay the foundations of psychopathology. Unfortunately, the present occasion does not permit of such a diverting excursion; but I cannot refrain from directing the attention of the reader in search of a good bed-time story to Freud's fascinating paper entitled 'A Neurosis of Demoniacal Possession in the Seventeenth Century'<sup>2</sup> Here we find recorded, with a pertinent psychoanalytical commentary, the story of a destitute artist, on Cristoph Haitzmann,

---

1 The fact that relief of guilt may be accompanied by an intensification of repression can only be satisfactorily explained in terms of the conclusion already recorded to the effect that *the defence of the super-ego and repression are separate defences*.

2 *Collected Papers*, Vol. IV, pp. 436-72.

- 70 -

who made a pact with the Devil while in a melancholic state precipitated by the death of his father. From the point of view of a psychopathology based upon object-relationships, the signing of the pact admirably illustrates the difficulty encountered by the psychoneurotic or psychotic in parting with his bad objects; for, as Freud leaves us in no doubt, the Devil with whom the pact was signed was intimately associated with the deceased father of Christoph. It is interesting to note too that Christoph's symptoms were only relieved when he invoked the aid of a good object and was rewarded by a return of the unholy pact, which he received, torn in four pieces, from the hands of the Blessed Virgin in the chapel at Mariazell. He did not achieve freedom from, relapses, however, until he had been received into a religious brotherhood and had thus replaced his pact with the Devil by solemn vows to the service of God. This was presumably a triumph for the moral defence; but Freud's commentary fails to do justice to the significance of the cure no less than to the significance of the disease (which lay in the fact that the poor painter was 'possessed' by internalized bad objects). Freud is unquestionably correct when he writes in the introduction to his paper: 'Despite the somatic ideology of the era of "exact" science, the demonological theory of these dark ages has in the long run justified itself. Cases of demoniacal possession correspond to the neuroses of the present day.' Yet the chief point of the correspondence to which Freud refers is obscured when he adds: 'What in those days were thought to be evil spirits to us are base and evil wishes, the derivatives of impulses which have been rejected and repressed.' This comment reflects the inadequacy of the classic conception that libido is primarily pleasure-seeking; for the whole point of a pact with the Devil lies in the fact that it involves a relationship with a bad object. Indeed, this is made perfectly plain in the terms of Christoph's bond; for, pathetically enough, what he sought from Satan in the depths of his depression was not the capacity to enjoy wine, women, and song, but permission, to quote the terms of the pact itself, 'sein leibeigener Sohn zu sein' ('for to be unto him even as a son of his body'). What he sold his eternal soul to obtain, accordingly, was not gratification, but a father, albeit one who had been a bad object to him in his childhood. While his actual father remained alive, the sinister influence of the bad father-figure whom he had internalized in his childhood was evidently corrected by some redeeming features in the real person; but after his father's death he was left at the mercy of the internalized

- 71 -

bad father, whom he had either to embrace or else remain objectless and deserted.<sup>1</sup>

## 8. The Libidinal Cathexis of Bad Objects as a Source of Resistance

Reference has already been made to my attempt to recast the libido theory and to the considerations which led me to make this attempt. A recasting of the theory in conformity with the considerations in question is, in my opinion, an urgent necessity; for, although the heuristic, no less than the historical, importance of the libido theory would be difficult to exaggerate, a point has now been reached at which the theory has outworn its usefulness and, so far from providing impetus for further progress within the field of psychoanalytical thought, is actually operating as a brake upon the wheels. The theory in its original form may be shown to have many misleading implications; but the case of Christoph Haitzmann provides an admirable opportunity to illustrate one such misleading implication, which has an important bearing on the concept of repression. The classic form of the libido theory unquestionably implies that libido is irrevocably seeking to express itself in activities determined by zonal aims, and that, if it does not always succeed, it is only prevented from so doing by some form of inhibition, and in the last instance by repression. According to this view repressed libido can only manifest itself, if at all, in a disguised form, either in symptoms or sublimations or in a manner determined by character-formations (i.e. in a manner which is a cross between a sublimation and a symptom). Further, it follows from this view that the actual form assumed by any such manifestation will be determined by the nature of the original zonal aim. If, however, libido is primarily object-seeking, it will seek the object by whatever channels are most readily available in a manner which is not primarily determined by any presumptive aims dependent upon a zonal origin. On this view, the significance of the zones reduces itself to that of available channels by way of which libido may seek the object. The barriers to libidinal expression will likewise resolve themselves in great measure into

