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Paul Parin

The Ego and the Mechanisms of Adaptation*

Translated by Eva J. Meyer

The title of this paper is to remind us of two works that are of undisputed importance to the development of psychoana1ysis: Anna Freud's *The Ego and the Mechanism of Defense* (1936) and Heinz Hartmann's *Ego Psychology and the Problems of Adaptation* (1939). I hasten to add that neither the scope of this article nor the relevance of our consideration warrants any comparison with the two cited works. The relationship to Anna Freud's book is by analogy: I describe mechanisms, and call them mechanisms of adaptation, that are more or less firmly established in the ego of an adult and always run the same course unconsciously, just as Anna Freud describes the defense mechanisms. While the latter, however, are established in the ego to defend against undesired or disturbing drives, wishes and affects, the adaptation mechanisms I am talking about are meant to cope with active influences of the social environment. You will also find some analogies to Anna Freud's approaches in my arguments, and especially to her objectives. We have learned to understand the various defense organizations of the ego as an idiosyncratic form, even as the most important dynamically effective substratum of the ego; similarly the mechanisms of adaptation also seem to group themselves as an organization, which leads to idiosyncratic characteristics of social behavior, something like culture-specific ego variants.

POSING THE QUESTION

I have touched on the work of Heinz Hartmann because I want to provide a kind of sequel. Since 1939, after all, two very different uses of the concept "adaptation" have evolved in psychoanalysis from his discussion of the adaptational capacity of the ego.

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„Adaptation"or "adaptational", first of all, is a point of view from which every psychic phenomenon can be considered, as it can also be explained genetically (from its origin), structurally (depending on its place in the structural scheme of the psychic apparatus), and so on.

This adaptive point of view is of course also extended to the mechanisms established in the ego. Second, adaptation is also conceived as a very specific process and its results. This usage starts from the task of the ego to mediate between the inner world and its surroundings, which is its origin and which determines its most important function. Ego psychology used a theoretical artifact to mark the course of adaptation to the environment, which from the very beginning was defined as social, the world of the respective person, and also measured the degree of adaptation achieved. This environment was reduced to that which could, on the average, be expected; that is, it was conceived as a constant. Now the study of the ego could blossom, its origin be studied, its structure develop until finally the apparatus of adaptation was also described, even though early psychoanalytic studies showed little interest in it. Now it would have been proper to drop this parameter and pursue the powerful and often violent effects of the varying social conditions on the structure and function of the ego. Hartmann was aware of this problem but did not pursue it further. Since, after all, people are biological creatures and in all animaldom adaptation as a means of survival is one of the chief characteristics of every species, adaptation seemed to be a goal; deviations were interesting only as disturbances, as a misstep in normal development, or as a lack of some functions. An examination of changes in the substrata "social environment" seemed superfluous. I have tried to nullify this artifact, to absolve the social conditions of the fictitious status of an assumed average to observe what measures the ego takes and how it is equipped to counter these forces. In this respect, I am continuing where Hartmann stopped. There are several reasons why I discovered a few new territories and why, for example, mechanisms of adaptation of the ego have hardly been noticed and have been studied even less, even though we are dealing with everyday observations. Many analysts still hold on to the biological concept that views the environment as a "natural given" and sees the individual as the only changeable element-a concept that does not hold for society as an environment. Another reason for this neglect may lie in the fact that psychoanalysis has had mostly bad experiences in referring to effects of the outer environment, rather than choosing the inner, or psychic, reality as a point of reference. The best known example is Freud's supposition that sexual seduction by adults

resulted in traumatic fixation on sexual childhood experiences. He soon had to recognize that it was the imagination of the child that reshaped harmless outside events into life-destroying inner dramas. Psychic reality, even if juxtaposed with a practical or, as Freud called it, objective reality, was and remains the main territory of psychoanalytic research.

I wish to emphasize that I follow the same direction. Who would dispute that psychic reality gives the real content to the abstract concept „ego“? However, if we want to examine which powers of

the id evoke the defenses and demand the erection of defense mechanisms, we cannot ignore the drives. It is well known how the defenses differ depending on whether the libidinous drives demand satisfaction out of their oral or anal developmental phases. In an analogous manner, we must consider the forces of the environment when we want to define the ego structure in the service of adaptation, whether we are dealing with a passive autoplastic adaptation or an active alloplastic one or a mixture of both.

The objection that psychoanalysis began this step long ago is justified. What, after all, is the research on the early relationship of the infant to the mother (e.g., Spitz, 1965) and what else are the descriptions of early childhood *(*A. Freud, 1965; Mahler, 1975), what is the entire revision of ego formation in the light of preoedipal object relations, if not research into a person's adaptation to the environment? And is not the observation of modes of communication, of language, of interaction with family or groups the best way to trace the adaptation of the ego in great detail ? Another direction of research emanated especially from the Freud-Institut Frankfurt, where multiple examinations and applications of psychoana1ytic knowledge are being undertaken in the light of historic processes and a critical examination of society.

Today, we know a great deal more about the psychology of social relationships than we did in 1939, when Hartmann began to examine the structure of the ego more closely from the vantage point of adaptation. One might wait until the results of the research on interactions and on the psychoanalytic social psychology have given us sufficient information to define the function of the ego in a changing environment which influences it.

MY METHOD

Instead of waiting, however, my interest in trying to understand social behavior from an analvtic point of view impelled me to pursue

another approach. I left the psychic development, the genetic point of view, aside for the time being, took note of the adaptation of the child to its familiar environment, but turned directly to the social behavior of the adult. Freud took this same path in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921).

Based on the attitudes of the group and of the individual within the group (l) he arrived at interpretations and and reconstructions that are the foundation of all we know about the

psychology of the individual vis-a-vis society. However, I was led to the point of view that I am presenting here by way of two seemingly quite different methodologies.

First of all, the psychoanalytic examination of members of tradition-bound nations, who live outside "Western civilization" and who use a precapitalistic form of economy, demanded a more exact understanding of the relationship of those ego structures (which are encountered immediately on beginning such a study) to the social system. Thus, one could not avoid questioning this adaptation analytically. We could describe idiosyncratic functions that apparently did not exist in European-American psychoanalyses or that received too little consideration. These studies led to the description of the "group ego", the "clan conscience", and the specific "modes of ego identification."

The second method, strongly influenced by the first, was that of classic psychoanalysis as practiced in Europe. Without changing the setting or the usual technique of interpretation, influences of the social environment on the analysand were included in the process of interpretation. This appeared to be necessary because many analysands were not able to perceive operative environmental influences; these were in the descriptive sense unconscious, while the ego had adapted itself to them structurally. For the time being, I have called this mechanism, which appeared most clearly during this process, "identification with the role." I have described my procedure in "Critique of Society in the Process of Interpretation," and have given my reasons for it there. (Parin, 1978, pp. 34-54). Here I will try to make the results of this method of analytic interpretation fruitful for ego psychological considerations and describe the clinical indications of automatic adaptation as parts of the ego. If in the process of interpretation we begin with adaptive mechanisms of the analysand toward social influences, which are unknown to him (that is, unconscious in a descriptive sense) and proceed analogously with the interpretation of a resistance, a change frequently

(1) Freud related his considerations mainly to organized masses (e.g., the church or the military), which today we would call institutions..

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occurs in the relationship to the analyst, such as a lowering of the transference resistance or a change of role assigned to the analyst in the transference situation. (2) Such interpretations result in intrastructural or even interstructural changes, that is, changes in the structure of the ego or those in the relationship between the ego and the superego, or the ego and the id. Here one can distinguish between two separate aspects. On the one side, mechanisms become clear that assure

an automatic adaptation to certain social demands and forces, and that bestow a relative stability to the ego. The stabilizing function of those mechanisms may affect both the good, healthy, normal characteristics of the ego and the restricted pathological ones. At the same time, quite different changes in the ego are produced that range from a strengthening and improvement of all functions up to a thorough shattering of the systems of defense, to far-reaching regressions and the breakthrough of demands of drives against which defenses had been built up previously.

