

Essential Papers in Psychoanalysis
General Editor: Leo Goldberger

Essential Papers on Borderline Disorders
Edited by Michael H. Stone, M.D.

Essential Papers on Object Relations
Edited by Peter Buckley, M.D.

Essential Papers on Narcissism
Edited by Andrew P. Morrison, M.D.

Essential Papers on Depression
Edited by James C. Coyne

Essential Papers on Psychosis
Edited by Peter Buckley, M.D.

Essential Papers on Countertransference
Edited by Benjamin Wolstein

Essential Papers on Character Neurosis and Treatment
Edited by Ruth F. Lax

Essential Papers on the Psychology of Women
Edited by Claudia Zanardi

Essential Papers on Transference
Edited by Aaron H. Esman, M.D.

Essential Papers on Dreams
Edited by Melvin R. Lansky, M.D.

Essential Papers on Literature and Psychoanalysis
Edited by Emanuel Berman

Essential Papers on Object Loss
Edited by Rita V. Frankiel

Essential Papers on Masochism
Edited by Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly

ESSENTIAL PAPERS ON MASOCHISM

Edited by
Margaret Ann Fitzpatrick Hanly



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1795

Introduction

What is the relation between the sexual perversion and the character disorder that goes by the same name? Moral masochism can be distinguished from masochistic perversion in two main ways: at first glance, moral masochism does not seem to have any connection with the sexual functions; the seeking of pain as punishment for forbidden fantasy pleasure is not a conscious phenomenon. The moral masochist does not know he is masochistic; he is unaware of his part in creating his suffering; and unaware that these sufferings could constitute the very means of satisfying the needs of a fettered libido (Nacht 1938). The seeking of pain for sexual pleasure is conscious in perversion. Perversion can be rigorously defined as an adult psychopathological formation, consolidated through adolescent development, which is obligatory for adult sexual functioning (Coen 1992, chapter 19 in this volume; Bak 1974). This definition referring to the perverse act and its conscious purpose with respect to orgasm separates masochistic perversion from moral masochism, with its unconscious purpose.

Having suggested the important differences in the functioning of moral masochism and masochistic perversion, we can note that many authors find no major distinction in the underlying fantasy structure. Freud (1919, chapter 8 in this volume; 1924, chapter 13 in this volume) makes little distinction between the fantasy structure in perversion and in moral masochism. Reik (1940; in excerpt form, chapter 16 in this volume) carries on this tradition in showing the movements between fantasy in moral masochism and the scenarios set in perversion.

Anna Freud (1922; chapter 14 in this volume) describes the repression of the beating fantasy in the course of development of moral masochism. The paper is an important example of the fantasy structure of an adolescent girl. Freud describes the period in which the beating fantasy and the masturbatory pleasure that accompanied it were given up with self-reproaches and pangs of conscience, in which the "perverse" infantile component instinct moved

toward the structure of moral masochism. The "nice stories" which came to preoccupy the patient were found to be analogous in construction to the beating fantasies, and parallel in content.

In the early days of Freud's (1924) discovery of unconscious guilt and its relation to the instincts and to symptom formation, a freshness is felt in the successful interpretive strategies described in such papers as Fenichel's "Clinical Aspect of the Need for Punishment" 1925; chapter 15 in this volume). Fenichel describes the sense of guilt as "a unique, primitive, ruthless thing." He writes up a case in which he sees "the genesis and constitution of moral masochism; the excessive sexualizing in it of all penalizing actions; the turning of the sadistic trends against the patient's self" (pp. 321-22 in this volume). Whatever more we have learned, this understanding of moral masochism has been fundamental to clinical psychoanalysis.

Reik (1940) begins his treatment of masochism stating that the "differences as to sex will be as little considered as the question of whether it concerns a masochistic phantasy or an actual scene of perversion" (p. 324 in this volume). He describes psychological phenomena which apply both to the perversion and to moral masochism, that is, to the underlying anxieties and to the leading defenses. The characteristics of masochism which Reik considers central are the special use of fantasy, the use of tension states, and a demonstrative (as opposed to exhibitionistic) tendency, a display of suffering or badness which leads to a negative victory. His idea that severe moral masochism is closer to perversion than to neurosis is articulated in some contemporary papers (Chasseguet-Smirgel 1991).

The difficulty in any attempt at precision in defining moral masochism is that the diagnostic category of masochism is never an exclusive one (Brenner 1959; chapter 18 in this volume). Nacht (1938) has sections on masochism in male homosexuality, masochism in obsessional neurosis, and masochism in melancholia. Bak (1946; chapter 9 in this volume) describes the masochistic aspects of paranoia; Fenichel (1945) outlines the masochism in obsessional neurosis; Grunberger (1956; chapter 10 in this volume) looks at the masochism as a vicissitude of phallic aggression which is particularly prone to pathological repression and turning round on the self. But despite the many-faceted nature of the subject, much consensus on the nature of moral masochism exists. The unconscious seeking after pain as a condition for pleasure (Brenner 1959) is the most consistent definition of moral masochism, where the pleasure, or reduction in unpleasure, may consist in the lessening of superego anxiety or the closer link to a bad but essential love object.

