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Robert W. White. Ego and reality in psychoanalytic theory. Psychological Issues. Monograph No. 11. New York: International Universities Press, 1964.

In this monograph, White proposes a concept of independent ego energies, i.e., the ego is equipped with its own energy and not libidinal or aggressive energy that has been neutralized. The idea of ego energies independent of libidinal or aggressive instincts receives support from research in animal and child behavior. White feels that if such a concept is accepted by the psychoanalysts, then it brings about significant improvements in psychoanalytic ego theory. "Because energy is vested in the instincts, and because the activities of the ego are clearly not instinctual, there has been an enduring problem of explaining the sources of power behind the vital and varied functions the ego performs. Quotations scattered through Freud's work show that he always entertained the possibility that the ego might have energies and satisfactions of its own, but nowhere is this thought developed beyond a sentence or two. On the contrary, he spared no pains to derive everything possible from instinctual energies" (1-2).

White believes that the concept of independent ego energies can be organized "...around the idea of the attainment of competence through action and through learning about the consequences of action. The ego has always been understood to be that part of the personality that is in contact with reality and is modified by reality, so that it can exercise realistic control over the expression of an impulse. I shall argue that an action theory is best equipped to make such attainments understandable, and I shall also try to show that the energies involved cannot be very well derived from erotic and aggressive instincts" (2).

White notes Freud's quote in which the ego is described as having ~~the~~ the task of self preservation. The quote is from An Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 15, Norton edition: "The principal characteristics of the ego are these. In consequence of the relation which was already established between sensory perception and muscular action, the ego is in control of voluntary movement. It has the task of self-preservation. As regard external events, it performs that task by becoming aware of the stimuli from without, by storing up experiences of them (in the memory), by avoiding excessive stimuli (through flight), by dealing with moderate stimuli (through adaptation), and, finally, by learning to bring about appropriate modifications in the external world to its own advantage (through activity). As regards internal events, in relation to the id, it performs that task by gaining control over the demands of the instincts, by deciding whether they shall be allowed to obtain satisfaction, by postponing that satisfaction to times and circumstances favorable in the external world or by suppressing their excitations completely" (5).

Freud stated in his New Introductory Lectures: "This relation to the external world is decisive for the ego" (5). The task of psychoanalytic ego psychology is to find an explanation for the "...many and varied processes whereby the ego mediates between personal need and surrounding reality." (5).

At the time of Freud's death, the outstanding ~~subject~~ content of ego psychology was defense. Freud recognized that in its defensive operations, the ego was capable of tremendous influence over the instincts, but this recognition did not lead him to change his conception of energies inherent in the ego. But the ego needed energy in order to function, so he introduced the concept of a displaceable energy, which is neutral in itself. He saw this neutral energy as coming from the narcissistic store of the libido. White points out later in his paper that, although neutral energy can also be derived from the aggressive instincts, Freud always seemed to favor his original libidinal theory and thus neutralization from aggressive energy seemed to be underplayed in his theory. Hartmann, Kris, and Lowenstein, in one of the papers I reviewed, did, however, take up the energy of aggressive instincts. Independent energies, at the times of Freud's death, had been mentioned, but only as a possibility,



and Freud's theory of neutralized libidinal energy "...came close to providing the ego with a power station of its own" (12).

"But..trouble already proclaims itself if we simply compare the content of ego psychology with the definition of the ego as Freud gave it. The central function of the ego was the mediation between instinctual drive and surrounding circumstances. The ego was held to be modified by its contact with the environment. It came to understand the environment and to represent it so that its requirements would be taken into account in behavior. The processes whereby the ego achieved this relation to reality should thus have been a central concern. The most remarkable feature of the ego psychology of 1939 is that it rarely aimed at this target and produced little information about it....The findings on defense..deal mainly with what the ego does when terror has reduced it to primitive mechanisms. Identification is seen as an important principle of development, but how the ego changes itself to be like another person is not explained at all; the findings bear entirely on the situations and motives that elicit the process. The growth of the sense of reality is treated as a problem in instinctual frustration...We find the ego deciding to form a conception of reality, recognizing that an external object intervenes to satisfy its needs, reliving actively what it has experienced passively, and synthesizing its various parts; but these significant activities, if explained at all, are interpreted only in terms of the expenditure of instinctual energies" (12-13).

"...Freud conceived two basic instincts, Eros and Thanatos, to be 'the ultimate cause of all activity.' Instincts supplied the energy for everything that was done by the mental apparatus, and the apparatus thus functioned in the service of instinctual aims. This exclusive powering of behavior by erotic and destructive instincts, to which an inherently powerless mental apparatus is at first subservient, leads straight into a serious difficulty about the development of a sense of reality. The full force of this difficulty is shown in Fenichel's idea that object cathexis vanishes with need reduction and that 'affirmation' of the world is an intermediate aim on the way to its 'negation.'" If our interest in reality is the always transient one of gratifying an instinct, it is hard to explain the progress from knowledge of the world in its instinct-gratifying properties to knowledge of the world in its objective properties independent of our needs. The strongly instinctual trend in Freud's theory served, I believe, to discourage interest in studying anything beyond the very first steps in reality testing. Another feature of the theory may well have had an even more discouraging effect. Freud's theory of development placed very great emphasis on the earliest experiences. This emphasis is expressed in the concepts of fixation and regression....The search for the earliest ~~experience~~ experience as the pattern for later behavior was..greatly encouraged....The trouble is that adaptive behavior implies not repetition, but change. Adaptive behavior does not literally repeat earlier patterns: it includes an accommodation to the present circumstances....Repetitions merely show the ego at its weakest moments" (14-16).