One can imagine that adaptation mechanisms free the ego from its steady conflicts with the environment, similarly to the way in which defense mechanisms work in relation to repressed demands of the drives. The other side of this unburdening is, however, rigidity and restriction. Whatever the ego has won in strength it loses in flexibility and elasticity. (3)

If there is no longer any forced automatic adaptation, the ego-after overcoming a phase of serious disruption-is presented with new possibilities of reorganization. It can assume a better, or at least a new,

stance toward the environment, but especially towards the id and the

superego. Practically speaking, the interpretation of unconscious adaptation appears to be followed most of the time by the uncovering of new material from the repressed unconscious. The relationship to the objects of love and aggression, as well as to the analyst is also affected and those parts of the superego related to social interactions are open to reworking. In other words, the analysis become deeper if through such interpretations one deprives the ego temporarily of the supporting function of its automatic adaptation.

DEMARCATION FROM OTHER PROCESSES OF ADAPTATION

Easily observed in children are several simple, one could even say primitive, mechanisms of adaptation, such as ritualization and imitation

(2) Sandler (1974) differentiates clearly between the emotional attitude transferred to the analyst and the role that a child attributed to a parent and that also can be transferred.
(3) "...every adaptation is a partial death, the giving up of a part of one's individuality ..." (Ferenczi, 1931, p. 248; see also Ferenczi, 1927)

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These enable the ego to do justice to tasks of adaptation with much less energy than would otherwise be needed. If excessive ritualization shows up in childhood, or if imitative behavior substitutes for more mature processes of identification or learning, one can conclude that the ego is subject to conflicts originating in the sphere of the drives, especially great anxieties or failures

of specific cathected objects. In the sense of an acute ego regression, the ego strives to balance its weakness by strengthening these measures. Both mechanisms are also available to the adult. It is well known that compulsive symptoms spread throughout the ego through ritualization or, better , that they force the ego to give in automatically to the demands of the incomprehensible compulsion. An excessive tendency to imitate is a conspicuous symptom in adults, indicating seriously disturbed object relations or a regressive detour to object relations less charged by conflicts. Of course, those and similar primitive mechanisms may continue to serve the adaptive process vis-a-vis the environment. We could hardly accomplish any task without the help of some routines, some adaptive ritualization; without imitation, we could hardly learn any new skills.

A housewife was undergoing analysis. She cooked three times daily, washed the dishes, shopped, served the meals. Everything was totally ritualized. Things ran like a charm. Still, she felt exhausted and took no pleasure in her work, and her family complained about the "loveless" preparation of the meals. Pointing out to her that her behavior was so ritualized that it not only spared her the trouble of personal initiative, but also excluded it, resulted in some disorder in this well-ordered household, but also enabled the patient to revise her attitude toward the members of her family, to realize, for instance, that she really did not like cooking for any of them, because she felt they gave her too little recognition and love. Exceptionally, in this case a primitive adaptive mechanism worked just as the more complex ones described below, by stabilizing the ego. When such additive mechanisms are no longer available, defense mechanisms are mobilized. There is no doubt that adaptation to social demands included sublimated drive-discharge or gratification. The object of sublimated drives has been changed, and they can run their course with a displaced substitute. Even the aim, the gratification itself, has changed. Even

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though I do not share the opinion that sublimated actions have become "conflict free" (Hartmann, 1955) but instead suppose that the conflicts that are abreacted in this manner have been relaxed only partially, thus becoming easily displaceable or plastic, I cannot equate adaptation mechanisms with sublimation (Parin, 1978, pp. 20-33). If one actually interprets such adaptations, the difference soon becomes clear. The clarification of "genuine" sublimations, which are egosyntonic, permitting the nonconflictual discharge of aggression or libido, has no further consequences. However, if we interpret an automatic and unconsciously achieved social adaptation, a reorientation of the ego follows; frequently the activation of previously repressed material ensues, and not infrequently further processes of restructuring. If one did not wish to differentiate between sublimation and adaptation mechanisms-which to us seems fruitful both

theoretically and therapeutically-one could say that in sublimations, synthetic and integrative functions of the ego are prominent; in other adaptations, social forces weigh more heavily, since isolation, loss of love, humiliations, and other punishments threaten if the ego does not adapt. The explanation of the fact that this adaptation is unconscious lies in the deficient perceptions of the "observing-ego," which needed to adapt itself so far-reachingly that it could no longer differentiate between its own interest and that of its social environment.

Sometimes one can see adaptive mechanisms in reaction formations that have lost their symptomatic character. The best-known example is personal grooming, which originates in the reaction to the anal pleasure of smearing; after "secondary autonomy" is achieved, it not only becomes an indispensible component of the libidinous cathexis of one's own body and one of the underpinnings of one's self-respect, but also serves as an adaptation to society. Neglect of the acquired habit of cleanliness can actually be used as a means of social protest. Obviously, reaction formations may also function as social adaptation. They are a lasting result of the education and socialization of the child. During an analysis, however, it becomes clear that these are genuine defense mechanisms; that is, without working through the resistances

to some depth, they cannot be changed or given up. It would be useless to confuse their adaptive value and their importance to the culture-specific formation of the ego with the dynamic of their original functions, that is, the defense against drives. I believe that even if the borderline is not always clearly visible, one should subsume under the heading of adaptation only those other mechanisms that do not or no longer function as defenses against drives but that continue to confront demands and pressures of the environment, thus affording or maintaining

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a relative stability of the ego. (4) That the ego contains a defense system that represses impulses of the drives or allows them to appear only in the form of symptom formations should be considered-as indeed it has always been-solely in the light of the psychic reality of fantasies, wishes, and anxieties, and not as related to the environment and its influence.

MECHANISM OF ADAPTATION; COMMON CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic of adaptive mechanisms is that they prove to be stabilizers of the ego as long as the social conditions under which the person lives do not change. Adaptive mechanisms function automatically and unconsciously, and they guarantee a relatively conflict-free handling of very specific social institutions. Thus they have an economic advantage: They relieve other ego

apparatuses and make it easier to reach drive satisfactions that are offered within the framework of the respective institutions. Narcissistic gratifications predominate over object-related ones. At the same time, all adaptive mechanisms restrict the ego' s ftexibility and prevent further adaptation of the instinctive wishes to other or changing social conditions. Originally they serve the precepts of the reality principle; thereafter, however, they can limit the ego's functioning. I do not attribute to the adaptive mechanisms any constant relationship to specific affects. If they function, they may, under certain circumstances, cause a sense of well being (Sandler, 1974); one cannot state, however, that they are always accompanied by this state of well-being or even that producing that state is their aim. When automatic adaptation fails, anxiety frequently appears; adaptation, being a development beyond defense mechanisms, however, does not directly serve to avoid anxiety or to defend against it.

Stated in brief: Defense mechanisms demand energy (countercathexis) to free the ego from the demands of the drives, whereas adaptive mechanisms relieve the ego of this task.

While one can view defense mechanisms as the remainder of childhood drive conflicts (or as their heritage, built into the ego), adaptive

(4) According to Hartmann (1939), one could suppose that these adaptive mechanisms "originally" were defense mechanisms that had become "conflict free" are now attached with "neutralized" libido and thus can be counted among the "secondarily autonomous" functions of the ego. The evolution of these mechanisms and their structure within the ego contradict such a supposition. A deeper discussion of the concept of the neutralization of the libido would exceed the limitations of this study (See Parin, 1978. pp. 20-33).

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mechanisms are a much more direct expression of the encroachment of the social environment on the ego. They too have their beginnings in childhood but throughout life they remain subject to social forces. Concepts such as "The Individual and His Property" (Stirner, 1845) or the idea of self-determination of one's own behavior, which have been promulgated by the traditions of liberalism on through Sartre's (1953) existentialism and which are reflected in such psychoanalytic concepts as ego autonomy and ego dominance, are brought into further question by the existence of adaptive mechanisms.