The transition from moral masochism to masochistic character involves the intensification of the masochistic trends into an organized and fixed set of attitudes to self and to others usually involving a relationship which allows for a permanent sense of injustice, or constant complaints concerning the object's failure to give enough, or endless sufferings experienced at the hands of the object in some other way (Nacht 1938).

A debate on the etiology of the masochistic character took place in the 1950s concerning the role of object relations in masochism. Some writers (Berliner 1947; 1958, chapter 17 in this volume; Menaker 1953) felt that the entire causation of moral masochism was to be found in the sadism of the parent or parents. Other analysts concentrated on a causation which varied and which involved many factors, among them, the exacerbation of ordinary aggressivity, intense incest wishes causing guilt, and attachment to regressed libidinal satisfaction (A. Freud 1922; Brenman 1952; Grunberger 1956; Brenner 1959): in other words, a complex interconnected blend of intrinsic human strivings and object relation factors.

Views of etiology influence approaches to therapy. The essays on masochism and object relations by Berliner (1947, 1958) and Menaker (1953) suggest that the main "analytic" task is to empathize with the patient insofar as he or she has been subject to the sadism of one or both parents, and has denied the parental sadism. Yet, when Berliner (1947) writes of the almost entirely unconscious aggression in the masochist and the difficulty of interpreting it to the patient, he is very close to Brenman (1952). One difference is that she sees the mechanism involved in rendering the aggression unconscious as a projection of the aggression (Brenman 1952). Berliner emphasizes the projection of love into the hating or ambivalent parent, and the denial of the parent's hatred, as the key defenses. Brenman (1952) describes a complex etiology for her severely masochistic patient. She recognizes a hating mother, but also, a libidinal satisfaction and self-punishment in the child's self-debasing humor, and, ultimately, a projection of hostile aggressivity onto the parent/therapist, which has the effect of a provocation. Her account of the multiple functions of, and multiple defenses involved in, the masochistic character suggests that we must be ready to see a unique variant of masochism in each patient. Brenner's (1959) case material suggests a similar flexibility of formulation. Grunberger (1956), in an attempt to see a fundamental psychodynamic in moral masochism, looks closely at a key unconscious fantasy. He finds clinical evidence to suggest that the fantasied wish to castrate the father (a critical point in the vicissitudes of normal aggression

and narcissism) becomes, when not integrated, the basis for the formation of masochistic character. In his view, the unconscious fantasy of being castrated by father (so often cited as leading to masochism) is, in itself, a masochistic fantasy, both flooded with sexual excitations and having the castration wish bent back against the self. How can severe castration anxiety be both an explanation for, and a manifestation of masochistic trends (Grunberger 1956)? What emerges is a debate about analytic attitudes toward the patient's aggression and masochistic satisfactions. One group of analysts deplored any attitude of fault finding, what Freud so long ago warned against as the search for the criminality in a patient. Berliner (1958), therefore, emphasized the basic helplessness of the child in the anaclitic bond, and the child's need for love and protection of the parent however sadistic that parent might be. His analytic goal was to help the patient undo denials concerning the parent's sadistic behaviors. Another group of analysts see the patient as trapped by the unconscious nature of his or her aggression and libido which is silently turned back on the self. For them, helping a patient to integrate memories of frightening, but understandable, sadistic impulses, is a key analytic goal. It seems that some analysts have misread the "classical" attention to the unconscious aggression and sadomasochistic dynamics as a failure to see trauma or as an attack on the patient. But no major writer has indeed oversimplified the field of observation, or the clinical task, in this way.

The debate concerning masochism continues in the 1990s. The questions, for the most part, no longer need to be posed in terms of an either-or. Freud's sense that masochism is shaped by a skewed and "scarcely effected" Oedipus is seen to go hand in hand with the pre-Oedipal trauma and fixation of sadism which he saw as distorting the Oedipal situation (Freud 1919). The hatred and sadism parents act out toward their children is described along with the way in which the child's psychic structures are altered by their reactions to and defenses against that hatred, or neglect and seductiveness. Both parent and then, tragically, child, take up the sadomasochistic positions, simultaneously and in turn (Shengold 1967; 1971, chapter 11 in this volume; Coen 1992; Novick and Novick 1987, chapter 12 in this volume).

Implicit in the debate in the fifties is a question concerning the relative roles of sexual libido and aggression in the formation of masochistic character. While Berliner (1958) and Menaker (1953) underplay the child's ordinary aggression and sexuality and focus on the hatred and sadism of the parent, they do emphasize the child's need for the love object, which brings them

round to the child's vulnerability to excitations and addictive attachments to sadistic objects. What finds a clearer focus in other papers is that a masochistic excitation grows up to complicate the need for love and a sadism complicates the frustration. In the nineties there is no longer debate about whether some trauma lies behind serious cases of masochistic character; instead there is a certain emphasis now on sadomasochism as purely a vicissitude of aggression (Blum 1991). And so the emphases shift over the years.

