Chapter VI

THE ROLE OF THE ID

I

Exposition

In "An Outline of Psychoanalysis"\(^1\) published posthumously in 1940, Freud altered and/or modified his theory of topographical model which he found answerable to certain clinico-psychological and theoretical issues. The theory thus formulated came to be known as structural theory or model. Let us make comparative study of the two models - topographical and structural.

(i) In the earlier model the psychic apparatus is divided into the conscious, preconscious and unconscious; in the later into the id, ego and super-ego.

(ii) In the earlier model, conscious, preconscious and unconscious are mental systems; in the later they are qualities and the structural divisions of the mental apparatus are not co-extensive with these qualities.

(iii) In the first scheme, ego self-preservative instincts are opposed to sexual instincts, each deriving from a different part of the mental apparatus; in the second, the self-preservative ego instincts are comprised in the eros and the duality is between eros and thanatos.

\(^1\) An Outline of Psychoanalysis - S. Freud
(iv) Anxiety, which was in the earlier scheme the result of a direct transformation of libido, becomes in the later an ego-effect with the important function of signalling the need for defensive manoeuvres on the part of the ego.

For the purpose of understanding why the first model was transformed into the second, the topographical into the structural, the following facts are to be noted.

(1) From his ceaseless clinical experience, Freud had come to recognise that, although the repressed was unconscious, not all that is unconscious is repressed. Such, for instance, was the case with numerous defensive functions of the ego. Id impulses were repressed in the unconscious. But impulses cannot repress themselves. They naturally seek fulfilment in consciousness. So some agency other than the id must defend itself from the demands of id impulses by repressing them in the unconscious. Freud took this agency to be the ego. But, then, the ego is not identical with consciousness as was formerly thought. The repression is done unconsciously. So the repressing agency must be partly unconscious. Thus though the id is wholly unconscious, the ego is never co-extensive with consciousness. It is partly unconscious too. In this way the concept of repression established two points.

(a) That the repressing agency is other than the instinctive impulses.

(b) This agency can work in an unconscious way. Hence id and ego distinction becomes necessary and the sphere of the unconscious is extended beyond id to a part of the ego.
(ii) The deprivation of instinctual impulses was not the sole cause of neuroses, but that another factor must be necessary was felt with regard to psychotic cases. Just as sexuality was the key to neuroses, Freud saw that ego structure was the key to psychosis.

(iii) Even within the neuroses, the concept of character can be seen as more and more important. The sexual instincts that trouble the neurotic are not different from one person to another. In accordance with that, the differentiation between the various kinds of neuroses and also between the neurotic and the normal person cannot be made on the basis of the existence or the intensity of the more sexual derive. Some differences, too, must be then in the way that these drives are handled. That implies that the handling agency in the form of the ego must be installed.

(iv) The fact of "narcissism" forced a radical change within the libido theory itself. In "On Narcissism" in 1914 Freud started with a clinical observation pointed out to him some years ago by Karl Abraham that patients with dementia praecox appear to have detached their libido from objects. To this Freud added the proposition that the thus detached libido cathects the patient's own ego. In this paper two important ideas appeared that formed the starting point for the radical change in Freud's concept of the nature of instincts and the structure of psychic apparatus.

2. On Narcissism - S. Freud
(a) The first one was the proposition that the narcissistic ego-libido formed the libidinal component to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation. That is to say, the ego-instincts were libidinal, not destructive. Hence a new duality was posted between two instincts of eros and thanatos to replace the old opposition of the ego self-preservation instincts to the libidinal ones.

(b) The second one was the suggestion that as a substitute for the lost narcissism of childhood, a man’s ego-ideal becomes a target for his self-love and that a "special agency", the conscience watches and measures the actions of the ego against the standards of the ego-ideal.

The new tripartite structural division of the psychic apparatus into the id, ego, super-ego was thus formulated. The id becomes the source of all drives and instinctual urges. The ego is that one that handles reality. The super-ego is the composite of the various commands, prohibitions and ideals. It is the heir of the parents. The structural model thus formulated was presented in the monograph, the Ego and the Id in 1923. The functions of the ego were now specifically enumerated. The eros and the death instinct in the id were clearly, delineated and the super-ego was described as a differentiating grade in the ego which was derived from and heir to the oedipus complex.