Ego psychology since Freud's death: Hartmann in Ego Psychology and the Problem of Adaptation and subsequent papers tried to bring ego psychology back on target by emphasizing 'those processes and working methods of the mental apparatus which lead to adapted achievements.' "Hartmann listed a number of such achievements: 'perception, intention, object comprehension, thinking, language, recall-phenomena, productivity,.. ..(the) phases of motor development, grasping, crawling, walking,..the maturation and learning processes implicit in all these.' He pointed out that such developments take place to a substantial degree quite apart from instinctual conflicts. He urged that serious consideration be given in psychoanalytic theory to the many developmental events that take place in a 'conflict-free ego sphere.' His emphasis on adaptation gave a new prominence to the mental apparatus. The instinctual drives alone could not guarantee survival; one has to assume mediation by an innate ego apparatus if the infant is to meet successfully the 'average expectable' environmental conditions. The apparatus develops through a maturation and learning, partly in situations of conflict but partly in circumstances that are conflict-free." (16-17). The developing



ego apparatus makes an independent contribution to the growth of a sense of reality, not only at the beginning but throughout life. "With respect to the energies involved in autonomous ego development, Hartmann seems hospitable to the idea that the ego apparatus might have energies of its own<sup>and</sup> that 'the activities...that constitute the reality principle can be pleasurable in themselves.' He is not, however, more hospitable than Freud, who admitted such possibilities without turning them to systematic use. For the purposes of systematic theory Hartmann has consistently preferred to employ Freud's idea of neutralization. In conjunction with Kris and Loewenstein, he carried this idea a logical step forward by proposing that the energies of both erotic and aggressive instincts could be neutralized and thus placed at the disposal of the ego for purposes more complex than immediate gratification. It is through neutralization of instinctual energies that we are able to be interested in the environment in its own right, according to its own lawful connections. Elevated to a general principle rather than an occasional happening, the doctrine of neutralization permits the ego to have independent energies without challenging Freud's theory of the instincts" (17).

Hendrik proposed an "instinct to master" as a more revolutionary solution to the problem of ego energies. This would be the third major instinct...an inborn drive to do and to learn how to do...a mastery instinct that supplied the power for those feats of learning whereby the helpless infant turns into the skilled and adapted adult. Others give erotic and aggressive instincts a greatly expanded definition, thereby making it possible to include certain kinds of adaptive behavior as direct expressions of instincts, such as when Spitz includes grasping under aggression even when it is not experienced as hostility or aims at destruction. Also they hypothesize symbolic erotic or aggressive meaning behind all actions that contribute to the building of ego functions, such as the child's play with sand being seen as symbolizing from moment to moment the oral, anal, and sadistic urges that are basic to his being. Or, like Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein, they postulate a process whereby erotic and aggressive energy can be neutralized and made available to the ego. White's position is between that of Hendrik and Hartmann. He "...assumes an independent source of energy without casting it as an instinct, and it assumes 'neutral' energies without deriving them by transformation from erotic and aggressive instincts. The plausibility of such an assumption has been greatly increased in the last few years by new turns of events in the study of animal behavior and of child development" (23).

Animals are given to exploration, manipulation, and playful activities. Primary-drive theory could not account for these observations, for even well-fed, sexually satisfied, etc. animals ~~may~~ engage in these activities. If these animals wander in mazes or problem boxes, they learn something about them and deal with them more effectively on a later occasion when a primary drive is active. Ideas concerning an instinct of curiosity and an exploratory drive were brought back into consideration. This is somewhat similar to Hendrik's idea of assuming an instinct to master. "Suffice it to say here that the assumption of a new drive, justified as it may seem to be by the directionality and persistence of exploratory behavior and by the manner in which learning is reinforced, raises great difficulties concerning the substantive meaning of drive...Exploration does not resemble any other primary drive with respect to somatic sources, specificity of aims, or the pattern of consummation and drive reduction. It can scarcely be defined at all in these terms. For the moment let us assume merely that animal play and exploration may ~~be~~ to be referred to an energy that is independent of drives" (29).

There are striking similarities between observations of exploratory and manipulative activities of animals and of children. The behavior is certainly motivated and is pursued with concentration, persistence, and signs of satisfaction and of frustration. "Clearly it has to do with effective dealing with reality (for the child).....and ..provides us..with the clearest body of facts upon which to build a conception of independent ego energies" (33).





White proposes that these kinds of behavior are motivated by energies independent of instinctual drives, but energies which are part of the ego apparatus. From time to time they are utilized by the demands of an instinctual drive. When they are not thus utilized, they operate in their own way, and are most plainly revealed in explorative and manipulative activities which seem to perform the service of maintaining and expanding an effective interaction with the environment. White proposes that these energies be referred to as effectance. Such a word places emphasis on action and its consequences. "The living organism does not typically sit and learn. It learns through action, and what it learns is a design or readiness for future action" (34). "The dynamics of sexual behavior are basically here and now, consisting of tensions, discharges, and affective experiences of the immediate present. The dynamics of effectance are equally present and immediate. Playful exploration and manipulation take place because one feels inclined toward such behavior and finds it naturally satisfying.... Theory today has been released from the strait jacket that pleasure and learning must always imply drive reduction. Thus liberated, we can examine without prejudice the satisfaction that goes with effectance. Taking into account not only stimulation and perception, but also action, effort, and the production of effects, I shall call the accompanying experience a feeling of efficacy. It might be described as a feeling of doing something, of being active or effective, of having an influence on something; but these phrases probably do not help much to amplify the original expression. My thesis is that the feeling of efficacy is a primitive biological endowment as basic as the satisfaction that accompany feeding or sexual gratification, though not nearly as intense... ..The activity is satisfying in itself, not for specific consequences" (34-35).