In the following, I attempt to describe three mechanisms of adaptation, which I have derived in part from analytical conversations with Africans (Parin et al., 1963, 1971), but which also delineate the ego of European analysands. It should not be said that these three mechanisms are

the only ones that exist. If my point of view proves to be correct, other modes of adaptation would probably be found or at least the third (identification with the role) would have to be split into several variants.

For each of these mechanisms I first review briefly: 1) the conditions under which they are "arranged" within the ego; 2) their dynamic and mode of operation; 3) the effects of each mechanism on social behavior.

The Group Ego (5)

OVERVIEW

We trace the origin of the group ego to relatively tension-free identificatory relationships that establish themselves during childhood and adolescence, preferably with youngsters of the same sex and age in "horizontal groups." If these relationships remain undisturbed by either frustration or aggression, and if certain "oral" ego qualities remain intact, the adult will always be ready to enter into such satisfying relationships again. If communities or groups exist in a social situation where mutual fraternal or sisterly identifications are possible because of these groups's special structure or the special psychology of their members, the group ego guarantees good social adaptation (as in the Dogon village) (Parin et al., 1963). This adaptive mechanism reflects the common structure of the society more accurately than others. It would be out of place in a nuclear family and it must fail in

(5) The term "group ego" was coined by Paul Federn (1936), who, while speculating about earlier forms of civilization, indicated that the borderline of the ego used to be much less distinct, perhaps even nonexistent. We give a totally different meaning to this word (cf. Parin et al., 1971).

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the public life of an urbanized industrial society, the ego structured in this manner is seriously weakened and becomes subject to pathological regression. Sometimes the group ego can serve adaptation even in our society, for example, within the framework of socially peripheral fraternal communities. Although it affords the participants some stability and an unaccustomed potential for action, it more likely corresponds to a desired utopian state than actually pressing for a changed society.

EXAMPLES

We first described the group ego in Africans. It was easily delineated, perhaps because the human environment is more important to these Africans than it is to us, in order to enable their ego to function relatively autonomously; perhaps, however, because their dependency on their environment became clearer to us than did that of our European analysands, whose dependencies are so similar to our own.

However, we also must ascribe a group ego to Europeans. Let us imagine a European scholar returning from a scientific colloquium with fellow specialists. Such occasions are important to him; his well-being depends on the satisfaction of aggressive and libidinous wishes, which can enter his ego only under these conditions. In this case, the necessary assumption, which determines the function of the ego as a whole, is that the ego is able to enjoy through these discussions gratifications that are subject to aim displacement and thus to secondary processes-only within a group (a manifestation of the group ego) whose structure permits scientific discussion and whose members have an ego with very similar capabilities (Parin et al., 1971, pp. 537ff.).

DYNAMIC AND FUNCTION

We understand the term group ego to be a specific mode of function that operates for the total ego, and a series of specific ego functions, manifestations of the group ego, that depend on the cooperation of a group of individuals in order to be and remain adequate. These groups must possess a specific structure, and their members must react in a specific way. The condition necessary for the group ego to become operational is their emotional readiness and capability to assurne very specific roles. These ego functions rest on the acquired readiness of the ego to enter into very specific identificatory relationships. Thus, the group ego in principle is not a different structure from the ego described elsewhere, but neither is it an additional one (as if there were a properly delineated ego and an additional group ego).

Freud (1921) described such modes of identification. Participants in

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a group take the leader as their ego-ideal, thus becoming able to enter into relatively tension-free identifications with each other. Freud describes these identifications as a form of temporary relationship and suspects that cathexis of the participants with homosexual libido plays a role; he

reminds us that heterosexual love relationships have a tendency to disturb the cohesiveness of the group or to break it up altogether.

Not everyone, however, becomes a total participant in the group. The strength of the inclination to make the leader or common ideals into the ego-ideal varies with the individual. Each person's ego lends itself very distinctively to structuring and retaining identificatory relationships. The African studies showed us that similar identificatory relationships may occur, without forming a group, without the existence of a leader or a leitmotif. This can happen under the following conditions:

1. The ego in its easier development has gained the ability to identify with cathected individuals who awakened very particular feelings and who granted very specific satisfactions. I call this form of relationship fraternal, although the term is not to be taken literally.

2. The ego has retained the capability to regress to oral modes of cathexis and satisfaction, at least if the cathected person does not provoke aggression, for example as envy or rivalry. Fenichel (1945) believes this ability to regress to the oral stage to be the sine qua non for every new identification, based as it is on an act of introjection. The group ego does not always permit such regressions; it may even appear to be rigid. If, however, the individual group members behave cooperatively, like siblings, the group ego is ready to regress and to establish such identifications. The group as a whole then has a "maternal" effect, in the sense that the members find oral participation and mutual oral exchanges; this oral "nursing" may refer to any libidinous gratification. Oral is meant here to refer to the developmental stage of the ego and not to the level of libido development.

3. If identification is achieved, the ego is strengthened. It functions better as a whole, probably because aggressions are directed outward and not toward group members, who offer one another relatively frustration-free gratification. The group tie itself is maintained in this form by aim-deflected homosexual cathexes.

We trace the *formation of the group ego* to identifications in childhood and adolescence, which are not so-called identifications with the aggressor. Freud found that there are traces of all early object relations in the ego and that identifications are its building blocks. However, the outcome seems to vary: Sometimes it is forced through frustration and

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threats; at other times it is more peaceful, and attributes of the object are not internalized. However, the ego provides a structure that is always ready to repeat such a satisfying relationship, if it is offered by the environment. This structural track of satisfying identification may be compared to an electric plug, repeatedly delivering energy to the ego as long as a person or group

exists that provides exactly the right current. It should be emphasized that this mechanism does not show any drive cathexis of its own. Defense mechanisms must be assumed to possess countercathectic drive energy. Plugs transmit energy; they do not contain their own. Relationships to groups of the same sex and age, such as peer groups, fraternities, various gangs, and formal or informal youth organizations, are most likely to permit such identification. There are hierarchical (in sociological terms, vertical) group structures in contrast to egalitarian, or horizontal, ones. Within the latter, such tensionfree identifications can take place only as long as the group behaves in a sufficiently motherly, permissive, caretaking, nurturing manner and is not too much disturbed by discord due, for example, to rivalries and envy in order to permit temporary "oral regressions." If during childhood and adolescence there is a balance between the vertical groups of individuals (according to the necessarily vertical model of the age-determined hierarchical family) and the horizontal ones-or better still if there is a harmonious back and forth movement between these two alternatives-then a well-functioning group ego is formed that facilitates later social adaptation.

In our society many groups seem to be organized horizontally, but they prove to have a vertical structure in their psychological effect: in the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, for example, there is leadership hierarchy and ideology. In the schools, the competitive pressure to achieve and the rivalry growing out of that pressure are more apt to outweigh the age-determined horizontalism of these groups. In such institutions, as a rule, identification with the aggressor develops, rather than a group ego.

On the other hand, some vertically organized groups, such as the matrilinear and age-hierarchical clan of the Agni, enforce an oral regression that assists in confronting even the most threatening objects symbolic of the assaultive, phallic mother, not by incorporating them in the typical manner of identification with the aggressor, but by using them to build up a readiness for identification.

In a *therapeutic analysis,* the group ego frequently makes the working relationship effective. Here the "good, cooperative, analytic work" enters into the ego ideal of the participants. The work is

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cathected, as is the leader in the formation of a group. This makes mutual identification easier. We may recall here that the formation of a common ideal, as the necessary basis for identification according to Freud's model of the formation of a mass, also occurs with the group ego. A mild homosexual transference, which is so beneficial for the working pact and for the progress of the analysis, can be traced back to the group ego. Object-displaced pregenital satisfactions, such as showing and looking of both partners, are perfectly permissible, and the ego, in spite of the

regression, appears to be strengthened. The appearance of uninhibited sexualized or aggressivized transferences immediately damages the working partnership, as does the analyst's violation of his brotherly role. The group ego loses its automaticly adaptive function. The defense mechanism of the ego reassumes full power either with adequate or with symptom-forming characteristics. During training analyses, the group ego may mean belonging to the group of analysts. If this adaptation mechanism is sufficient, the ego becomes relatively conflict free, and the analytic process stops entirely. For such persons, the analysis may again proceed if they find it possible to experience how uncertain their group ego would become if they could not become psychoanalysts.