When masochism is seen as purely a vicissitude of aggression, we are led to ask what the difference is between masochism and depression. For superego guilt turning back aggression on the self and pre-Oedipal aggression turned back out of fear of loss of the object or fear of reprisals seems to define both depression and masochism. While there is some overlap in the psychic mechanisms, the particular need to manipulate the object into being sadistic, and the simultaneity of denial, projection, and introjection (Brenman 1952) which are characteristic of the masochistic character in a struggle with the love object, create a varied but identifiable set of clinical phenomena, appropriately called masochistic, or sadomasochistic. These are distinguishable from depression, which cuts off the object tie at certain points and becomes more isolated (Kernberg 1988). An object-bound struggle and excitations, covert or hidden, provoked by that struggle with the love object, are at the heart of masochism.

The question as to whether pre-Oedipal trauma is the sine qua non of masochistic character is still under discussion. The important distinction between primary and secondary guilt that Modell (1965) draws offers a way of understanding the unconscious need for punishment in the negative therapeutic reaction, without indicating much influence from the Oedipal stage. Modell (1965), quoting Freud, notes the fact that unconscious guilt precedes the formation of the superego. Primary guilt associated with aggression and accompanied by confusions of identity, can be diffuse, pervasive, and, at worst, can interfere with all personality functioning. This diffuse pre-Oedipal guilt, which distorts the Oedipus complex, then becomes fixed into the personality in specific masochistic fantasies through unconscious incest guilt (Novick and Novick 1987).

The aspect of masochistic character which has been called extreme submissiveness (Reich 1940; chapter 21 in this volume) or sexual enthrallment (Kernberg 1988) shows how sexual attachment to a humiliating object can be used to maintain narcissitic balance. The narcissitic function of masochism (Stolorow 1975) has led some analysts to consider a classification of narcis-

sistic/masochistic character (Cooper 1988). And yet, careful distinctions have been made over time which separate masochism from narcissism (Reik 1941; Grunberger 1956; Kernberg 1988).

Moral masochism, then, is part of human psychic life, developed as an important function of the superego. The intensification of moral masochism into masochistic character, or its pathological role in homosexuality, obsessional neurosis, or paranoia have made it a central subject of psychoanalytic inquiry.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bak, R. 1946. Masochism in Paranoia. *Psychoanal. Quarterly* 15:285–301. (Chapter 9 in this volume.)
- . 1974. Distortions of the Concept of Fetishism. *Psychoanal. Study Child*. 29:191–214.
- Berliner, B. 1947. On Some Psychodynamics of Masochism. *Psychoanal. Quarterly* 16:459–71.
- . 1958. The Role of Object Relations in Moral Masochism. *Psychoanal. Quarterly*. 27:38–56. (Chapter 17 in this volume.)
- Blum, H. 1991. Sadomasochism in the Psychoanalytic Process, Within and Beyond the Pleasure Principle: Discussion. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*: 39:431–50.
- Brenman, M. 1952. On Teasing and Being Teased and the Problem of Moral Masochism. *Psychoanal. Study Child*. 8:264–85.
- Brenner, C. 1959. The Masochistic Character: Genesis and Treatment. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 7:197–226. (Chapter 18 in this volume.)
- Chasseguet-Smirgel, J. 1991. Sadomasochism in the Perversions: Some Thoughts on the Destruction of Reality. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 39:399–415.
- Coen, S. 1992. The Excitement of Sadomasochism. In *The Misuse of Persons: Analyzing Pathological Dependency*. Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, pp. 190–208. (Chapter 19 in this volume.)
- Cooper, S. 1988. The Narcissistic-Masochistic Disorder. In *Masochism: Current Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, ed. R. Glick and D. Meyers. Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, pp. 117–38.
- Fenichel, O. 1925. The Clinical Aspect of the Need for Punishment. In *The Collected Papers of Otto Fenichel: First Series*. New York: Norton, 1953, pp. 71–96. (Chapter 15 in this volume.)
- . 1945. *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis*. New York: Norton.
- Freud, A. 1922. Beating Fantasies and Daydreams. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*: 4:89–102. (Chapter 14 in this volume.)
- Freud, S. 1919. A Child Is Being Beaten: A Contribution to the Study of the Origin of Sexual Perversions. In *S.E.* 17: 179–204. (Chapter 8 in this volume.)
- . 1924. The Economic Problem of Masochism. In *S. E.* 19:159–70. (Chapter 13 in this volume.)
- Grossman, W. I. 1986. Notes on Masochism: A Discussion of the History and Development of a Psychoanalytic Concept. *Psychoanal. Quarterly*. 55:379–413.
- . 1991. Pain, Aggression, Fantasy and Concepts of Sadomasochism. *Psychoanal. Quarterly* 60:22–52. (Chapter 7 in this volume.)
- Grunberger, B. 1956. Psychodynamic Theory of Masochism. In *Perversions, Psychodynamics and Therapy*, ed. S. Lorand and M. Balint. New York: Random House, pp. 183–208. (Chapter 10 in this volume.)
- Kernberg, O. 1988. Clinical Dimensions of Masochism. In *Masochism: Current Analytic Perspectives*. Ed. R. Glick and D. Meyers. Hillsdale, N.J.: The Analytic Press, pp. 61–79.
- Loewenstein, R. 1957. A Contribution to the Psychoanalytic Theory of Masochism. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.* 5:197–234. (Chapter 2 in this volume.)
- Menaker, E. 1953. Masochism—A Defense Reaction of the Ego. *Psychoanal. Quarterly* 22:205–25.
- Modell, A. 1965. On Having the Right to Life: An Aspect of the Super-ego's Development. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 46:323–31.
- Nacht, S. 1938. *Le masochisme*. Paris: Payot, 1965.
- Novick, K., and Novick, J. 1987. The Essence of Masochism. *Psychoanal. Study Child* 42:353–84. (Chapter 12 in this volume.)
- Reich, A. 1940. A Contribution to the Psycho-Analysis of Extreme Submissiveness in Women. *Psychoanal. Quarterly* 9:470–80. (Chapter 21 in this volume.)
- Reik, T. 1940. The Characteristics of Masochism. *American Image* 1 (1940):26–59. (In excerpt form, chapter 16 in this volume.)
- . 1941. *Masochism and Modern Man*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart.
- Shengold, L. 1967. The Effects of Overstimulation: Rat People. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 48:403–15.
- . 1971. More About Rats and Rat People. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 52:277–88. (Chapter 11 in this volume.)
- Stolorow, R. D. 1975. The Narcissistic Function of Masochism. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.* 56:441–48.
- Valenstein, A. 1973. On Attachment to Painful Feelings and the Negative Therapeutic Reaction. *Psychoanal. Study Child* 28:305–92.