Exploration and playful activity, done for its own sake, has significance for adaptation and survival when we recognize that it is through action and its consequences that we learn to become effective in dealing with our surroundings. White introduces two additional terms: competence, which is used to describe a person's existing capacity to interact with his environment. Innate abilities play some part in this, but in the human case competence is largely due to learning. "Such learning may be the result of exploratory and manipulative behavior motivated wholly by effectance, but it may also have occurred under the influence of instinctual pressure or in some combination of sources of energy. Competence is a cumulative result of the whole history of transactions with the environment, no matter how they were motivated. Sense of competence describes the subjective side of one's actual competence..... We can reserve for the term feeling of efficacy for what is experienced in each individual transaction, using sense of competence for the accumulated and organized consequences in later stages of ego development" (39). "Most human interactions have both an aspect of need gratification and an aspect of competence. Dealing with a refractory child challenges the mother's competence as well as arousing her aggression. A young man who achieves a successful seduction enjoys both the sexual gratification and a sense of social competence; the experience would have been different if he had had to beg for it. Efficacy and competence are thus not at all peculiar to transactions with the inanimate environment. The feeling of being able to have some effect on people, to get them to listen, provide some of the things we need, do some of the things we want, receive some of the love and help we want to give--this feeling of social competence is a substantial foundation stone of self-respect and security" (41).

White summarizes his views on reality testing thusly: "In psychoanalytic theory the ego is given the function of representing reality and of assuring that behavior is governed by realistic considerations. According to the thesis of this essay, reality testing--finding out about reality and being guided by it--come about through attempted actions and their consequences. Reality is not passively received; it does not imprint itself on the mind. It is slowly constructed through active, varied, and persistent exploration, and what is learned about it is how to deal with it: what actions produce what effects of what objects. This conception has by no means been overlooked in psychoanalytic theory. Freud used it to explain how one learns to distinguish between inner and outer stimuli. But the systematic application of an action theory to reality testing has been greatly impeded by attempts to work wholly with instinctual energies and to derive the entire course of events from



hypothetical first situations. This tendency is shown in Freud's account of the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle, a change which he described entirely in terms of instinctual frustration and an unwilling reckoning with reality as the frustrator. It is shown in the idea that defense originates from a splitting of instinctual energy into cathectic and anticathectic components, with structure arising in layers from their repeated collision. These are unsuitable concepts for understanding the relation between ego and reality. They can be dressed up to plausibility only by the belated smuggling in of those ideas about action and structure which a theory of independent ego energies seeks to make explicit from the start. According to an action theory, reality testing is not undertaken solely because of instinctual frustration. Exploration occurs in its own right, and reality can be interesting and satisfying as well as frustrating. Even in Freud's model situation it seems clear that frustration leads to action and that the pleasure principle is transcended through the discovery of some action, like crying, which influences the environment and can be used to influence it again. Tolerance of delay depends on a confidence, born of experience, that some efficacious can be done if need waxes painful. The reality principle is thus learned by slow degrees. This applies equally to the distinction between self and not-self: it is a cumulative growth depending upon extended exploration of one's own body and its sensations as well as of sensations proceeding from external objects. This unavoidable conclusion plays havoc with much that has been written about early introjection, projection, and the externalization of libidinal and aggressive energies. Most of this speculation presupposes that self and not-self have been discriminated once and for all almost from the beginning. But many of these hypothetical events stand to gain from reconsideration. An action theory is most particularly needed to account for the construction of a world of permanent objects having independent causal relations. If we knew the world wholly through instinctual cathexes, we would forever see objects in relation to our needs, not in impersonal relations to each other. On this point, Piaget's detailed developmental studies are highly illuminating. His observations fill in successive steps of what would otherwise be a hypothetical course of development. Growth of the concept of permanent objects is traced by means of experiments in which objects are covered and put out of sight. Before eight months, out of sight is out of mind, even if the object has been concealed only by placing a handkerchief over it... Piaget describes in like sequential fashion the growth of the concept of causality apart from one's own effort... The objective stable world is best conceived of as a construction based on action. Knowledge about the environment is knowledge of the probable consequences of action. It is a system of readiness for action which can properly be conceived of as patterns of facilitation and inhibition in the nervous system. This is the form in which reality leaves its record, and instinctual drives are governed by it--become bound by it--because they have to use the nervous system as their means of expression, complete with its acquired facilitations and inhibitions. There is no need to assume that cathexis plays any necessary part at all in knowledge of reality" (186-188).

White quotes a section from a paper by Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein, dealing with the importance of the mother. <sup>in relation to self and not-self</sup> They propose, in accord with Freud's view "...that the mother will be the first and most important object in the infant's world. They deduce from this that the focus of the child's early reality testing and the main arena for his learning about self and not-self will be the mother, or significant parts of the mother such as the breast. The use of this relation as a model, and as the centrally important feature of growth, leads to a closely interwoven treatment of reality testing, discrimination of self, and the problem of object relations. The child's earliest learning is held to proceed partly by identification with the mother, this being gradually replaced by an object relation with a true libidinal tie. This in turn implies that primary narcissistic cathexis has been transformed into object cathexis" (49). They make no use of independent ego energies in their formulation.

White feels this leads to difficulties in separating the several strands of development implied in it. "An action-consequence theory which is like Hartmann's but which also ~~and~~ makes use of the concept of effectance will give us a sharper view of the first strand, the distinguishing of self and not-self" (49). Later, White states: "...my main hypothesis equips the infant from the start with a kind of energy and with a



kind of structure that dispose him to construct a stable, objective, real world" (60). "For our present theme the main thing is to realize the constant connection between knowledge and action. We learn about the environment because we go out to it, seek response from it, and find out what kind of responses it can give" (68).