Frequently, the mechanism of adaptation solidifies attitudes of the analysand's ego and could thus be mistaken for a resistance. Consorting with drinking companions, participating in the ritual of invitations by a layer of society with an elegantly bourgeois life style, taking part in political groups are frequently ineffectively interpreted as acting out. If the analysand can be shown that his beloved drinking bouts with his pub pals only serve to spare him from the threatening humiliation of social or sexual failure that he might have to confront without his group, the mechanism can become transparent and the analysis of the corresponding symptoms can begin. The adapted ego has become
stable; in the less well adapted one, conflicts become more vivid and may be more easily experienced as neurotic conflicts.

SPECIFIC EFFECTS

We have retraced the exemplary sense of community that creates in the traditional village of the Dogons a well-defined group ego (Parin, Morgenthaler, & Parin-Matthèy, 1963). This is formed in an effectively "motherly" group, into which a child enters in its fourth year of life after an extended period of nursing and symbiotic life as a twosome with its mother. The group ego is strengthened and renewed during adolescence, and later on during adulthood, in organized groups that consist of similarly socialized sex and age peers. The Dogon experience

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suggests that to achieve the educational goal of better social behavior, toward which so many utopian models of education strive, one might do well to give children and adolescents the opportunity to form a group ego. (6)

In the study of families, we might well ask whether adaptive mechanisms similar to the group ego might not play a role in patients with a specific form of schizophrenic development. Family researchers and family therapists (Stierlin, 1975) describe patients who have been socialized so invasively and one-sidedly that they can only live in a world that is totally circumscribed by the rules and expectations imparted to them by their mothers or other members of their families. Since this world does not correspond to the reality outside of the family, they are psychotic. We have observed that adult Dogons with good and stable ego functions, the result of a well-formed group ego, can suddenly enter into psychotic like states if they are suddenly transported to an environment structured differently from their own. Reconstitution is immediate when they return to their own village. Might it not be true that "delegating" mothers, by their spoiling attitude, further the formation of oral ego-qualities and that mutual identification with members of the family represents an irreplaceable ego stabilizer to the tied "delegate"? The concept of "delegation" has been related by family researchers (as have the modalities of.interaction, or the so-called heritage) to the interpersonal process. Viewed metapsychologically (Hartmann, 1953), the psychotic ego should, however, also be described as structure. It appears to me that the ego of the "committed delegates" is not yet sufficiently characterized by its system of communication and interaction with objects largely involving splitting and introjection (Grotstein, 1982; Ogden, 1982; Boyer, 1983) and that it is distinguished by the establishment of a specific mechanism of adaptation.

The "Clan Conscience"

The most impressive adaptation to the demand of the social environment is, no doubt, the construction of the superego. This extraordinary process leads to a result that cannot just be called a mechanism; one is justified in speaking of a separate agency, a structure differentiated from the ego.

(6) Murphy's (1974) hypothesis to explain the worldwide protest movement of the young would be quite compatible with the assumption of mechanism close to the group ego.

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OVERVIEW

Still, the ego can develop and retain the ability to substitute extraneous authorities or institutions, intermittently or temporarily, for the internalized superego. These then are cathected with the same drive energies and have the same forbidding or approving effects on the ego. The ego is particularly inclined to establish this substitution as a mechanism, if during the years of childhood dependency educators, parents and family are especially highly subject to outer, macrosocietal influences. Extreme living conditions such as extreme privilege, ghettoization, impoverishment, and enforced or highly cathected ideologies, especially, for example, in the lower middle classes or in religious sects, favor such an ego development. In those cases, outer and inner introjected imperatives become one in the ego. In a classless society, in which ideological demands are relatively true mirrors of the interests of the individual in the society, the clan conscience not only has a stabilizing effect, but also furthers those interests that have any chance to be realized. However, if the ideological values and rules of the society are opposed to the needs of the individual-which is the case most of the time for our analysands, who do live in a class-determined society-the clan conscience frequently restricts the individual. The ego loses independence in the face of the social environment that it might have enjoyed after conquering guilt and shame vis-à-vis the internalized superego.

EXAMPLES

I am taking a simple example of the clan conscience from a conversation with a pious pagan Dogon. He says that he would pray according to the Islamic rite if he were in a Mohammedan village, "so that the elders there would not be sad if someone does not share their faith ... it is not good for anyone if the village elders are depressed, then they cannot care properly for the common good." Religious ideas and rules, attributable to the superego, are delegated to external realms. From the point of view of the ego, relief is achieved if one can satisfy one's superego by adapting to the outer environment.

In our analysands, too, we can sometimes observe that the delegation of the superego to the environment can diminish ego conflicts without necessitating a total working through of the guilt or the loosening of the defense mechanism. The best-known examples are the confessions of faithful Catholics, or the soldier at war, who kills without suffering torments of conscience.

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DYNAMIC AND FUNCTION

Freud (1921) distinguished very specifically between identification with an object that brought about pleasurable feelings and the embodiment of the ego ideal in an outer authority such as the church. Sandler (1964/1965) clarified this process and characterized it as an everyday event:

The superego is being supported by the ego only as long as the superego also functions as support for the ego. There are, however, situations in which the ego can and will ignore the standards and rules of the superego altogether, i.e., if it can find sufficient narcissistic support elsewhere (p. 741) ...in daily life there are many examples where the morals and the ideals of a group take the place of an individual's moral attitude, such as in religious conversions, in the forming of gangs, and the hero worship of adolescents (p. 742).

I speak of a clan conscience, however, only if the externalization becomes necessary, and therefore automatic, for the maintenance of the ego; for such persons no "other ...narcissistic support" is necessary. Externalization itself is the support.

ON THE ORIGIN OF THE CLAN CONSCIENCE

In our culture parents take a back seat to the environment that they represent. They offer to the child values and ideologies that are not their own and that may not even determine their own behavior, which they may fail to live up to, or values they may even fear. If this happens during critical phases, the clan conscience becomes a permanent acquisition. Passive submission to the failing chief personage in the oedipal conflict seems, in our milieu, to be such a sensitive phase, especially if strong feelings of desertion, of not being loved, or a deficit in the narcissistic cathexis of the self result from the preoedipal phase.

Projections, or splitting processes, where the roles of a cruel superego or preautonomous superego nuclei are shifted to the external world, do not belong here. Those are emergency defenses through which the ego finds unreliable relief. Attempts at defense through primitive mechanisms have little value in adaptation, as do paranoid hallucinations.

On the other hand, during *therapeutic* analyses, we often overlook the fact that a patient's hyperidentification with the superego of a leader or a group has relieved his ego of conflict and even stabilized it.

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The used car dealer who shares the business ethic of his colleagues follows his "clan conscience" just as closely as does the fanatic who fights ruthlessly for a good cause; but so does the analysand

who makes the analyst who "understands everything" the bearer of the superego and who admits otherwise forbidden drive impulses. People who use this mechanism cannot by any psychiatric measure be considered delinquent or predelinquent personalities. It is exactly the well adapted, good citizens with relatively sufficient ego functions who adjust to external powers, in order to begin to give their egos some strength.

The repetitive character of such actions indicates a transference situation, especially if the function of superego is attributed to the analyst. Surprisingly, an interpretation of the drive impulses against which the analysand believes his defenses to be intact, or of the transference, is impossible. The patient has no capacity to understand such interpretations. He says, "That's how it is, after all. Everybody does it, everyone demands it that way"; he means the group to which he allots his superego. If the analyst insists on his own interpretation, his person and his morality are put in question by the analysand, who may retreat in many ways, including aggressive withdrawal and submission. If one, however, proceeds in a way that allows the analysand to be the first to recognize whom and what he used as a superego substitute and to lay bare the morals of his clan conscience, then the ego can be relieved through adjustment of the superego to extraneous demands.