13. The Economic Problem of Masochism

Sigmund Freud

The existence of a masochistic trend in the instinctual life of human beings may justly be described as mysterious from the economic point of view. For if mental processes are governed by the pleasure principle in such a way that their first aim is the avoidance of unpleasure and the obtaining of pleasure, masochism is incomprehensible. If pain and unpleasure can be not simply warnings but actually aims, the pleasure principle is paralysed—it is as though the watchman over our mental life were put out of action by a drug.

Thus masochism appears to us in the light of a great danger, which is in no way true of its counterpart, sadism. We are tempted to call the pleasure principle the watchman over our life rather than merely over our mental life. But in that case we are faced with the task of investigating the relationship of the pleasure principle to the two classes of instincts which we have distinguished—the death instincts and the erotic (libidinal) life instincts; and we cannot proceed further in our consideration of the problem of masochism till we have accomplished that task.

It will be remembered that we have taken the view that the principle which governs all mental processes is a special case of Fechner's 'tendency towards stability',¹ and have accordingly attributed to the mental apparatus the purpose of reducing to nothing, or at least of keeping as low as possible, the sums of excitation which flow in upon it. Barbara Low [1920, 73] has suggested the name of 'Nirvana principle' for this supposed tendency, and we have accepted the term.² But we have unhesitatingly identified the pleasure-

unpleasure principle with this Nirvana principle. Every unpleasure ought thus to coincide with a heightening, and every pleasure with a lowering, of mental tension due to stimulus; the Nirvana principle (and the pleasure principle which is supposedly identical with it) would be entirely in the service of the death instincts, whose aim is to conduct the restlessness of life into the stability of the inorganic state, and it would have the function of giving warnings against the demands of the life instincts—the libido—which try to disturb the intended course of life. But such a view cannot be correct. It seems that in the series of feelings of tension we have a direct sense of the increase and decrease of amounts of stimulus, and it cannot be doubted that there are pleasurable tensions and unpleasurable relaxations of tension. The state of sexual excitation is the most striking example of a pleasurable increase of stimulus of this sort, but it is certainly not the only one.

Pleasure and unpleasure, therefore, cannot be referred to as increase or decrease of a quantity (which we describe as 'tension due to stimulus'), although they obviously have a great deal to do with that factor. It appears that they depend, not on this quantitative factor, but on some characteristic of it which we can only describe as a qualitative one. If we were able to say what this qualitative characteristic is, we should be much further advanced in psychology. Perhaps it is the rhythm, the temporal sequence of changes, rises and falls in the quantity of stimulus.³ We do not know.

However this may be, we must perceive that the Nirvana principle, belonging as it does to the death instinct, has undergone a modification in living organisms through which it has become the pleasure principle; and we shall henceforward avoid regarding the two principles as one. It is not difficult, if we care to follow up this line of thought, to guess what power was the source of the modification. It can only be the life instinct, the libido, which has thus, alongside of the death instinct, seized upon a share in the regulation of the processes of life. In this way we obtain a small but interesting set of connections. The *Nirvana* principle expresses the trend of the death instinct; the *pleasure* principle represents the demands of the libido; and the modification of the latter principle, the *reality* principle,⁴ represents the influence of the external world.