Effectance, leading as it does to increased competence in dealing with the environment, can be conceived of as inherently an urge away from the necessity for being mothered. [Here White is talking about some of the factors responsible for early deviations in ego development.] When a child ~~undertakes~~ undertakes to be independent, to do something in his own way or to achieve some goal without adult help, he is acting in opposition to mothering impulses." (77). "The process of separation-individuation can be conceived of as one which the mother can allow to happen or which she can largely prevent from happening. It cannot be conceived of as one which derives its whole impetus from her gifts of love and praise. The point is worth laboring because current psychological theory has beclouded it. Learning theories in which reinforcement is provided only by drive reduction have led to the idea that the mother, as supplier of nourishment and comfort, possesses a fund of reward which she can dispense in the form of love and praise. She expends her capital at such times as the child must be pushed over some developmental hurdle such as weaning, self-feeding, or learning to walk. The same idea, it must be admitted, has also cropped up in psychoanalytic theory, and with the same strange, though probably unwitting, implication that the infant has no desire to grow up and must be seduced into doing so. Not only does the theory misrepresent the nature of the active living organism, but it also fatally falsifies the meaning of independence. The child who requires maternal reward for doing things on his own is not independent at all. He is, in fact, rather like a child with a symbiotic psychosis, whose every step must have maternal ramification. Independence begins when the child can briefly dispense with his mother's approval, finding sufficient reward in his own sense of competence" (79). "It is my contention, then, that the concept of a sense of competence yields us a gain in understanding the interaction between children with early ego deviations and their mothers. Both the omnipotence of hereditary constitution and the omnipotence of the 'schizophrenogenic' mother must be rejected in favor of an interactive interpretation. Initial abnormality in the infant and initial pathology in the mother must be treated as variables neither of which is likely to be at a negligible value. In the interaction that ensues it is profitable to see that threat to the maternal sense of competence is one of the things to be weighed. Love thwarted and buried, hate threatening to gain the upper hand, anxiety undermining intelligent action may all be parts of the picture, but they all can be understood better if we look at the mother's activity as well as her affects and realize that she is experiencing a series of frustrations in her intended acts of mothering, frustrations which signify to her that she must be an inferior, incompetent woman..." (83-84).

White's conception is that effectance will give rise to active exploration, manipulation and experimentation unless it is in some way inhibited. "If it proceeds naturally, reality will be tested, self will be distinguished from not-self, a <sup>stable</sup> world of ~~stable~~ objects and people will be constructed, a sense of competence will be achieved, and there will be movement toward independence. Early ego deviations represent a serious obstruction of these processes. To the extent that constitution may be involved as an obstructing agent, the incapacity might be presumed to lie in difficulty in achieving feelings of efficacy. This could be the case if activity level were low and effort uncomfortable, or if coordination were poor so that the effects produced upon the environment were not regular and repeatable" (84). Earlier effectance was described as energy that operates freely in the infant during the spare time that is not being occupied by aroused instinctual urges or by sleep. Only when drives are quiet does the system operate in the pure service of feelings of efficacy. In the newborn infant, there is very little of this spare time, although exploratory activity can be detected virtually from the start. One way to conceive of the inhibition of effectance is to say that the mother prevents the use of this spare time, not by stopping the infant from playing, etc. "...rather, it means that spare time is squeezed out because of instinctual drives are in a continual state of arousal." Such as would be the case ~~in need for security and satisfaction~~ which is not being satisfied because of an





ill mother, or rejecting mother. Also during the first year of life, the infant's experience of ~~intrinsic~~ efficacy in dealing with human objects is heavily concentrated on the mother. The reward of feeling of efficacy can be obstructed by a mother who is not responsive to the infant's efforts.

White argues that ".psychoanalytic theory has failed to provide sufficient specific concepts to account for the ego's relation to reality. It has not drawn attention to the actions and learning processes whereby the child tests reality, adapts to it, and learns to exert some influence on his surroundings....It is my hope that the concepts of effectance, feeling of efficacy, competence, and sense of competence will be experienced by clinical workers as helpful, as tools which will enable them to form a clearer and more consistent picture of just what it is that goes wrong in early ego deviation. The chief service rendered by these concepts is their serving as reminders that the child is intrinsically active, tending to explore, manipulate, and produce effects upon the environment beyond the call of instinctual gratification. He has an intrinsic interest in how to deal with things, a push toward mastery and independence that does not borrow its energy from instinctual pressures or from rewards administered by the mother. It is through this activity that a substantial part of ego development is achieved, particularly the testing of reality and the learning of flexible controls. Children with early ego deviations are weak in these achievements. Constitutional factors may contribute to this weakness if they are of the sort, like passivity or overactivity, that make the experience of efficacy difficult and rare. The human environment makes its contribution by obstructing and inhibiting effectance. This may amount to a generalized swamping because the infant is rarely free from instinctual tension or anxiety; it may be a more specific obstruction of social efficacy by unresponsiveness to the infant's initiative; and it may include specific inhibitions of exploratory play through association with anxiety or pain. Such an account is not intended to eliminate familiar and valuable concepts like deprivation, rejection, overprotection, and aggression, which are surely essential in understanding why parents behave as they do. It is intended to make the theory more complete by specifying how these attitudes become translated into actual obstructions of those processes that make for ego development" (92-93).