The ego of the young Agni woman Elisa who took first her mother, then the arbitrator Ibi, then the village chief, then the sorceress of Yosso as her "ideal," each time finding a sufficient discharge after being severely shattered by a revived oedipal conflict. There is no doubt that the borrowed "morals" were in most respects identical with her own (Parin et al., 1971). If in our analysands a corresponding correlation exists between their own and external moralities, it is hardly possible to unravel this mechanism analytically. If, however, the ideologically represented values are in opposition to the ego interest of the analysand, a revision of the mechanism can occur.

SPECIAL CONSEQUENCES

The clan conscience does not gain its importance so much from the projective identification that externalizes the introject with whose demand the ego identifies as through the opposite movement. If the demands and values of the external society change, a process that can be directed by means of power and propaganda, the ego must submit to

the new ideology or use it to remain fully functional. This adaptation mechanism functions at the price of increased vulnerability of the subject to manipulation.

It might have to be examined whether those psychotic "delegates" that through their family carry along a kind of immunization against the individual conscience may own a clan conscience. The mechanism appears more clearly in the so-called torch bearer. Several generations of his family furnish him with a substratum for his clan conscience. When these values become ineffective in therapy, or when they diverge too far from the publicly held ones, there occurs a shock to the ego, which had depended on the narcissistic gains resulting from a good clan conscience.

"*ldentification with the Role"*

PRELIMINARY

I assigned the term "identification with the role" to complex mechanisms of adaptation that establish themselves in the ego, temporarily or permanently. The delineation of these mechanisms from other functions is not a sharp one; their dynamic may not be uniform. Neither can I state their psychogenesis with absolute certainty. Nevertheless, I hold these mechanisms to be irreplaceable supplements to the psychology of the ego. In my own practice, I can no longer do without this concept; it permits a broad linkage between individual psychology and social psychology, our knowledge of behavior in small groups and in macrosociety.

I understand the term role as it is used in sociology: the desired and demanded attitudinal behavior, depending on sex, age, position in the family, occupation, and as a participant in various institutions. Attitudinal behavior specific to groups, castes, or social classes is included in this role concept. (7) Positively valued roles-the father figure in the family, the entrepreneur, the worker-or negatively valued ones-the criminal, the mentally ill, a ward-are considered equally. All these social roles are connected with social institutions. The ideological superstructure of these institutions contains the respective wishes and demands that have been directed to the real or presumptive role bearer by the narrower or broader societal unit. It does not matter here whether or not the society or the role bearer is conscious of this ideological content.

(7) Identification with the role has little in common with the role playing in Moreno 's psychodrama (Fromm-Reichmann and Moreno, 1956).

However, I do not include in my social role everything that can be subsumed in the term role in functionalistic sociology. Social behavior of any kind-whether desired, of no consequence, or

despised by the society-if it is not defined by ideology, does not make identification with the role possible. The social behavior of an individual, whether , psychologically speaking, it follows the path of the reality principle or of a repetition compulsion, becomes role behavior only if it is predefined in an ideologic context. We are not yet making any statement about whether the person does or does not take on this role without identifying with it. Identification with the role is a process to be described in psychological terms, a step by which an "objective" role becomes a "subjective" one.

To give an example: The homosexual man has a specific social behavior pattern. He chooses only male sexual partners. This does not necessarily mean that he behaves in the manner dictated by the ideology of the system "homosexuality in an industrial society." If he does-frequents appropriate meeting places, wears homosexual clothes, and behaves in a manner corresponding to the expectations or society as a whole-he is playing the specific social role. But still we cannot conclude as yet whether or not he identifies with the role or the homosexual. If he does, which is a purely psychological process, there has been a change in his ego, which can be described psychologically and which can be clarified psychoanalytically.

OVERVIEW

During its development in childhood, the ego becomes able to take on various roles, assigned to it first by the family and later by the school and the wider public, and to behave according to these roles. Even though conflicts between the id and the demands of education are not totally resolved through this ability, identification does relieve the tension of many of these conflicts. Le Coultre (1970) emphasized that the ego of the adult is frequently "split": one is an able, adult man and, at the same time, a helpless little boy, or an aging woman of 55 and simultaneously an adolescent, whose life is still "ahead of her." The retention and splitting off of a childish role, according to Le Coultre, protect the adult ego against unresolved childhood conflicts-as a defense, after all. Other authors, such as Richter (1976), believe that the assumption of assigned roles alleviates or even avoids anxiety altogether, especially the anxiety of not being loved and being left alone and defenseless, which derives from the separation anxiety of the child.

We have seen that a passing or lasting identification with the role

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gives greater stability to the ego. In order to relax conflicts with the environment, simple assumption of role-determined behavior would be sufficient. How, then, can we explain the continuation of role playing when there are no longer any threatening outer conflicts? Even role

identification does not resolve inner conflicts. However, two advantages result for the ego, if it does not merely assume roles but rather identifies with them. Outward adaption then occurs automatically; it does not demand the spending of energy or cathexis. Any ego split that might become necessary is seldom noticed and hardly decreases total functioning. Moreover, identification always offers a real or imagined libidinous or aggressive gratification, which is sometimes related to the role-conveyor. Additionally, it offers a narcissistic satisfaction because one fits one ' s role well.

As the identification with the role is the chief instrument of the adjustment of the adult to social demands and compulsions, so the analysis of these identifications (whether exchangeable and short-lived or lasting) is an irreplaceable instrument of emancipation. In other words: The person is not master of his own home. The analysis must make him aware not only of these forces from his repressed material to which he is subject, but also of the powers of his environment that automatically dominate him because his ego, mostly unconsciously and through diverse role models, has identified with them.

EXAMPLES

The identification with the rote became particularly clear in Africans, in whose relatively simply structured environment the attributions are clearer and less numerous than with us.

In conversations with F. Morgenthaler (Parin, Morgenthaler, & Parin-Matthèy, 1971) Brou Koffi impressed him as an energetic, self-assured, and prudent man, as long as he spoke in his role as village chief. When he had to give up this role under the assault of unconscious material or through interpretations of his behavior, he became fraught with anxieties, perplexed, abjectly submissive; his self image was in disarray. When a new duty as village chief arose for him, he assumed the offered role, and his psychic equilibrium was restored immediately.

A case from my Zurich practice shows the effect of rote identification:

During four preliminary interviews, a capable, intelligent, and seemingly articulate physician had expounded on his biography

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and the reasons for needing an analysis. He did this convincingly and with sufficient effect to evoke empathy. When I accepted his proposal-he wanted to begin to tell me what came to his mind without prior planning-he could not speak. This was an extremely mortifying experience for him, which repeated itself several times in spite of all attempts to help him over this obstacle. Every word he wanted to speak spontaneously, every feeling he wished to show was restricted by disabling anxiety or deathly shame.

During this period, he worked energetically and without complaint as chief physician of a complex medical institution and was seen as a rather cool, but friendly, accessible, and self-assured colleague. The identification with the allotted social role had been gained step by step and had substituted for otherwise deficient ego functions. At one point, he could not identify with the social role of a physician, when he accepted a position abroad, where the role expectations of him as a physician were totally different. There he suddenly became confused and wanted to commit suicide. He returned home just in time to find another placement as a physician.

In psychoanalytic theory and practice, one usually explains such a phenomenon without using the concept of identification with the role. I did likewise, and the analysis was successful in the end. Nevertheless, I believe that my interpretations, as well as my understanding of the patient, remained incomplete.

During the analysis, in addition to the well-known transference roles (Sandler, 1974) such as that of an educating mother during the anal phase, other role expectations are conferred on the analyst, attributed to him, or projected onto him. His own role identification has the effect of identifying the partner, alloplastically, with a corresponding role and treating him accordingly.