None of these three principles is actually put out of action by another. As a rule they are able to tolerate one another, although conflicts are bound to arise occasionally from the fact of the differing aims that are set for each—in one case a quantitative reduction of the load of the stimulus, in another a

Reprinted by permission of Sigmund Freud Copyrights, The Institute of Psycho-Analysis, the Hogarth Press, from *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, translated and edited by James Strachey, vol. 19: (1961) 159–70.

qualitative characteristic of the stimulus, and, lastly [in the third case], a postponement of the discharge of the stimulus and a temporary acquiescence in the unpleasure due to tension.

The conclusion to be drawn from these considerations is that the description of the pleasure principle as the watchman over our life cannot be rejected.⁵

To return to masochism. Masochism comes under our observation in three forms: as a condition imposed on sexual excitation, as an expression of the feminine nature, and as a norm of behaviour.⁶ We may, accordingly, distinguish an *erotogenic*, a *feminine* and a *moral* masochism. The first, the erotogenic, masochism—pleasure in pain—lies at the bottom of the other two forms as well. Its basis must be sought along biological and constitutional lines and it remains incomprehensible unless one decides to make certain assumptions about matters that are extremely obscure. The third, and in some respects the most important, form assumed by masochism has only recently been recognized by psycho-analysis as a sense of guilt which is mostly unconscious; but it can already be completely explained and fitted into the rest of our knowledge. Feminine masochism, on the other hand, is the one that is most accessible to our observation and least problematical, and it can be surveyed in all its relations. We will begin our discussion with it.

We have sufficient acquaintance with this kind of masochism in men (to whom, owing to the material at my command, I shall restrict my remarks), derived from masochistic—and therefore often impotent—subjects whose phantasies either terminate in an act of masturbation or represent a sexual satisfaction in themselves.⁷ The real-life performances of masochistic perverts tally completely with these phantasies, whether the performances are carried out as an end in themselves or serve to induce potency and to lead to the sexual act. In both cases—for the performances are, after all, only a carrying-out of the phantasies in play—the manifest content is of being gagged, bound, painfully beaten, whipped, in some way maltreated, forced into unconditional obedience, dirtied and debased. It is far more rare for mutilations to be included in the content, and then only subject to strict limitations. The obvious interpretation, and one easily arrived at, is that the masochist wants to be treated like a small and helpless child, but, particularly, like a naughty child. It is unnecessary to quote cases to illustrate this;

for the material is very uniform and is accessible to any observer, even to non-analysts. But if one has an opportunity of studying cases in which the masochistic phantasies have been especially richly elaborated, one quickly discovers that they place the subject in a characteristically female situation; they signify, that is, being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby. For this reason I have called this form of masochism, *a potiori* as it were [i.e. on the basis of its extreme examples], the feminine form, although so many of its features point to infantile life. This superimposed stratification of the infantile and the feminine will find a simple explanation later on. Being castrated—or being blinded, which stands for it—often leaves a negative trace of itself in phantasies, in the condition that no injury is to occur precisely to the genitals or the eyes. (Masochistic tortures, incidentally, rarely make such a serious impression as the cruelties of sadism, whether imagined or performed.) A sense of guilt, too, finds expression in the manifest content of masochistic phantasies; the subject assumes that he has committed some crime (the nature of which is left indefinite) which is to be expiated by all these painful and tormenting procedures. This looks like a superficial rationalization of the masochistic subject-matter, but behind it there lies a connection with infantile masturbation. On the other hand, this factor of guilt provides a transition to the third, moral, form of masochism.

This feminine masochism which we have been describing is entirely based on the primary, erotogenic masochism, on pleasure in pain. This cannot be explained without taking our discussion very far back.

In my *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in the section on the sources of infantile sexuality, I put forward the proposition that 'in the case of a great number of internal processes sexual excitation arises as a concomitant effect, as soon as the intensity of those processes passes beyond certain quantitative limits'. Indeed, 'it may well be that nothing of considerable importance can occur in the organism without contributing some component to the excitation of the sexual instinct'.⁸ In accordance with this, the excitation of pain and unpleasure would be bound to have the same result, too.⁹ The occurrence of such a libidinal sympathetic excitation when there is tension due to pain and unpleasure would be an infantile physiological mechanism which ceases to operate later on. It would attain a varying degree of development in different sexual constitutions; but in any case it would provide the physiological foundation on which the psychical structure of erotogenic masochism would afterwards be erected.

The inadequacy of this explanation is seen, however, in the fact that it throws no light on the regular and close connections of masochism with its counterpart in instinctual life, sadism. If we go back a little further, to our hypothesis of the two classes of instincts which we regard as operative in the living organism, we arrive at another derivation of masochism, which, however, is not in contradiction with the former one. In (multicellular) organisms the libido meets the instinct of death, or destruction, which is dominant in them and which seeks to disintegrate the cellular organism and to conduct each separate unicellular organism [composing it] into a state of inorganic stability (relative though this may be). The libido has the task of making the destroying instinct innocuous, and it fulfils the task by diverting that instinct to a great extent outwards—soon with the help of a special organic system, the muscular apparatus—towards objects in the external world. The instinct is then called the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery, or the will to power. A portion of the instinct is placed directly in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play. This is sadism proper. Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards; it remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation described above, becomes libidinally bound there. It is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochism.¹⁰

We are without any physiological understanding of the ways and means by which this taming,¹¹ of the death-instinct by the libido may be effected. So far as the psycho-analytic field of ideas is concerned, we can only assume that a very extensive fusion and amalgamation, in varying proportions, of the two classes of instincts takes place, so that we never have to deal with pure life instincts or pure death instincts but only with mixtures of them in different amounts. Corresponding to a fusion of instincts of this kind, there may, as a result of certain influences, be a *defusion* of them. How large the portions of the death instincts are which refuse to be tamed in this way by being bound to admixtures of libido we cannot at present guess.