White then discusses the concept of identification as a process of development. He points to the fact that the concept of identification has run riot through the clinical literature, and even Freud did not clear up the confusion he had created in using identification to mean a variety of things. "It had been used (1) for melancholia, where it occurred as a regression when a cathected object was lost; (2) for the little boy's admiring imitation of his father, where it was a primitive type of object relation; (3) for the internalizing of parental values during resolution of the oedipus complex; (4) for relations among siblings, where it developed as a reaction formation against envy and rivalry; and (5) for the aim-inhibited tender tie among the members of an adult group who have substituted a leader for their ego ideals. Some of these usages fit the idea of wanting to be, but others involve the additional element of an emotional tie. Some of them depend upon a love object being lost or renounced, but others do not. Some point to a lasting change in the character of the ego, but others deal with superficial and temporary change. The concept has obviously come to mean too much too easily" (102). Later, Anna Freud developed the idea of identification with the aggressor...a defense mechanism used in mastering anxiety. Her account deals with anxiety and aggression, thus separating this form of identification from the tender emotional tie that crept insistently into her father's thinking. Erikson gives a prominent place to identification, but he does not assume that identification takes place through abandoning an object cathexis. "The concept is not hobbled by linking it to a sequence of events first hypothesized as taking place in special circumstances in melancholia. In the second place, Erikson does not use identification to account for the whole character of the ego, but only for that particular characteristic which he calls a sense of ego identity. In the third place, he makes clearer than Freud did the active synthesis that is a normal part of the whole process." (104).

"Freud's glowing picture of the little boy who identifies admiringly with his father, while reserving for his mother a dependent love, did not at first do justice to the mother's:



potentialities as an identification figure. It was implied, however, that she served in this capacity for the little girl and indeed to some extent for the boy in the complete oedipus complex. One of the moves made by subsequent workers, encouraged by Freud's derivation of identification from the incorporative urges of the early oral stage, was to carry the concept backward to a time when the mother is the predominant person in the infant's life. Here it has been put to a variety of uses. Among them is the idea that identification with the mother is crucial to the growth of reality testing and the synthesis of functions" (104-105). White later points out that Freud did not separate ~~intro~~ identification and introjection in any systematic way. Then he discusses identification in terms of action and competence. The first step in applying the notion of independent ego energies to this problem is to consider what is known about imitation. "The first point to notice is that the child in his earliest manifestations of overt imitation is able to copy only those acts that he has already performed by himself. This is conspicuously true with vocal imitation..." (109). "Imitation...even in its simplest forms cannot be conceived of as an abrupt copying another's behavior. Imitation can occur only in an organism that has already elaborated a sufficient matrix of actions so that it can produce something resembling the act to be copied. The child can imitate when he is, so to speak, already almost there, when manageable variations of his existing repertory will produce behavior similar to the model. In other words, imitation is an active process of changing one's established behavior to make it more like that of a model" (111).

Identification as a form of imitation: The distinction between the two is an arbitrary one. White believes that it turns on something internal, and that it can be indicated by contrasting the two phrases, 'wanting to do something that someone else has done,' and 'wanting to be like someone else.' Freud used the term 'identification' loosely so that it implied an emotional tie, particularly a warm tie, but this was not consistent with the later idea of identification with the aggressor. White suggests this trouble ~~is~~ is dissolved by a stricter usage in which the one invariant affect in identification is admiration of the model's competence. "Identification can go with several types of emotional relationship provided they permit admiration" (112). "...if we are to find a common denominator in the phenomena of identification, if we are to use this term as a systematic concept rather than as a loose designation for a lot of things only vaguely similar, then the central meaning is best found in the adaptive process of copying the competence of others in an attempt to improve one's own competence. Copying...means modifying through action, often with much help from fantasy, the behavior of which one is already capable--modifying it in directions suggested by the model. The central affect is for the single act a feeling of efficacy, for the sustained series of acts a growth of the sense of competence" (118). In regard to the superego and the resolution of the oedipus complex, White writes: "Sex roles have an important bearing on one of the difficulties that Freud himself pointed out in his discussion of the resolution of the oedipus complex: the fact that identification seemed to be strengthened not with the relinquished love object, as in melancholia, but with the parent of the same sex. Freud got himself into this trap by generalizing the melancholic mechanism. In 1917 he saw regression from object cathexis to identification as a process that occurred only under quite special conditions, but by 1923 it had become a general law of development that ought to apply to oedipal events. What Freud saw in melancholia, however, was not identification at all in the meaning we have developed here; it corresponds to a primitive introjective process that is most likely to occur under pathological stress. Once we clear up this point, it is no mystery that the little boy continues an identification with his father rather than shifting to the mother whom he is relinquishing as a love object. He is sticking to the choice dictated by his learned sex role" (120-121).

Self-esteem, sense of competence, and ego strength: In Freud's view, self-esteem is a function of narcissistic libido, and it is supported either by one's own self-love or by the achievement of the goal of narcissistic libido with respect to others; namely, to be loved by them as one loves oneself...Fenichel proposed the following definition of self-esteem: 'The individual's experiences connected with omnipotence lead to a most significant need of the human mind. The longing for the oceanic feeling





of primary narcissism can be called the 'narcissistic need.' 'Self-esteem' is the awareness of how close the individual is to the original omnipotence" (127).

"The formula that has most often guided psychoanalytic theory in describing the later vicissitudes of self-esteem is based on the relation between ego and ego ideal. This presupposes that ego ideal and superego are at least partly separate institutions of the mind. The ego ideal becomes the repository of the original narcissistic omnipotence, and the ego enjoys self-esteem to the extent that it matches its ideal in actuality. But the adult ego ideal contains more than this" (128). One analyst, Silverberg, has a theory that sees self-esteem as compounded of one's own activity and the recognition of it by others, and it is this picture that White attempts to develop.