---

<sup>1</sup> It is very far from my intention to imply that guilt over aggressive wishes towards his father played no part in Christoph's depression; but it is implied that the part which it must undoubtedly have played is secondary from an *etiological* standpoint.

inhibitions against object-seeking. This being so, a peculiar situation arises when the object has been internalized and repressed; for, in these circumstances, we are confronted with a situation in which libido is seeking a repressed object. The bearing of this fact upon the concept of narcissism need not be stressed here. The phenomenon to which I desire to direct attention is that, in the circumstances mentioned, libido is, for practical purposes, operating in the same direction as repression. It is captivated by the repressed object; and, owing to the lure of the repressed object, it is driven into a state of repression by the very momentum of its own object-seeking. *When the object is a repressed object, accordingly, the object-cathexis operates as a resistance; and the resistance encountered in analytical therapy is thus maintained, not only by the agency of repression, but also by the dynamic qualities of libido itself.* This last conclusion is in plain contradiction to Freud's statement: 'The unconscious, i.e. the "repressed" material, offers no resistance whatever to curative efforts; indeed, it has no other aim than to force its way through the pressure weighing on it, either to consciousness or to discharge by means of some real action.'<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is a conclusion which follows as a necessary corollary from the view that libido is primarily object-seeking; and it possesses the special advantage of throwing additional light on the nature of the negative therapeutic reaction, which can now be seen to derive its significance largely from the fact that, in so far as the object is a repressed object, the libidinal aim is in direct conflict with the therapeutic aim. In a word, the negative therapeutic reaction involves a refusal on the part of libido to renounce its repressed objects; and, even in the absence of a negative therapeutic reaction, it is in the same direction that we must look in no small measure for an explanation of the extreme stubbornness of the resistance. The actual overcoming of repression as such would, accordingly, appear to constitute if anything a less formidable part of the analyst's difficult

task than the overcoming of the patient's devotion to his repressed objects—a devotion which is all the more difficult to overcome because these objects are bad and he is afraid of their release from the unconscious. This being so, we may surmise that the analytical treatment of poor Christoph would have proved a somewhat formidable proposition in a twentieth-century consulting-room. It would have proved no easy task, we may be sure, to dissolve his pact with Satan; and it is not difficult to envisage the emergence of a stubborn negative therapeutic reaction in his case.

---

1 *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922), p. 19.

After all, even the intervention of the Blessed Virgin was insufficient to establish his cure upon a firm basis. It was only after his pact with the Devil was replaced by a pact with God that his freedom from symptoms was finally established. The moral would seem to be that the appeal of a good object is an indispensable factor in promoting a dissolution of the cathexis of internalized bad objects, and that the significance of the transference situation is partly derived from this fact.<sup>1</sup>

## 9. Dissolution of the Cathexis of Bad Objects

It follows from what precedes that among the various aims of analytical technique should be (1) to enable the patient to release from his unconscious 'buried' bad objects which have been internalized because originally they seemed indispensable, and which have been repressed because originally they seemed intolerable, and (2) to promote a dissolution of the libidinal bonds whereby the patient is attached to these hitherto indispensable bad objects. So far as considerations of technique affect the fulfilment of these aims, principles to be borne in mind would appear to include the following: (1) that situations should be interpreted, not in terms of gratification, but in terms of object-relationships (including, of course, relationships with internalized objects); (2) that libidinal strivings should be represented to the patient as ultimately dictated by object-love and as, therefore, basically if not superficially 'good'; (3) that libidinal 'badness' should be related to the cathexis of bad objects ('sin' always being regarded, according to the Hebraic conception, as seeking after strange gods and, according to the Christian conception, as yielding to the Devil); (4) that 'guilt' situations should be related by interpretation to 'bad object' situations; (5) that caution should be exercised over interpretations in terms of aggression except perhaps in the case of depressives, who present a special problem for analytical technique.<sup>2</sup>

---

1 It is of interest to record that, since this paper was originally written, the theme of a pact with the Devil has emerged quite explicitly and spontaneously in the case of several of my patients.

2 Interpretations in terms of aggression are liable to have the undesirable effect of making the patient feel that the analyst thinks him 'bad'. In any case, they become less necessary in proportion as the repressed objects are released; for in such circumstances the patient's aggression makes itself obvious enough. It will then become the analyst's task to point out to the patient the libidinal factor that lies behind his aggression.