3. The Ego and the Id - S. Freud
Id comes quite late in the scheme of the Freudian theory. Though this being so, Freud gives much importance to it and is of the opinion that it is the oldest of the mental provinces or agencies. Further, it accommodates everything inherited and which is present at birth. "To the oldest of the mental provinces or agencies we give the name of id. It contains everything that is inherited, that is present at birth, that is fixed in the constitution - above all, therefore, the instincts, which originate in the somatic organisation and which find their first mental expression in the id in forms unknown to us." 4 The concept of id in this sense corresponds to that of collective unconscious of Jung. On the other hand, it corresponds to the concept of unconscious in the early stage of the theory of Freud. Actually, unconscious underwent a radical change in the later stage, some of its functions and contents having been transferred to id. Regarding the id's relation with the unconscious in this stage it has been remarked, " ... Everything which goes on in the id is unconscious and remains so ... ." 5

A question haunts in our mind as to how we arrive at the knowledge of the id's existence. It is not a hasty step trying to put it in some way or other arbitrarily. There is a lot of evidences to lead us to the idea of its existence. "You must not expect me to tell you much that is new about the id,

4. An Outline of Psychoanalysis - S. Freud, Chapter 1
5. The question of Lay Analysis - S. Freud, Chapter 2
except its name. It is the obscure inaccessible part of our personality; the little we know about it we have learnt from the study of dream-work and the formation of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character, and can only be described as being all that the ego is not. We can come nearer to the id with images and call it a chaos, a cauldron of soothing excitement. We suppose that it is somewhere in direct contact with somatic processes, and takes over from them instinctual needs and gives them mental expression, but we cannot say in what substratum this contact is made. These instincts fill it with energy, but it has no organization and no unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctual needs, in accordance with the pleasure-principle.6

The purpose of the individual organism's life is expressed by the id and herein lies the power of the id. It is always in an attempt to satisfy the innate needs of the individual. It is, therefore, not merely a container but also an activist, a runner in the interests of the innate needs, i.e., instincts. "The power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs."7

On the issue of relation of id with the external world, it is totally ignorant and careless of it. So the working

6. New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis - S. Freud, Chapter III
7. An Outline of Psychoanalysis - S. Freud, Chapter 2
principle of the id is quite different from that of the ego which has direct contact with the external world, i.e., reality. In other words, the demands of the id will be considered by the ego for execution in tune with the reality. It follows also that the id has no sense of apprehension, anticipation of dangers. "The core of our being, then, is formed by the obscure id, which has no direct relations with the external world and is accessible even to our own knowledge only through the medium of another agency of the mind. ... The id, which is cut off from the external world, has its own world of perception. ... The id obeys the inexorable pleasure principle." Coupled with this, there is another remark, "The id cannot be afraid, as the ego can; it is not an organisation, and cannot estimate situations of danger."  

About the internal processes in the id, there is no logic, no unity - all in chaos, hotch-potch. However, there is no conflict. Contradictions and antitheses exist side by side except at the time of compromise formation. There is no recognition of ideas of space and time, much against the general assertion of the philosophers. The id has no idea of value, good and evil and morality. In short, the id is a world on its own account, as Freud described, "the laws of logic - above all, the law of contradiction - do not hold for processes in the id. Contradictory impulses exist side by

8. Ibid., Chapter 8
9. The Problem of Anxiety - S. Freud, Chapter 8
side without neutralizing each other or drawing apart; at most they combine in compromise formations under the over-powering economic pressure towards discharging their energy. There is nothing in the id which can be compared to negation, and we are astonished to find in it an exception to the philosophers' assertion that space and time are necessary forms of our mental acts. In the id there is nothing corresponding to the idea of time, no recognition of the passage of time, and ... no alteration of mental process by the passage of time ... Naturally, the id knows no value, no good and evil, no morality." 10

It was evident to Freud that a sort of confusion could be noticed in every individual in the oral phase between object-cathexis and identification. This was, perhaps, to show that the function of the id was more important than that of the ego and as such dominating over the latter in the process of mental development of an infant. To point out this fact was also necessary from another angle that the ego develops out of the id which is supposed (by Freud) to be the mind at birth. Thus in the initial stage the acts of object-cathexis and identification were assigned to the id, although, of course, the former was to be re-assigned to the ego. It was stated as "At the beginning, in the primitive oral phase of individual's existence, object-cathexis and identification are hardly to be distinguished from each other. We can only suppose that later on object-cathexes proceed from the id, in which erotic trends

10. New Introductory Lectures onPsychoanalysis - S. Freud, Chapter 3
are felt as needs. The ego, which, at its inception, is still far from robust, becomes aware of the object-cathexis, and either acquires in them or tries to defend itself against them by the process of repression."11

Now this abandonment of object-cathexis by the id and the subsequent re-assignment of it to the ego are quite meaningful and significant. This will lead to the development of the ego. The character of the ego is the product of such abandoned object-cathexes and in this way it is a record of past object-cathexes. It is further contended by Freud that identification is the only condition by which objects can be given up by the id. "It may even be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects. ... it points to the conclusion that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains a record of past object-cathexes."12