White believes that the primary difficulty hampering psychoanalytic theory in dealing with self-esteem is the failure to distinguish between esteem and love. "Esteem has more to do with respect than with love, and respect for oneself is essential for self-esteem. Freud lost the distinction between respect and love when he squeezed out the ego instincts and made self-regard a function of narcissistic libido, and he did not recover it through his conception of the death instinct. Self-respect should in some way have reappeared along with the structural ego, but the image of the ego as a mechanism that was put in action by instinctual energies did not encourage this way of reasoning... It should be noted that self-love and self-esteem... may often manifest themselves in a close relation. A person may at once love himself for his beauty and respect himself for his competence, in which case the attitudes will reinforce one another and be difficult to separate. In similar fashion there may be a concurrence of sense of incompetence and feeble self-love....." (130). "If we take as our starting point the child's overt behavior, disregarding for the moment the reconstructed infantile fantasies, it would appear that self-esteem has an important root in experiences of efficacy. Children chuckle and laugh when their efforts have effects on the environment.. Success in these ventures leads to greater confidence in further action... Just as esteem for another person is based on what he can do, self-esteem is based on a sense of what I can do--a sense of competence" (131-132). Self-esteem has its taproot in the experience of efficacy. The other source of self-esteem "...the esteem in which we are held by others, begins to assume importance as soon as the child attains a clear enough conception of others to sense them as the source of attitudes. Starting perhaps from a vague discrimination between parents pleased and parents displeased, the child moves toward a more distinct awareness of the way he is being taken by others. His self-esteem is then influenced by the evaluations that proceed from others; through their acts and attitudes he learns how they perceive him and is influenced to perceive himself in the same way" (134-135).

Ego strength: technically, it signifies the capacity to endure frustration and to keep working toward the goals of treatment, i.e., this is the way ego strength has been viewed by some therapists. In a factor analysis of the MMPI, researchers found a factor which they named "ego weakness vs. ego strength." Low scorers showed evidence of general maladjustment, anxiety, dependency, and tendencies toward psychological disorders, whereas high scorers were free from anxiety and psychopathology and showed tendencies toward leadership and effective intellectual ability. Thus ego strength is not some esoteric quality, but manifests itself quite clearly at the surface as well as in the deeper layers of personality. In answer to the question of when is an ego strong, Fenichel writes of "the ability to tolerate tension or excitation; the ability to judge validly and to carry out intentions despite hindrances; strength in controlling and channeling the instincts; ability to modulate the more archaic manifestations of the superego; and power to reconcile conflicting elements within the ego itself. But he did not allow ego strength to fall apart into a list of separate abilities. Underlying everything was a more basic formula whereby ego weakness was related to the damming up of instinctual energy and the consequent curtailment of energies available to the ego..... It describes the psychopathology that can afflict the ego and take away its strength, but it leaves health unexplained. When there is no sickness the ego works as it is supposed to work. For an ego psychology and for a complete theory of personality we cannot take so much for granted... To see this function in its true complexity we must have a positive theory of how the ego is supposed to



work....This point can be clarified if we start from the idea that anxiety and competence stand in a reciprocal relation. The point has been sharply made by Goldstein, who conceives of anxiety as the subjective aspect of a threat that ordered, adequate behavior will break down and turn into catastrophic behavior. Goldstein's extensive experience with brain-injured patients showed him in rather dramatic form the relation between environmental pressure and capacity to respond. The patients were often badly upset by a seemingly simple task that happened to involve some of the power of abstraction which they had lost through cerebral injury. Threat is not solely a quality of the stimulus; it lies rather in the relation between the stimulus and our ability to deal with it.....Fenichel's formulation of ego strength can now be restated in what I believe is a more adequate and illuminating fashion. A strong ego..is one which has developed substantial competence in dealing with impulse and with environment. A weak ego is one which, lacking this development, has had to make heavy use of defensive measures of the anticathectic type, thus sacrificing further flexible learning....Hartmann has advanced the valuable idea that the ego does not make all of its gains in situations of stress. What it learns through dealing with the environment in conflict-free situations may prove to be useful knowledge in the next scene of conflict. It cannot be said, therefore, that the strength of the ego is purely a function of past performance in situation of crisis and stress" (137-139).

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"These considerations are helpful..in dealing with a problem...of people whose histories seem to be crushingly loaded with situations conducive to psychopathology but who have come out healthy, effective, and happy. Well-studied cases of this kind have been reported...and it is noteworthy that most attempts to predict future development have erred in the direction of pessimism....I believe this sort of thing reflects perfectly a lack of concepts for understanding the ego and its adaptive activities. We go wrong in our predictions because we are more skillful in detecting destructive psychodynamic situations than we are in discovering constructive replies to them. I believe the concepts of efficacy and competence can do much to restore the balance..." (141). White then presents one case in which the early circumstances, impulses, fantasies, and defense mechanisms offered no basis for predicting what was in adulthood a relatively successful adjustment. "But the riddle can be solved if one pays careful attention to the way in which defenses adopted in crises led to actions of an efficacious sort which worked well upon the particular environment and thus became the basis for continuing growth of competence and confidence!"

In his final chapter, White presents some further considerations on anxiety, cathexis, and neutralization: At the start of Freudian theory, the libido theory managed to encompass aggression, ~~xxx~~ which in the forms of sadism and masochism appeared as an appendage of the basic erotic strivings. It also accounted for anxiety which was seen as direct transformation of dammed-up libido. Later, Freud removed anxiety from this bond by changing it to have the meaning of a signal, and he also established aggression in its own right as the second of the two major instincts, though with a provision that Thanatos usually operated in fusion with Eros.