If one is prepared to overlook a little inexactitude, it may be said that the death instinct which is operative in the organism—primal sadism—is identical with masochism. After the main portion of it has been transposed outwards on to objects, there remains inside, as a residuum of it, the erotogenic masochism proper, which on the one hand has become a component of the libido and, on the other, still has the self as its object. This masochism would thus be evidence of, and a remainder from, the phase of development in which the coalescence, which is so important for life, between the death

instinct and Eros took place. We shall not be surprised to hear that in certain circumstances the sadism, or instinct of destruction, which has been directed outwards, projected, can be once more introjected, turned inwards, and in this way regress to its earlier situation. If this happens, a secondary masochism is produced, which is added to the original masochism.

Erotogenic masochism accompanies the libido through all its developmental phases and derives from them its changing psychical coatings.¹² The fear of being eaten up by the totem animal (the father) originates from the primitive oral organization; the wish to be beaten by the father comes from the sadistic-anal phase which follows it; castration, although it is later disavowed, enters into the content of masochistic phantasies as a precipitate of the phallic stage or organization;¹³ and from the final genital organization there arise, of course, the situations of being copulated with and of giving birth, which are characteristic of femaleness. The part played in masochism by the nates, too, is easily understandable,¹⁴ apart from its obvious basis in reality. The nates are the part of the body which is given erotogenic preference in the sadistic-anal phase, like the breast in the oral phase and the penis in the genital phase.

The third form of masochism, moral masochism,¹⁵ is chiefly remarkable for having loosened its connection with what we recognize as sexuality. All other masochistic sufferings carry with them the condition that they shall emanate from the loved person and shall be endured at his command. This restriction has been dropped in moral masochism. The suffering itself is what matters; whether it is decreed by someone who is loved or by someone who is indifferent is of no importance. It may even be caused by impersonal powers or by circumstances; the true masochist always turns his cheek whenever he has a chance of receiving a blow. It is very tempting, in explaining this attitude, to leave the libido out of account and to confine oneself to assuming that in this case the destructive instinct has been turned inwards again and is now raging against the self; yet there must be some meaning in the fact that linguistic usage has not given up the connection between this norm of behaviour and erotism and calls these self-injurers masochists too.

Let us keep to a habit of our technique and consider first the extreme and unmistakably pathological form of this masochism. I have described elsewhere¹⁶ how in analytic treatment we come across patients to whom, owing to their behaviour towards its therapeutic influence, we are obliged to

ascribe an 'unconscious' sense of guilt. I pointed out the sign by which such people can be recognized (a 'negative therapeutic reaction') and I did not conceal the fact that the strength of such an impulse constitutes one of the most serious resistances and the greatest danger to the success of our medical or educative aims. The satisfaction of this unconscious sense of guilt is perhaps the most powerful bastion in the subject's (usually composite) gain from illness—in the sum of forces which struggle against his recovery and refuse to surrender his state of illness. The suffering entailed by neuroses is precisely the factor that makes them valuable to the masochistic trend. It is instructive, too, to find, contrary to all theory and expectation, that a neurosis which has defied every therapeutic effort may vanish if the subject becomes involved in the misery of an unhappy marriage, or loses all his money, or develops a dangerous organic disease. In such instances one form of suffering has been replaced by another; and we see that all that mattered was that it should be possible to maintain a certain amount of suffering.

Patients do not easily believe us when we tell them about the unconscious sense of guilt. They know only too well by what torments—the pangs of conscience—a conscious sense of guilt, a consciousness of guilt, expresses itself, and they therefore cannot admit that they could harbour exactly analogous impulses in themselves without being in the least aware of them. We may, I think, to some extent meet their objection if we give up the term 'unconscious sense of guilt', which is in any case psychologically incorrect,¹⁷ and speak instead of a 'need for punishment', which covers the observed state of affairs just as aptly. We cannot, however, restrain ourselves from judging and localizing this unconscious sense of guilt in the same way as we do the conscious kind.

We have attributed the function of conscience to the super-ego and we have recognized the consciousness of guilt as an expression of a tension between the ego and the super-ego.¹⁸ The ego reacts with feelings of anxiety (conscience anxiety)¹⁹ to the perception that it has not come up to the demands made by its ideal, the super-ego. What we want to know is how the super-ego has come to play this demanding role and why the ego, in the case of a difference with its ideal, should have to be afraid.