## 10. The Psychopathological Return of Bad Objects

Paradoxically enough, if it is an aim of analytical technique to promote a release of repressed bad objects from the unconscious, it is also fear of just such a release that characteristically drives the patient to seek analytical aid in the first instance. It is true that it is from his symptoms that he consciously desires to be relieved, and that a considerable proportion of psychopathological symptoms consist essentially in defences against a 'return of the repressed' (i.e. a return of repressed objects). Nevertheless, it is usually when his defences are wearing thin and are proving inadequate to safeguard him against anxiety over a threatened release of repressed objects that he is driven to seek analytical aid. From the

patient's point of view, accordingly, the effect of analytical treatment is to promote the very situation from which he seeks to escape.<sup>1</sup> Hence the phenomenon of the transference neurosis, which involves in part a defence against, and in part a reaction to, a release of repressed bad objects. The release of such objects obtained in analytical treatment differs, however, from a spontaneous release of such objects in that it has a therapeutic aim—and ultimately a therapeutic effect in virtue of the fact that it is a release controlled by the analyst and safeguarded by the security imparted by the transference situation. Nevertheless, such fine distinctions are hard for the patient to appreciate at the time; and he is not slow to realize that he is being cured by means of a hair from the tail of the dog that bit him. It is only when the released bad objects are beginning to lose their terror for him that he really begins to appreciate the virtues of mental immunization therapy. Here it should be noted that the release of repressed objects of which I speak is by no means identical with that active externalization of internalized bad objects, which is the characteristic feature of the paranoid technique.<sup>2</sup> The phenomenon to which I specially refer is the escape

---

<sup>1</sup> This is well illustrated in a dream of one of my female patients. In this dream she saw a friend of her father digging in peaty ground. As her glance fell upon one of the cut surfaces, the loose and fibrous nature of the ground attracted her attention. Then, as she looked closer, she was horrified to see swarms of rats creeping out from the interstices between the roots and fibres. Whatever else this dream may have represented, it certainly represented the effects of analytical treatment. The man digging in the peaty ground was myself digging in her unconscious, and the rats were the repressed bad objects (actually penises, of course) which my digging had released.

<sup>2</sup> The paranoid technique consists, not in the projection of repressed impulses, as is commonly supposed, but in the projection of repressed objects in the form of persecutors.

- 75 -

of bad objects from the bonds imposed by repression. When such an escape of bad objects occurs, the patient finds himself confronted with terrifying situations which have hitherto been unconscious. External situations then acquire for him the significance of repressed situations involving relationships with bad objects. This phenomenon is accordingly not a phenomenon of projection, but one of 'transference'.

## **11. The Traumatic Release of Bad Objects—With Special Reference to Military Cases**

The spontaneous and psychopathological (as against the induced and therapeutic) release of repressed objects may be observed to particular advantage in wartime in the case of military patients, amongst whom the phenomenon may be studied on a massive scale. Here I should add that, when I speak of a 'spontaneous' release of repressed objects, I do not mean to exclude the operation of precipitating factors in reality. On the contrary, the influence of such factors would appear to be extremely important. The position would appear to be that an unconscious situation involving internalized bad objects is liable to be activated by any situation in outer reality conforming to a pattern which renders it emotionally significant in the light of the unconscious situation. Such precipitating situations in outer reality must be regarded in the light of traumatic situations. The emotional intensity and specificity required to render an external situation traumatic varies, of course, in accordance with economic and dynamic factors in the endopsychic state. In military cases it is common to find that a traumatic situation is provided by the blast from an exploding shell or bomb, or else by a motor accident—and that quite irrespective of any question of cerebral concussion; but being caught in the cabin of a torpedoed troopship, seeing civilian refugees machine-gunned from the air or shelled in a crowded market-place, having to throttle an enemy sentry in order to escape captivity, being let down by a superior officer, being accused of homosexuality, and being refused compassionate leave to go home for a wife's confinement are all examples chosen at random from among the traumatic situations which have come under my notice. In many cases Army life in time of war itself constitutes a traumatic experience