~~XXXXXXXX~~ The power of anxiety: "By initiating repression and other defense mechanisms, anxiety could enforce the most extensive restrictions on instinctual expression, including the abandonment of real outlets in favor of sublimated and symbolic ones. Whence came this unique position, this virtual omnipotence?...How did Freud avoid the conclusion that in making anxiety the force behind defense he was postulating a very powerful independent drive?...his solution was a curious one. Anxiety, he decided, was not an affair of the id, which 'cannot have anxiety as the ego can.' It was an affect experienced by the ego, having its origins as part of a serviceable reaction to the crisis of birth, but serving thereafter as a signal of possibly impending danger. This description of anxiety, first as a reaction and then as a signal, denies it much significance as a source of energy and fails to explain its role in the defensive process. For this step Freud assumed that the ego took an active part by passing on the signal, so to speak, and thus arousing the power of the pleasure-pain mechanisms. So it was here, through its activation of this virtually omnipotent principle of the id, that anxiety acquired its unique position in the mental economy. Did not Freud in this



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way invoke an independent source of power fully as strong as any instinct, but then fatally confuse the issue by calling it a principle and a mechanism rather than a drive?..... Avoidance ~~an~~ of pain and anxiety are different in nature from sexuality, and I certainly have no complaint against Freud for treating them differently. But I cannot escape the conclusion that it was his deep partiality for his instinct theory that led him to express himself as if anxiety were merely an affect used as a signal to put a mechanism into effect, when in fact he was interpreting it as a powerful force in the most profound psychodynamic sense. One might say that he let anxiety into the id by a back door so that on the brass plates at the front door Eros and Thanatos could announce themselves unchallenged as 'the ultimate cause of all activity.' In fact, Freud attributed to the avoidance of anxiety everything that drive theorists have attributed to it, including great power to generate unpleasant tension and a strong inhibitory effect on actions and impulses leading toward danger. But he would not allow it the status of an instinctual drive.... An understanding of defense organization needed two concepts that were not estimated in psychoanalytic theory: avoidance of anxiety as a powerful motive force, to explain the power to thwart and distort instinctual urges, and effectance as independent ego energy, to explain the transformation of rigid into flexible defensive arrangements" (154-156).

Difficulties with the concept of cathexis: "Cathexis ranks today ~~as~~ as a central concept in psychoanalytic theory. The word stands for the German Besetzung, which Freud used to signify an investment or accumulation of psychic energy in the mental representations of objects..... the concept of cathexis could apply equally well to libidinal and aggressive energies, even though aim and affect are virtually antithetical.... What is the source of discomfort using this scheme? Simply, it seems to me, that it is so much at odds with the way Freud used cathexis and with the way it is still being used very widely in the psychoanalytic literature. Freud brought us all up to associate cathexis with libido, and we have done it. Cathexis of an object thus almost automatically means loving it, valuing it, cherishing it; the whole historical importance of the concept lies in its power to account for these positive attitudes, enduring beyond the immediate rise and fall of instinctual pressure. When cathexis begins to be directed toward external objects, this means that the infant develops a positive interest, not that he wants to destroy the objects. When the permanence of objects is explained as an enduring cathexis, this necessarily means a libidinal cathexis, not a destructive one. When functions are described as cathected, this almost always implies that they are loved and strengthened, not that they are hated and injured. This current common usage of cathexis is an anachronism dating perhaps from 1917, when the libido theory reached its systematic peak and when the whole relation to the surrounding world was based on the analogy of love. But it is an anachronism with which we have all become deeply imbued. This is an example of a concept doing harm, obstructing the further growth of theory and observation. Freud's introduction of destructive instincts should have had more effect than he allowed it to have in breaking down the hegemony of libido. For even this step had the consequence of showing that the energies within us prompt us toward different kinds of relations with objects, as different as loving and hating, cherishing and destroying, binding together and pulling to pieces. His elevation of anxiety to a powerful force should have broadened the scope of these relations still more. We know that people form lasting avoidant tendencies in relation to objects that have caused anxiety, and that they develop strong positive feelings toward symbols of security. I suggest that the libido theory and its associated concept of cathexis has been a substantial hindrance to psychoanalytic ego psychology, obstructing understanding of the relations between ego and reality which need to be examined in all their breadth" (157-159).

Difficulties with the energies of play: There is agreement that information having to do with ~~the~~ the following is necessary for fuller understanding of the ego: the cumulative growth of adaptive behavior, including manipulation, locomotion, language, the mastery of motor skills, the growth of cognition, and the perfecting of higher thought processes. These adaptive activities do not show clear and regular relations to instinctual aims, thus ~~it becomes necessary to postulate~~ it becomes necessary to postulate either other sources of energy or to hypothesize an underlying relation to the in-





instincts that is not apparent on the surface. White prefers the former, but it is evident that the more orthodox ego psychoanalysts attempt the latter, either by using very broad definitions for the major instincts and allowing for symbolic forms of satisfaction, or by employing the hypothesis of neutralization of instinctual energy. "...the determination to perceive playful behavior in terms of the outflow of erotic and aggressive energies means looking for characteristics that resemble those of indubitably erotic or aggressive acts, be they only such generalized ones as the ebb and flow of activity or the joining and separating of entities. It is important for the theorists to realize how loosely these characteristics have been defined and how badly they serve to distinguish one instinctual drive from another. But the main point I want to make is this: the search for these characteristics produces a failure to observe the behavior in its own right, directing attention away from its intrinsic meaning and adaptive significance. This is another instance of a conceptualization doing positive harm. It was once a great illumination to be shown latent erotic and aggressive urges behind behavior where their presence had not been suspected. But if this analysis is generalized and assumed to apply everywhere, the observer is discouraged from looking at things in any other aspect. The search for latent meaning in playful ~~activity~~ and exploratory behavior has interfered with grasping its manifest meaning" (165). White believes that when we see playful or exploratory activity as a whole, rather than fragmentizing it into two instincts, ~~the~~ the hypothesis of independent ego energies is more suitable. This allows us to reserve the assumption of erotic or aggressive instincts for those occasions where behavior exhibits unmistakable signs of gratifying erotic or aggressive elements or when it is more feasible to infer symbolic erotic or aggressive elements in the playful behavior.