A young woman physician had in analysis a young man who came from a very wealthy family. The working alliance was a good one; the transference had a mildly eroticized, fraternal-positive coloration. In several of the last preceding hours, the patient had tried to clarify for himself the complicated, tormenting, neurotic entanglement in his parental family. Since he was unable to get a good grasp of the matter, the analyst sought to help him in his effort by summarizing what the patient had said about his family. Suddenly the patient lost his temper and berated the analyst, saying that she

had no right to discuss this and wondering what he still had to gain.

through working with her. The analyst's first reactive thought was

that he was very rich, and then she became aware that he was scolding her as if she were a maid. An appropriate intervention made the patient conscious of his perception: "As long as I speak to my physician, I have full confidence in her competence, and she understands me like a sister. As soon as she discusses my family, in which I am the "son of a distinguished family" (we would say identify with that role), she turns into something like a maid, whom we employ but who has no right to mix into family affairs." After this interpretation, the favorable working alliance was restored.

DEVELOPMENT OF ROLE IDENTIFICATION

The genetic steps leading to role identification probably coincide with the development of the child's ego, which never occurs in an unchanging environment: Just by growing older, the child encounters steadily changing social situations relative to his role and must adapt to them. Later role identifications are copied from those conveyed early on and demanded by family and school; that is, they are drawn within the same ego-contours.

Later on, social necessities and compulsions bring about an identification with a social role. The difference between need and compulsion is not great. Both indicate that it is more advantageous to accept the assigned role than to refuse it. If one does not accept the role, dangers threaten; fear of real frustrations and punishments arises in the ego. This does not exclude simultaneously arising neurotic anxieties. A woman who marries to find her role as a wife and mother may be afraid of the disadvantages and discrimination that await an unmarried women in our society; a neurotic anxiety of being alone may codetermine her decision. Anxieties triggered by real threats, as well as those originating from drive conflicts, may be conscious or unconscious.

DYNAMICS AND FUNCTION

Identification with the social role is not meant simply to be behavior in a prescribed manner, but the specific form in which the ego deals with this assigned role. When examining this mechanism, we must give weight to the fact that anxiety generally has the effect of a regulator; but that the tracing of the anxiety signal in the ego will not help to understand the processes within the ego further than recognizing that a

role has been assumed or that uncertainty and threatening dangers suggest some form of adaptation to the ego. (8)

One might deduce from observing families and groups that the fears of isolation, exclusion, or loss of love are the main or even the only determinants of role identification (Richter, 1976). However, conscious fears often can not be proven when multiple new roles are assumed in macrosocial institutions. On the contrary, it is just those role identifications that isolate the subject, distinguish and separate him from family or group, and frequently lend the ego particular stability so that the effectiveness of unconscious separation anxiety becomes improbable.

(8) My concept of identification with a role is opposed by others, who commonly describe this mechanism as a defense mechanism, that is, as a defense against anxiety. That point is most clearly represented by the so-called English School, which is indebted to the thinking of Melanie Klein.

I. Menzies (undated) examines "The functioning of social systems as a defense against anxiety," especially role distribution within an institution, a nursing school within a large London hospital. It is explained that the execution of the ascribed role always serves to defend against anxiety. It is said that reality (of the institution) acts as a symbol that triggers anxiety which originates from unconscious phantasies. When the symbol (i.e., the symbolic aspect of reality) is equated with the unconscious phantasy, unmanageable, acute anxiety arises. If real events as symbols only represent the unconscious content of the phantasies, then the anxiety can be conquered. The assumption that reality (e.g., working in that institution) in all cases triggers anxiety, theoretically permits the description of role identifications as a defense mechanism. In practice, they deduce from the fact that anxiety appears when a social role is given up that the function of the role is to defend against anxiety.

Within the present framework, I naturally cannot present a sufficient appreciation or criticism of Melanie Klein 's theory. For the theme of this paper, a clear delineation of my interpretation from that of the English school is, however, possible. Theirs has the advantage of furnishing a simpler model. Instead of assuming, as I do, a defense organization and separate adaptation mechanisms, they make do with the concept of defense alone.

The mere fact, however, that anxiety appears if a situation changes does not lead me to conclude that the situation served to defend against anxiety; nor does the mere circumstance that a child shows anxiety as soon as the mother leaves lead to the conclusion that the presence of the mother functions as a defense against anxiety. Aside from the questionability of this theoretical reasoning, the model role/anxiety-defense is a closed one: The individual psyche needs the institution as a defense; the institution is organized in accordance with subjective (neurotic) needs. Thus one

Parin 1988c
The Ego and the Mechanisms of Adaptation. In Boyer, Bryce & Simon A. Grolnik (Eds.): The Psychoanalytic Study of Society, Vol. 12. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press, 97-130.

explains the conservative character of institutions, their tendency, contrary to a more reasonable arrangement, to remain always the same. They can be changed only through insight. My own model leaves open which conditions give stability to the institutions and the set roles within them: social conditions, economic and other interests and pressures. Insight into their psychological effect alone may well change the subjective experience of the role, but does not guarantee that the institution, which depends on other forces, together with its set roles, changes so readily.

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The most important psychological predetermining factors to make role identifications possible are active adaptation to the social roles that must be assumed, and libidinous and aggressive experiences that are triggered in the individual by the role assignments and role expectations of the environment. For society offers each individual frustrations and seductions that are specific to his social situation and that advance the one-sided adaptation of his psychic structure. We might even suspect that the position of the individual within his class and his profession and his place in the power structure have a continuous influence on the cathexis of the self and thus determine the relationship of the psychic structures with each other.

Identification with social roles, no matter how dichotomous or frustrating they may be, always serves the process of social adaptation; without such identifications, the proper interaction with the environment would be most difficult. The roles themselves are derived from and defined by social institutions. Many of these institutions are arranged in such a way that they affect the individual like a defense mechanism that has been externalized. Freud (1913) uncovered this first in the "human penal system."

If one person succeeds in gratifying the repressed desire, the same desire is bound to be kindled in all the other members of the community. In order to keep the temptation down, the envied transgressor must be deprived of the fruit of his enterprise; and the punishment will not infrequently give those who carry it out an opportunity of committing the same outrage under colour of an act of expiation. This is indeed one of the foundations of the human penal system and it is based, no doubt correctly, on the assumption that the prohibited impulses are present alike in the criminal and in the avenging community [p. 72].

We are still far from totally penetrating the effects of even the most important social institutions. The psychoanalytic illumination that Freud began again and again was stymied mostly by the fact that analysts, too, were identified with the same norms and value systems that legitimated the institutions under prevailing conditions, and they were not free to question them. Culturally

constituted defensive systems, as Pollock (1972) calls them, are social structures, which relieve the individual of socially undesirable drive impulses and of the effort of defense or renunciation. Culture, which, in part, is based on the repression of drives, takes over a part of this effort through its institutions. The adapting ego is spared the effort of defence, as long as

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the person identifies, up to standard, with the role assigned to him by society. The finding that the ego does not need any energy for the identification with the role and that his defense system is actually relieved cannot be a surprise. It is true, however, that this economic gain brings with it a structural restriction.

Successful identifications with the role relieve the ego. Sometimes they help to bridge intrastructural conflicts in the ego, as between active and passive attitudes, where perhaps the role of an employee demands passivity vis-à-vis his superios and activity in his work or attitude vis-à-vis those below him in rank. The necessary outerdirectedness may temporarily quiet uncomfortable affects. Demands of the id may also take a step backward, so that the distinction from a defense mechanism is not always easy. The most important difference from a complex defense mechanism, such as the narrowing of the ego, lies in the drive gratification that often follows the role identification.

Here we can compare this mechanism with a symptom formation. However, while a symptom almost never brings about a secondary narcissistic satisfaction and a corresponding increase in self-respect, identification with the role is regularly accompanied by narcissistic satisfaction, even if only temporarily.