We have said that the function of the ego is to unite and to reconcile the claims of the three agencies which it serves; and we may add that in doing so it also possesses in the super-ego a model which it can strive to follow. For this super-ego is as much a representative of the id as of the external world.²⁰

It came into being through the introjection into the ego of the first objects of the id's libidinal impulses—namely, the two parents. In this process the relation to those objects was desexualized; it was diverted from its direct sexual aims. Only in this way was it possible for the Oedipus complex to be surmounted. The super-ego retained essential features of the introjected persons—their strength, their severity, their inclination to supervise and to punish. As I have said elsewhere,²¹ it is easily conceivable that, thanks to the defusion of instinct which occurs along with this introduction into the ego, the severity was increased. The super-ego—the conscience at work in the ego—may then become harsh, cruel and inexorable against the ego which is in its charge. Kant's Categorical Imperative is thus the direct heir of the Oedipus complex.²²

But the same figures who continue to operate in the super-ego as the agency we know as conscience after they have ceased to be objects of the libidinal impulses of the id—these same figures also belong to the real external world. It is from there that they were drawn; their power, behind which lie hidden all the influences of the past and of tradition, was one of the most strongly-felt manifestations of reality. In virtue of this concurrence, the super-ego, the substitute for the Oedipus complex, becomes a representative of the real external world as well and thus also becomes a model for the endeavours of the ego.

In this way the Oedipus complex proves to be—as has already been conjectured in a historical sense²³—the source of our individual ethical sense, our morality. The course of childhood development leads to an ever-increasing detachment from parents, and their personal significance for the super-ego recedes into the background. To the imagos²⁴ they leave behind there are then linked the influences of teachers and authorities, self-chosen models and publicly recognized heroes, whose figures need no longer be introjected by an ego which has become more resistant. The last figure in the series that began with the parents is the dark power of Destiny which only the fewest of us are able to look upon as impersonal. There is little to be said against the Dutch writer Multatuli²⁵ when he replaces the *Μοῖρα* [Destiny] of the Greeks by the divine pair 'Λόγος καὶ Ἀνάγκη, [Reason and Necessity]';²⁶ but all who transfer the guidance of the world to Providence, to God, or to God and Nature, arouse a suspicion that they still look upon these ultimate and remotest powers as a parental couple, in a mythological sense, and believe themselves linked to them by libidinal ties. In *The Ego and the*

Id [p. 58] I made an attempt to derive mankind's realistic fear of death, too, from the same parental view of fate. It seems very hard to free oneself from it.

After these preliminaries we can return to our consideration of moral masochism. We have said²⁷ that, by their behaviour during treatment and in life, the individuals in question give an impression of being morally inhibited to an excessive degree, of being under the domination of an especially sensitive conscience, although they are not conscious of any of this ultramorality. On closer inspection, we can see the difference there is between an unconscious extension of morality of this kind and moral masochism. In the former, the accent falls on the heightened sadism of the super-ego to which the ego submits; in the latter, it falls on the ego's own masochism which seeks punishment, whether from the super-ego or from the parental powers outside. We may be forgiven for having confused the two to begin with; for in both cases it is a question of a relationship between the ego and the super-ego (or powers that are equivalent to it), and in both cases what is involved is a need which is satisfied by punishment and suffering. It can hardly be an insignificant detail, then, that the sadism of the super-ego becomes for the most part glaringly conscious, whereas the masochistic trend of the ego remains as a rule concealed from the subject and has to be inferred from his behaviour.

The fact that moral masochism is unconscious leads us to an obvious clue. We were able to translate the expression 'unconscious sense of guilt' as meaning a need for punishment at the hands of a parental power. We now know that the wish, which so frequently appears in phantasies, to be beaten by the father stands very close to the other wish, to have a passive (feminine) sexual relation to him and is only a regressive distortion of it. If we insert this explanation into the content of moral masochism, its hidden meaning becomes clear to us. Conscience and morality have arisen through the over-coming, the desexualization, of the Oedipus complex; but through moral masochism morality becomes sexualized once more, the Oedipus complex is revived and the way is opened for a regression from morality to the Oedipus complex. This is to the advantage neither of morality nor of the person concerned. An individual may, it is true, have preserved the whole or some measure of ethical sense alongside of his masochism; but, alternatively, a large part of his conscience may have vanished into his masochism. Again, masochism creates a temptation to perform 'sinful' actions, which must then

be expiated by the reproaches of the sadistic conscience (as is exemplified in so many Russian character-types) or by chastisement from the great parental power of Destiny. In order to provoke punishment from this last representative of the parents, the masochist must do what is inexpedient, must act against his own interests, must ruin the prospects which open out to him in the real world and must, perhaps, destroy his own real existence.