- 76 -

which approximates to the nature of a traumatic situation, and which may confer the quality of a traumatic situation upon some little incident of Army life. It is remarkable how common among psychoneurotic and psychotic soldiers in wartime are the complaints, 'I can't bear being shouted at', and 'I can't eat Army food' (a remark which is commonly followed by, 'I can eat anything my wife cooks for me'). The effect of such traumatic situations and traumatic experiences in releasing bad objects from the unconscious is demonstrated nowhere better than in the wartime dreams of military patients. Amongst the commonest of such dreams, as would be expected, are nightmares about being chased or shot at by the enemy, and about being bombed by hostile aeroplanes (often described as 'great black planes'). The release of bad objects may, however, be represented in other ways, e.g. in nightmares about being crushed by great weights, about being strangled by someone, about being pursued by prehistoric animals, about being visited by ghosts and about being shouted at by the sergeant-major. The appearance of such dreams is sometimes accompanied by a revival of repressed memories of childhood. One of the most remarkable cases of this kind in my experience was that of a psychopathic soldier, who passed into a schizoid state not long after being conscripted, and who then began to dream about prehistoric monsters and shapeless things and staring eyes that burned right through him. He became very childish in his behaviour; and simultaneously his consciousness became flooded with a host of forgotten memories of childhood, among which he became specially preoccupied by one of sitting in his pram on a station platform and seeing his mother enter a railway carriage with his older brother. In reality his mother was just seeing his brother off; but the impression created in the patient was that his mother was going off in the train too and thus leaving him deserted. The revival of this repressed memory of a deserting mother represented, of course, the release of a bad object from the unconscious. A few days after he told me of this memory a shop belonging to him was damaged by a bomb; and he was granted twenty-four hours' leave of absence to attend to business arising out of the incident. When he saw his damaged shop, he experienced a schizoid state of detachment; but that night, when he went to bed at home, he felt as if he were being choked and experienced a powerful impulse to smash up his house and murder his wife and children. His bad objects had returned with a vengeance.

- 77 -

## 12. A Note on the Repetition Compulsion

What has been said regarding the role of traumatic situations in precipitating psychopathological conditions in soldiers in wartime naturally recalls what Freud has to say regarding the traumatic neuroses in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. If, however, the views expressed in the present paper are well-founded, there is no need for us to go 'beyond the pleasure principle' and postulate a primal 'repetition compulsion' to explain the persistence of traumatic scenes in the mental life of those in whom it occurs. If it be true that libido is object-seeking and not pleasure-seeking, there is, of course, no pleasure principle to go beyond. Apart from that, however, it does not require any repetition compulsion to explain the revival of traumatic scenes. On the contrary, if the effect of a traumatic situation is to release bad objects from the unconscious, the difficulty will be to see how the patient can get away from these bad objects.<sup>1</sup> The fact is that he is haunted by them; and, since they are framed by the traumatic incident, he is haunted by this too. In the absence of a therapeutic dissolution of the cathexis of his bad objects, he can only achieve freedom from this haunting if his bad objects are once more banished to the unconscious through an access of repression. That this is the manner in which the ghosts are customarily laid is obvious from the attitude of those soldiers in whom traumatic memories have disappeared from waking life, if not from the life of dreams. Quite characteristic is the remark of one of them whom I questioned about his experiences: 'I don't want to talk about these things. I want to go home and forget about all that.'

## 13. A Note on the Death Instincts

What applies to Freud's conception of the repetition compulsion applies also to his closely related conception of the death instincts. If libido is really object-seeking, this conception would appear superfluous. We have seen that libido is attached not only to good objects, but also to bad objects (witness Christoph's pact with the Devil). We have seen, furthermore, that libido may be attached to bad objects which have been internalized and repressed. Now a relationship

---

1 It cannot be a coincidence that Freud should describe the expressions of a repetition compulsion as having, not only an instinctive, but also a 'daemonic' character (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1922), p. 43).

- 78 -

with a bad object can hardly escape the alternative of being either of a sadistic or of a masochistic nature. What Freud describes under the category of 'death instincts' would thus appear to represent for the most part masochistic relationships with internalized bad objects. A sadistic relationship with a bad object which is internalized would also present the appearance of a death instinct. As a matter of fact, such relationships are usually of a sado-masochistic nature with a bias on the masochistic side of the scale; but in any case they are essentially libidinal manifestations. This may be well illustrated in the case of a patient of mine who came to me haunted by bad objects in the form of penises. In course of time, breasts began to rival penises in the role of haunting bad objects. Later the bad objects became grotesque figures which were obviously personifications of breasts and penises. Later still, the grotesque figures were replaced by devilish forms. These in turn were succeeded by numerous figures of a parental character; and eventually these figures were replaced in turn by recognizable images of her parents. 'They', as she always described them, seemed to forbid her under pain of death to express any feelings; and she was constantly saying, 'They will kill me if I let any feelings out.' It is, accordingly, interesting to note that, as the transference situation developed, she also began to beg me to kill her. 'You would kill me if you had any regard for me,' she cried, adding, 'If you won't kill me, it means that you don't care.' This phenomenon seems best interpreted as due, not to the operation of a death instinct, but to the transference of libido, albeit libido which still retained the masochistic complexion of her relationships with her original (bad) objects.