For both object-related ones and narcissistic gratification, we must consider that role identification frequently demands the renunciation of certain satisfactions (for example, he who drives should not drink) but that only the fewest social roles do not yield at least some gratification to the bearer from those who assign the roles.

The narcissistic gratification derived from role identification is most striking when the assumption of the role results in other massive frustrations. Recruits who have suffered deprivation of their rights and harassing treatment during military training, remember during their analysis how identification with their role brought them immediate relief. When part of the individual superego can be delegated to the authorities, passive, masochistic homosexual and other regressive satisfactions suddenly become possible. Here, and especially in less disagreeable role assignments, the narcissistic gain is achieved through being a recruit, a doctor, or a father, for example; if we are dealing with more or less permanent identification, the feeling of an identity of

one's own is strengthened, no matter how much this identity is founded on unavoidable or even forced adaptation.

Under certain circumstances identification with the social role appears only temporarily, as an emergency mechanism. An otherwise kind man beats his children "as a father"; an honest merchant gets into trouble and takes unfair advantage of his friend and partner "as a

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businessman." The role model with which he identifies includes the motto that in business one's own advantage must be pursued above all else and that "friendship stops where business begins." Thus, a role identification may at times work like a manic mechanism by means of which the ego rids itself or otherwise valid demands of the superego.

The relationship of ego identity (Erikson, 1950) to the identification with the role is complex. To delineate these concepts from each other would take a more detailed discussion than we can present here. We must start from two statements that seem to contradict each other and that can be traced to psychoanalytic observation: On one hand, ego identity is built partly on role identification; on the other hand, the structure of a durable ego identity diminishes the tendency to identify with social ro1es.

In the "epigenetic crises," during which the identity of a person establishes itself (the most striking ones have been described by Erikson, 1950, 1959), assigned role models, which have been internalized through identification, connect-more or less modified-with other, previously internalized identifications. If the acquired ego identity is sufficiently strong and well-integrated into the psychic structure, it has the effect of an organizer, stabilizing the ego. Thereafter it is less dependent on identification with roles that social existence offers or presses on it. Clinically, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between lasting identifications and the social role of ego identity. However, one really should speak of identity only when the sum of all self-representations is involved; a loss of identity is also accompanied by a shakeup and demands a psychic restructuring, while long-lasting role identifications are easily given up and exchanged against others when they no longer offer any advantages.

Many people are unable to identify with the roles offered to them. Their ego has suffered distortions during its development or is the steady locus of such conflicts that the person cannot behave according to the role model offered or cannot identify with this role. The ego of such persons, in fact, has an urgent need for such role identification, in order to retain sufficient stability, but cannot make use of the offering. Every psychiatrist is familiar with the following uncanny consequence of hospitalization: The offer of more and more restricted roles with which

even a badly functioning or regressed ego can identify leads to a stabilization as demanded by these role-assigning institutions. Automatic adaptation under such circumstances leads to a result called hospitalism.

No doubt, there are persons who will not identify with any role model offered to them, no matter what kind it is. They are quite

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capable of behaving according to the dictates of one or another role. However, if the environment demands automatically conforming role behavior, which can be accomplished only by identifying with the total model, they prefer to change their social situation or leave it altogether , in order to oppose the identification offered or to avoid it. In very close or institutionally tightly structured social groups, such individuals become opponents of, or at least alienated from, society. But even if the social situation does not present such concrete disadvantages, the refusal of all role identifications takes a substantial psychic effort. Such individuals do not make life easy for themselves. Their ego renounces a stabilizer that, at least in our society, is more easily built-in than avoided. They decide to do without narcissistic gratification, which would automatically flow toward them through role identification. Their ego must, therefore, continue to work through various conflicts with both inner and outer authorities, without guarantee of the outcome, without any protection against upsetting its balance, but in danger of forfeiting gratification without compensation.

It is not clear which developmental steps of early childhood bring about such a character formation; there probably are very different constellations leading to the same result. Certainly all such persons have a strong ego identity into which further role models simply do not fit and into which nothing can be integrated that does not totally harmonize with it. Furthermore, one has the impression that the ego of such persons has somehow decided to follow the internalized ego ideal rather than to follow the demands of the external environment. Such an inner autonomy and external independence, which confronts all conflicts openly even in the face of danger, corresponds to the emancipatory aim of a psychoanalysis. However, we frequently see in therapeutic as well as in training analyses that the achieved relative ego autonomy may be sufficient for entering further identifications with the role not totally unconsciously, but that this autonomy alone is not a sufficient basis for refusing role identifications altogether.

SPECIAL CONSEQUENCES

Adulthood sees very deep psychological changes that are triggered by the environment. Psychoanalysis has paid little attention to them. They frequently do not run such a dramatic and life-determining course as the discovery of one's identity, which has been described by Erikson (1959) as the last step in the development at the end of adolescence, as adaptation to new tasks, and as inner restructuring. It appears, however, that later restructuring, which brings about great inner conflicts and a "new edition " of childhood conflicts, is

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introduced by changes in the role identifications. A role must be given up because of external circumstances. The ego loses its stability; narcissistic gratification, which the role had presented, is lost. Either new identifications are found or the ego must cope with the emerging conflicts without this support, which sometimes is successful only at the price of neurotic symptom formation. Conversely, diminished cathexis of the self and its subsequent impoverishment can force the ego to give up a role that demands much self-esteem, phal1ic exhibition, or similar qualities. Then the same process occurs.

The transformation of a human being through the assumption of power is an old psychological problem, which is clarified by close observation of role identification. It is true that only rarely will persons in positions of high political or economic power al1ow themselves to be observed psychoanalytical1y. But, given sufficient knowledge of the social relationships, one can delineate the position of power as a role assignment of those who outwardly seem to have little power, and make them conscious of it. It is obvious how little object-related satisfaction adheres to such roles and that the acting out and enjoyment of aggression appears only as a secondary gain. The narcissistic gain in self-cathexis-whether originating from the self-image, from the real or imagined admiration by less powerful individuals, or from the identification with more powerful persons in similar social positions-compensates for the effort necessary to reach this position of power and retain it. Many social roles confer power, but very few concrete material advantages. Still, people cling to such roles with great effort, because the narcissistic gain sterns from the exercise of power. I could observe in several analysands that the narcissistic supply through the identification with a powerful role had replaced object-related ties step by step. In this sense, they followed the banal thesis that "power produces a lust for more power."

IN THE THERAPEUTIC ANALYSIS

During the analysis, I pay careful attention to the roles assigned to analysands and how far they identify with those roles. Sometimes the role identification can be observed easily, as in the

earlier-mentioned young man who, as the son of a distinguished family, made a hired servant out of his women analyst. The narcissistic satisfaction stemming from the aggressive or masochistic acting out of caste or class interests is easily overlooked if the analysand and the analyst belong to the same social layer and if the therapist does not have a special capacity to recognize and see through these social forces. As soon as the analysand is fully identified with his class role, the view of the

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analyst, who relies on the psychic reality of his patient, usually only reaches the line drawn by his patient's reality testing. To remain on the path of the analytic process, however, he must direct his constant attention beyond both lines of demarcation, that between conscious and unconscious and that between the conscious and unperceived social realities of the analysand.

When interpreting the identification with a role, it is wise to remember the old technical rule: to interpret regressive defense mechanisms first and only later on progressive ones, which give the ego a certain strength. Similarly, only after there is less readiness to regress and there is no further danger of unmanageable anxiety should one interpret role identifications that allow the ego more room to function and are linked with drive gratifications. Thereafter, however, the interpretation of identification with the role is absolutely necessary in order to make unconscious conflicts, which are far-reaching determinants of social behavior, accessible to a conscious working through.