Regarding inheritance of experiences, Freud had to apprise us of many varied ideas. When we speak of the inheritance, it should be by the ego. However, direct inheritance by the ego is not possible. It is assumed that the experiences undergone by the ego, instead of their seeming to be lost for ever, after several repetitions with sufficient intensity in successive individuals of many generations, transform themselves into experiences of the id. The impress

11. The Ego and the Id - S. Freud, p. 35
12. Ibid., p. 36
of these experiences are preserved by inheritance. The transformation of the ego's experiences into those of the id was based on Freud's own concession that the difference between id and ego is not too hard and fast, the latter being a part of the former. It is now clear that the inheritor is the ego, while what is to be inherited is the id's experience. In other words, the id's experience is the ego's experience only transformed through the ages. To illustrate the point, Freud contends that when the super-ego is formed out of the id by the ego, the task is only reviving images of egos that have passed away. It is stated as, "No external vicissitude can be experienced or undergone by the id except by way of the ego, which is the representative of the external world to the id. Nevertheless it is not possible to speak of direct inheritance by the ego." It is further stated as, "One must not take the difference between ego and id in too hard and fast a sense, nor forget that the ego is a part of the id which has been specially modified. The experiences undergone by the ego seem at first to be lost to posterity, but when they have been repeated often enough and with sufficient intensity in the successive individuals of many generations, they transform themselves, so to say, into experiences of the id, the impress of which is preserved by inheritance. Thus in the id, which is capable of being inherited, are stored up vestiges of the existences led by countless former egos and when the ego forms its super-ego out of the id, it may perhaps only be reviving images of egos..."

13. Ibid., p. 51
that have passed away and be securing them a resurrection."\textsuperscript{14}

On the matter of development of the id from the genetic and conceptual points of view, as in the case of the ego, little can be said. The id is what is associated with the individual at birth. Experience does not write upon that, although the ego and super-ego grow with experience. However, there is a kind of change which we can infer only in the question of inheritance as explained above. The ego experiences become slowly and gradually id experiences. But this change takes many years and generations. In this connection Freud contends that the id we have now is different from the id which was before thousand years. This much for the genetic. The conceptual development is inapplicable to the id. In the Freudian scheme, the concept of the id emerges quite late. To be precise, it has no history, instead of its having a close affinity with the unconscious in the topographical theory.

The role of the id in affecting neurosis may be explained from three levels: in management of (a) virgin instincts, (b) repressed instincts and (c) psychic energy. Let us explain them serially.

(a) The virgin instincts will be referred by the id to the ego. This time (in the structural theory) the ego is the full-time and full-fledged screening officer in that there are no censors on the way of the instincts to the ego. The time and condition for the discharge of the instincts will be examined

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 52
by the ego in view of the external realities. This does not rule out the importance of the super-ego. The super-ego will definitely come to the level of examination. When such examination fails to discharge the instincts in the external world, the instincts will be pushed down to the id. What matters is that the instincts are referred to the ego by the id in no time and manner. This is due to the fact that there is no time, sense, logic in the id. The ego, then, is not always in a position to examine the pros and cons of the feasibilities of the instincts being gratified. The more the id behaves in this way, the more the chance of neurosis is there.

(b) The management of the repressed instincts are in two ways: First, to let them remain in the id to wait and see for a better chance so that another chance for gratification may be availed of, second, to put them in the cold storage of the unconscious.

In the first case, an arrangement will be made for the repressed instincts to mix with the fresh instincts. This will enable the former to see a chance for getting themselves discharged into the external world. Every attempt in this direction, however, does not guarantee success. In case the fresh instinct happens to enjoy the pleasures of the ego, the super-ego and the external reality, the success point of the repressed instinct is extremely near; for, in this case the censorship of the ego may be eluded. The ego at the time of censoring will usually try to fix its screening eye on the
fresh instinct. Supposing, by accident, the screening eye falls on the portion of the repressed instincts, the fate of it is doomed. Inspite of failure, similar attempts will be repeated. But this depends on the intensity of the repressed instincts.

When these repeated attempts fail to evoke a positive response, i.e., to be discharged into the external world, grouping of the repressed instincts follows. Now, this process of grouping does not occur due to the sole nature and effort of the repressed instincts. A part is to be played by the id in that its duty is always to refer any instinct, which can cause excitation, to the ego. In doing so, any feasible process has to be adopted. The constituent elements are all repressed instincts which will form an association to make a heavy pressure on the ego. The ego, by this time, will be compelled to consider the gravity of the situation, for the act of association or grouping will make a new look other than that caused by a single instinct. But this is not the only factor by which the ego is compelled to consider. There is another factor in that the strength of the association of the repressed instincts already gathered momentum to the extent that their case may be disposed of.