#### **14. The Psychoneuroses and Psychoses of War**

The subject of the present paper can hardly be dismissed without a final note upon the psychoneuroses and psychoses of wartime. My experience of military cases leaves me in no doubt that the chief predisposing factor in determining the breakdown of a soldier (or for that matter a sailor or an airman) is infantile dependence upon his objects.<sup>1</sup> At the same time my experience leaves me in equally little

---

1 As a matter of fact, this also applies to civilian cases, not only in time of war, but also in time of peace; and indeed it is one of the main theses of my paper entitled 'A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses' that all psychopathological developments are ultimately based upon an infantile attitude of dependence. I had just reached this conclusion as the result of material provided by cases seen in private when I began to see military cases in large numbers; and I found my conclusion most opportunely confirmed on the grand scale. Military cases are specially illuminating for two reasons: (1) because in such cases phenomena detected in a narrow field under the high-power lens of the analytical microscope may be observed in a wide field under a less powerful lens, (2) because under military conditions in wartime large numbers of individuals may be observed in an 'experimental' state of artificial separation from their objects.

- 79 -

doubt that the most distinctive feature of military breakdowns is separation-anxiety. Separation-anxiety must obviously present a special problem for democracies in time of war; for under a democratic regime the dependent individual can find no substitute for his

accustomed objects under military conditions (the sergeant-major proving a very poor substitute, e.g., for an attentive wife). The problem of separation-anxiety in the soldier is anticipated under a totalitarian regime by a previous exploitation of infantile dependence, since it is part of the totalitarian technique to make the individual dependent upon the regime at the expense of dependence upon familial objects. Dependence upon familial objects is what really constitutes 'the degeneracy of the democracies' in totalitarian eyes. The totalitarian technique, however, has its weakness. It depends upon national success; for only under conditions of success can the regime remain a good object to the individual. Under conditions of failure the regime becomes a bad object to the individual; and the socially disintegrating effects of separation-anxiety then begin to assert themselves at the critical moment. On the other hand, it is in time of failure or defeat that a democracy has the advantage; for in a democracy the individual is less dependent upon the state, and, therefore, less subject to disillusionment regarding the 'goodness' of the state as an object. At the same time, the threat to familial objects inherent in defeat (so long as this is not too devastating) provides an incentive for effort, which is lacking under a totalitarian regime. Considered from the point of view of group psychology, accordingly, the great test of morale in a totalitarian state comes in time of failure, whereas in a democracy the great test of morale comes in time of success.<sup>1</sup>

If separation-anxiety is the most distinctive feature of breakdowns among soldiers, such breakdowns are at the same time characterized by another feature which is of no less importance from a national standpoint, and which can only be properly appreciated in the light

---

<sup>1</sup> The conclusions recorded in this paragraph now (1951) appear to have been justified by subsequent, no less than by previous, events.

of what has been said regarding the nature of the moral defence. No one who has read Freud's *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* can remain in doubt regarding the importance of the super-ego as a factor in determining the morale of a group. It is obvious, therefore, that the super-ego fulfils other functions besides that of providing the individual with a defence against bad objects. Above all, it is through the authority of the super-ego that the bonds which unite individuals into a group are forged and maintained. At the same time, it must be recognized that the super-ego does originate as a means of defence against bad objects. As such, the return of bad objects obviously implies a failure of the defence of repression; but it equally implies a failure of the moral defence and a collapse of the authority of the super-ego. The soldier who breaks down in time of war is thus characterized not only by separation-anxiety, but also by a condition in which the appeal of the super-ego, which bade him serve his country under arms, is replaced by the acute anxiety which a release of bad objects inspires. From a practical standpoint, accordingly, what happens is that for him the Army ceases to perform a super-ego function and reverts to the status of a bad object. It is for this reason that the psychoneurotic or psychotic soldier cannot bear to be shouted at by the sergeant-major and cannot bear to eat Army food. For in his eyes every word of command is equivalent to an assault by a malevolent father, and every spoonful of 'greasy' stew from the cookhouse is a drop of poison from the breast of a malevolent mother. No wonder that the 'war neuroses' are so recalcitrant! And no wonder, perhaps, that, after gaining some experience of psychoneurotic and psychotic servicemen *en masse*, I was driven to remark, 'What these people need is not a psychotherapist, but an evangelist'; for, from a national point of view, the problem of the 'war neuroses' is not so much a problem of psychotherapy as a problem of group morale.