The turning back of sadism against the self regularly occurs where a *cultural suppression of the instincts* holds back a large part of the subject's destructive instinctual components from being exercised in life. We may suppose that this portion of the destructive instinct which has retreated appears in the ego as an intensification of masochism. The phenomena of conscience, however, lead us to infer that the destructiveness which returns from the external world is also taken up by the super-ego, without any such transformation, and increases its sadism against the ego. The sadism of the super-ego and the masochism of the ego supplement each other and unite to produce the same effects. It is only in this way, I think, that we can understand how the suppression of an instinct can—frequently or quite generally—result in a sense of guilt and how a person's conscience becomes more severe and more sensitive the more he refrains from aggression against others.²⁸ One might expect that if a man knows that he is in the habit of avoiding the commission of acts of aggression that are undesirable from a cultural standpoint he will for that reason have a good conscience and will watch over his ego less suspiciously. The situation is usually presented as though ethical requirements were the primary thing and the renunciation of instinct followed from them. This leaves the origin of the ethical sense unexplained. Actually, it seems to be the other way about. The first instinctual renunciation is enforced by external powers, and it is only this which creates the ethical sense, which expresses itself in conscience and demands a further renunciation of instinct.²⁹

Thus moral masochism becomes a classical piece of evidence for the existence of fusion of instinct. Its danger lies in the fact that it originates from the death instinct and corresponds to the part of that instinct which has escaped being turned outwards as an instinct of destruction. But since, on the other hand, it has the significance of an erotic component, even the subject's destruction of himself cannot take place without libidinal satisfaction.³⁰

NOTES

1. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) [Standard Ed., 18, 9].
2. [*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *ibid.*, 56. Freud had previously given this same principle the name of 'the principle of constancy'. A full discussion of the history of Freud's use of these concepts and of their relation to the pleasure principle will be found in an Editor's footnote to 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (1915), *Standard Ed.*, 14, 121.]
3. [This possibility had already been raised in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *Standard Ed.*, 18, 8 and 63.]
4. [Cf. 'Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning' (1911), *Standard Ed.*, 12, 219.]
5. [Freud took up this discussion again in Chapter VIII of his *Outline* (1940 [1938]).]
6. [This last word is added in English in the original.]
7. [See Section VI of 'A Child Is Being Beaten' (1919), *Standard Ed.*, 17, 196ff.]
8. [*Three Essays* (1905), *Standard Ed.*, 7, 204-5.]
9. [*Ibid.*, 204.]
10. [For all of this see Chapter IV of *The Ego and the Id*. Cf. also another account in Chapter VI of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, *Standard Ed.*, 18, 50.]
11. ['Bändigung.' Freud takes up the word again in the third section of his late paper on 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937). He had much earlier applied the idea to the 'taming' of memories in Section 3 of Part III of his 'Project' of 1895.]
12. ['Psychische Umkleidungen.' The image is an old one of Freud's. It occurs several times, for instance, in the 'Dora' case history (1905), *Standard Ed.*, 7, 83, 84, and 99 n. 2.]
13. See 'The Infantile Genital Organization' (1923).
14. [Cf. a reference to this at the end of Section 4 of the second of the *Three Essays* (1905), *Standard Ed.*, 7, 193.]
15. [In a paragraph added in 1909 to *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900), Freud had proposed the term 'mental masochism' for people 'who find their pleasure, not in having physical pain inflicted on them, but in humiliation and mental torture'. (*Standard Ed.*, 4, 159.)]
16. *The Ego and the Id* (1923).
17. [Feelings cannot properly be described as 'unconscious'. See Chapter II of *The Ego and the Id*.]
18. [*Ibid.*, Chapter III.]
19. ['Gewissensangst.' An Editor's footnote discussing this term will be found in Chapter VII of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (1926), *Standard Ed.*, 20, 128.]
20. [Cf. 'Neurosis and Psychosis' (1924).]
21. *The Ego and the Id*.
22. [Cf. *ibid.*]
23. In Essay IV of *Totem and Taboo* (1912-13).
24. [The term 'imago' was not often used by Freud, especially in his later writings. Its first appearance seems to be in his technical paper on 'The Dynamics of Transference' (1912), *Standard Ed.*, 12, 100, where he attributes it to Jung. In this latter passage Jung tells us that he partly chose the word from the title of a novel of the same name by the Swiss writer, Carl Spitteler; and we learn from Hanns Sachs (1945, 63) that the psycho-analytic periodical *Imago*, started by him and Rank in 1912, also owed its title to the same source.]
25. E. D. Dekker (1820-87). ['Multatuli' had long been a favourite of Freud's. He heads the list of 'ten good books' which he drew up in 1907, *Standard Ed.*, 9, 246.]
26. ['Ἀνάγκη' had been named by Freud at least as early as in the Leonardo paper (1910),

Standard Ed., 11, 125. Ἀόγος, on the other hand, seems to appear for the first time here. Both are discussed, and more especially Ἀόγος, in the closing passage of *The Future of an Illusion* (1927).]

27. [*The Ego and the Id*.]

28. [Cf. *The Ego and the Id*.]

29. [The subjects discussed in this paragraph were enlarged upon by Freud in Chapter VII of *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930).]

30. [Freud discussed masochism in relation to psycho-analytic treatment once more in section VI of his paper on 'Analysis Terminable and Interminable' (1937).]

REFERENCES

- Low, Barbara. 1920. *Psycho-Analysis*, London and New York.
 Sachs, Hanns. 1945. *Freud, Master and Friend*, Cambridge, Mass., and London.