Unconscious role identifications gain special importance at the beginning and at the end of analyses. The role of the patient can be conceived in such a way that the patient complains only about physical ailments to the physician, who is supposed to cure them. If one wanted to interpret this behavior during the analysis as resistance, then one would also have to guess what is being defended against with these complaints about physical frailties. It is not unusual to find that nothing has been defended against, that the temporary role identification was only intended to stabilize and strengthen the ego to enable it to stand up to fears and other burdens.

A student of architecture with whom I had started on a course of analytically oriented psychotherapy complained to me only about headaches. When I pointed out to him how he identified with the traditional role of a patient, he replied: ..You, too, are wearing a white doctor's coat." (It was a hot summer's day, and I was wearing jeans and a shirt with an open collar.) During the course of the psychotherapy, which, with some interruption, lasted for two years, there was no further talk of headaches. This example shows us that, as frequently happens, a second "role assigning" person is also affected by this identification.

At the end of an analysis, identification with a newly attained social role sometimes simulates a cure, or at least a good narcissistic restitution. Ferenczi (1927) in his time and later Grunberger (1957) have described this restitution as characteristic for a resolution of childhood

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conflicts and for the "natural" end of the analysis. If the analyst realizes the true circumstances, he can easily bring the role identification into consciousness, without endangering the newly achieved social position. Then the analysis of those feelings can begin which the ego, now stronger by virtue of role identification through its defenses, had kept far away from consciousness.

ADAPTATION MECHANISMS AND "NARCISSISTIC" DISORDERS

The mechanisms of adaptation are able to accomplish much for the ego if it is to continue to be able to function under interfering or changing conditions of the outer environment. They assist the autonomy of the ego (Rapaport, 1951, 1957) but have a tendency to restrict independency from the environment. If they do function, the ego is discharged from drive conflicts, there is less anxiety, and the ego as a whole is stabilized. However, the environment interferes with its structure in a manner that cannot be controlled by the ego and that determines important ego functions.

Adaptation mechanisms cannot suffice in the adult whose psychic development has not led to a degree of socialization in which he finds himself in disagreement with his social environment. This does not happen only during transplantation to another cultural climate as in immigration; a change in the social situation (such as impoverishment, proletarization, or upward mobility) produces the same effect. Innumerable individuals are affected if the macrosociety changes rapidly, as in political upheavals, economic crises, urbanization, technological or power-related political and bureaucratic reorganizations of society. Because these mechanisms no longer relieve the ego, a deep restructuring of the person follows. Elsewhere (1978) I have expressed the suspicion that such "alienating" situations frequently permit neurotic fixations to become manifest, when they might otherwise have remained latent.

In the last few years, there have been assumptions from various sides that "narcissistic" personality disorders increasingly appear in Western industrialized countries (Kohut, 1971). We suspect that this is traceable less to changes in family structures or early childhood education, than to failure to adapt in an alienated social situation. By this I mean that although the ego has formed adaptation mechanisms to insure a sufficiently functional area under other circumstances,

diminished gratifications cause regression or retreat to narcissistic modes of experience. Rapaport (1951, 1957) demonstrated convincingly that the ego not only is dependent on a sufficient delivery of drive energy from

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the id to retain a relative autonomy, which is diminished when the defense organization is neurotically frozen or distorted, but also needs a social environment in which it can function, which accepts it and nourishes it. In some analyses, I have found that the environment, when measured by the results of psychic development and socialization, was too frustrating, so that seemingly narcissistic personality disorders came about. Social adaptation was no longer successful. A narcissistic retreat ensued. This retreat did correspond to a regression to narcissistic modes of experiences of early childhood, but it could be relatively easily reversed as soon as active changes of the social situation or even a conscious confrontation with it became possible. (9)

In modern industrial society, socialization of the human being reaches a "higher" level, in the sense that the number of roles to be assumed, and the inevitability of their assignment, increases. Economic developments and crises entail a frequent and unpredictable change in the offering of roles. These conditions apparently lead to the ego's identification with an ever increasing number of roles that, in part, contradict each other. Thus, object-related satisfactions and conflicts retreat, are caught up by the role-identified ego in a compensatory way, and are replaced by narcissistic satisfactions and conflicts. In other words, the balance between narcissistic aggressive and libidinous needs and object-related ones is disturbed; a shift ensues in favor of the narcissistic ones. The progressive marketization of the individual forces the ego to exchange the pleasurable gain of objectrelated wish fulfillment for narcissistic premiums, which are more easily compatible with the offered role identifications.

In principle, these are reversible processes. During analyses, one discovers repeatedly that once "scar tissue" has formed over narcissistic injuries, an improved self-image, resultant from cathexis of the self without conflict, makes automatic role identifications unnecessary and that seemingly lost object-related cathexes reappear.

But such a development is contrary to the social situation. Propaganda and advertising transmitted by mass media and the public consensus and directed by the marketplace (as well as by the morality of the so-called material compulsions) have the real aim of mobilizing narcissistic needs and offering means of narcissistic gratification (such as a new car for a narcissistic lack).(10)

Against propaganda and offers of that kind, the ego is relatively defenseless. Since no concrete opponent is available, it can neither

(9) I would speak of "genuine" narcissistic neuroses if developmental disturbances of childhood weighed more heavily and if eternal life situations figured little.

(10) Here I follow a hint from Pier Francesco Galli, Bologna (personal communication).

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organize at tacks against him (in the service of the ego) nor easily renounce its adapted formation: It would first be thoroughly shaken and confronted with inner conflicts and the frustration of object-related wishes. Frequently it happens that further narcissistic satisfactions are sought to balance the deficit of gratification. This may occur through new or strengthened role identification, which can then no longer be given up.

If one follows these considerations, one comes to the conclusion that the ever more frequent narcissistic personality disorders are structured like perversions (Morgenthaler, 1974).Defects in the cathexis of the self and of objects are compensated by hypercathexis of narcissistic needs. Such cathexes are necessary for the retention of some ability to function; without them, the ego would lose its stability. Since the social situation favors a narcissistic compensation of the frustrated ego and of the defective se1f, it is doubtful whether such narcissistic personality disorders may still be called pathological. Measured against a greater flexibility and tolerance of the ego for drive demands and an assumed harmony between narcissistic and object-related needs, we are dealing with serious disturbances. Measured against the obligatory integration into the managed world of technology, production, and capital, "narcissistic" developments are successful solutions that the ego has achieved after having become identical with its roles.

Poets of our time have described such conditions quite impressively. Bertold Brecht (1921) in his "In the jungle of the Cities," shows a man who no longer can find anyone with whom he can experience anything, not even an opponent to fight, if no happier relationship is possible, and who despairs because of it. Samuel Beckett's (1954) Godot, for whom everyone is waiting, does not arrive; the waiting is filled by manifestations of narcissistic power. In Boris Vian' s (1959) "Les Batisseurs d'Empire" no human being is expected any longer. Living space, represented by the meager apartment of the protagonist, becomes tighter, uninhabitable. At the end of each act, the threatened individual gives Schmuertz, a lifeless puppet standing in a corner, a tremendous slap in the face and then withdraws to the floor above by way of an ever narrowing circular staircase into an apartment exactly like the one below, again with a Schmuertz in the corner. This he does three times, in three acts. One does not know whether this flight upwards, step by step, will still continue after the play is over. Perhaps no way out is left.

In an extremely alienated social situation, possibilities of adaptation no longer work. Psychological collapse ensues; the dark visions of these poets realistically describe the effect of unbearable life situations on the soul. In psychoanalysis we try to make it possible for the ego to

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renounce its unconsciously functioning adaptation mechanisms, so that it becomes capable of actively changing its social situation. To strive actively to change unbearable social conditions is not only an ethical imperative or consequence of a political decision; this fight for a better life is also an irreplaceable function of the ego.

Freud, at the beginning of his psychoanalytic studies, took as his starting point the concept that living conditions are the producers of neuroses and that the therapist 's task is to enable the patient to confront his environment actively. He wrote in 1895:

No doubt, fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness, but you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With a mental life that has been restored to health, you will be better armed against that unhappiness [Breuer and Freud, 1893-1895, p. 305].

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