Difficulties of neutralization: Independent energies are seen as neutral energies, but White sees them as present in the organism from the beginning and not as neutralized libido or neutralized aggression. "The theory of neutralization asserts that instinctual-drive energies, defined initially as having aims, can be deflected from these aims and so come to direct their force toward entirely different aims. Such a statement is full of implications about the nature of energy and the mechanism of transformation. I shall argue (1) that it won't work, and (2) that we don't have to try to make it work, because the hypothesis of independent ego energies makes the concept of neutralization superfluous" (167-168). "Neutralization refers to what is, when we stop to think of it, a pretty drastic change in energy. The concept can hardly advance ~~it~~ from being a magic words unless the conditions and processes of this change can be specified. It is in the nature of instinctual drives, by definition, to press toward instinctual aims, and we recognize that they continue to do this throughout life. Under what conditions, then, can they be prevailed upon not merely to deflect themselves through roundabout channels, not merely to accept modified but still satisfying forms of their goals, but to release a part of their force from all connection with original aims and make it over without obligation to the ego?" (170). If neutralization is to do the work set out for it, the process must start quite early in life. Research in child development shows that the infant begins exploration of the world very very early, that sensory and motor coordinations are in practice just about from the start. It's been necessary, therefore, to push neutralization back earlier and earlier until we find one ~~theoretician~~ <sup>theoretician</sup> arguing that neutral energy must be present from the start. But it is clear that the further back in life we push neutral energy, the less reason we have for assuming that it is neutralized out of something else. The hypothesis of independent ego energies gets us out of these difficulties; therefore, effectance (an urge toward sensory and motor activity), eroticism (an urge toward pleasurable stimulation of sensitive zones), and aggression (an urge toward forceful destruction) are all ~~available~~ <sup>available</sup> seen by White as being available pretty much from the start. Sublimation can be seen then as not having to be powered <sup>cooperatively</sup> by aim-inhibited instincts, but as representing "...a special sort of cooperation between, on the one hand, interests with an enduring capacity to engage and satisfy effectance, and, on the other, instinctual impulses that can find in the same activities some measure of aim-inhibited gratification" (175). In terms of modern knowledge of neurological functioning, the concept of neutralization seems to perpetuate certain assumptions that have been long discarded from neurology. "The neuron systems that form the sexual pattern cannot pluck out



their intrinsic interest and deposit it in the neurons involved in a pattern of ego interests. No meaning whatsoever can be attached to the statement that the energy of an active ego interest was once sexual but is not sexual now, or that the energy of a given expression of aggression was for a while neutral but has now become aggressive again. Such transformations are simply not possible in the system as we have come to know it. There is no doubt in my mind that the concept of neutralization of instinctual-drive energies will simply have to be abandoned. I can see no ~~function~~ future for a concept of energy ~~transformation~~ for which no convincing metaphor has been proposed, which contains some serious metaphorical absurdities, which is so incompatible with current knowledge of brain function, and which is being betrayed by its best friends as they push it further and further back to the first weeks and days of life. But I cannot feel that anything is lost if we make full use of independent ego energies.... This concept can easily take over everything that has been attributed to neutralization... Only one real concession is required... We cannot continue to say that erotic and destructive urges comprise the entire push behind human behavior. It could be argued that Freud in effect expanded this list when he conferred vast power upon the avoidance of anxiety" (179-180).

Concluding note: "I have used an energy concept in this monograph because psychoanalytic theory is based on instinctual energies, and because independent ego energies already existed as a postulate, though a poorly developed one. But I shall call attention to the fact that my ~~text~~ thesis is inherent structural. The importance of effectance as energy does not lie in direct confrontations with instinctual energies, in battles of cathexis and anticathexis, or in conflicts between measurable charges of force. Its importance lies in the suggestion that apart from instincts the human organism is still a restless creature, constantly directing itself toward its surroundings and learning through experience the effects that can be produced upon the environment-- the kind of relations that can be sustained with it. The energy leads to exploring and testing reality. It thus contributes to the forming of those dynamic structures which we describe variously as abilities, skills, patterns of coping and mastering, defensive organizations, and knowledge. It is these learned dynamic patterns that constitute the representation of reality within the mind and the main instrument of control over instinctual impulses. Our knowledge about the energy is derived entirely from playful and exploratory behavior and its structural products. It is on this account that I have alternatively called my thesis one of action and its consequences, and it would be no discomfort to me to see the word 'effectance' quickly wither on the vine providing the image remained of that active, probing, learning, coping, adapting aspect of ourselves that seems a necessary complement to instinctual drives" (180-181).

It seems to me that White's concept of independent ego energies is one that will be firmly resisted by the more orthodox Freudian theoreticians for its ramifications for psychoanalytic theory are very broad. For one thing, it implies that the ego and id may be both equal in strength and influence on behavior, for the ego is not dependent on the id for its energies and the id cannot "take back" its energies by de-neutralizing them. For another, it sets up a tripartite system of energy, if indeed not instincts (although White seems reluctant to view these ego energies as part of instinct): libidinal, aggressive, and independent ego energies. This flies in the face of the basic view of only two energy sources. Also where do the independent ego energies fit in the concept of bound and free energies which operate in the secondary and primary processes? There are certainly ~~xxx~~ ramifications here. White's concepts push for a broader conception of man than simply seeing him as at the mercy of two instincts, with the job of the ego being to find gratification and satisfactions for those instincts in as reality-oriented a manner as possible. His concepts lend themselves toward seeing man as something other than a creature of and slave to his instincts, as a more creative, productive, and coping individual with gratification being found in those activities per se. Independent ego energies can also be used to broaden the concept of how man comes to know ~~the world~~ and perceive the world around him.