In the second case, when all the above attempts for discharge are frustrated, the only way for the repressed instincts is to be put in the unconscious for ever. They will be in this position for a long time or for the whole life of the individual, affecting or influencing from time to time
the individual's behaviour to such an extent as demanded by the realities of the future situations concerned. This will reduce the volume and capacity of the repressed instincts gradually. This is, however, in the one case. In the other case, if the repressed instincts are too strong to be so put in the cold storage of the unconscious, another process will appear to be taken up. Some mechanisms will be at work. These mechanisms are conducted by the id for the purpose of clearing out the repressed instincts of the id in quick times. They are wit, humour, fantasy, day-dream, dream, etc. The ensuing of the neurosis will be quite off the track, if the latter process is ensured in action.

(c) Before coming to this level, let us have a look at the views of D. Yankelovich and W. Barrett on the relation of id and the instincts.

(1) "The id is the source of all energy. This is its most important characteristic. Energy moves from the physico-chemical processes of the body (where it is generated) to the psychic apparatus. Entering the psychic apparatus by way of the id, energy moves through the ego, and is then discharged onto objects in the outside world or is used by the ego to hold back other id energies." 15

(2) "The id sector of the psychic apparatus is the source of all human motivation. This is a point of cardinal

15. Ego and Instinct - D. Yankelovich and W. Barrett, p. 67
importance, imposing the demand on theorists that all evidence of motivation, however, remote from the instinctual drives, must be ultimately related to them.\textsuperscript{16}

\textbf{(3) "The instinctual energies of the id are subdivided into the libidinal and the aggressive drives. Due to the fluidity of the instinctual drive energies, differentiation between libidinal and aggressive energies cannot be sharply maintained. Overwhelming clinical evidence supports the observation that all degrees of separateness and fusion occur between these two types of impulse."\textsuperscript{17}}

These three views may be supposed to represent Freudian views. The only thing to be added to the first view is that the passage of the energy is not completely straight. It has to move towards the super-ego as well so that energy may be made available when it acts. Our explanation as to how the id plays its part in neurosis in this level will be based on the above views.

The id does not impose any restriction on the movement of energy. As mentioned earlier, wishes are referred to the ego in no time, manner and place. In referring, these wishes are cathexed, i.e., energy starts moving with the wish. Why it does not impose any restriction is explained by the fact that the id works under the pleasure-pain principle corresponding to the primary process. By pleasure it is meant to attain and

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
maintain psychic equilibrium of the organism at any cost. The means may be even condemnable, but it must lead surely to the goal desired. Such behaviour of the id takes a great part in the causation of neurosis by placing a flood of energy beyond the disposal of the ego.

From another angle it may be speculated that this flood of energy will do no harm, provided that they are discharged immediately. But the question of immediate discharge of all energy is sometimes unthinkable when the ego functions in accord with the super-ego and the external world. By this time a part of the energy is utilised by the ego to hold back id energies. The id being the exclusive source of psychic energy, it is not anomalous to think that a short of control may be exercised by the id over the energy in its being utilised by the ego. The id, however, is not inclined to any such control, thereby making an indirect contribution to the causation of neurosis.

The same aversion to control over the energy is encountered when we come to the super-ego. It also utilises a part of the energy that had come from the id. This is necessary to enable the super-ego to act. In its functioning, it sometimes co-operates with the id and sometimes heavily opposes the id. This opposition by the super-ego will have no relative strength, when the part of energy as stated above is beyond the reach of the super-ego.
And it is a fact that this opposition contributes to the causation of neurosis. It follows, therefore, that the id again takes an indirect part in the causation of neurosis.
II

Discussion

By introducing the concept of the id, Freudian theory becomes more systematic and coherent than before. The various kinds of instincts — those in the ego and the unconscious — came to be placed properly, at least apparently, in the id. Certain issues unanswerable by the topographical theory become illuminated by the structural theory of which id is an important part. "... the concepts of id, super-ego and ego are crucial to psychoanalytic theory as a whole. These structures are basic to one of the most important findings of psychoanalysis — that behaviour has unconscious motivation. They are also vital in the Freudian theory of neurosis ... ."18

However, let us try to discuss on some issues pertaining to the id so that we may see if new facts emerge on the surface. In the first instance, the case of the id obeying the pleasure-pain principle comes up. It has been found that Freud used the term for three meanings which are inconsistent with one another. "... the first and the most fundamental is the tendency for the instinctual impulses to press for full and immediate discharge. But Freud also used the pleasure principle to refer to the feeling state of relief or pleasure that accompanies such discharge of energies. ... It is the third meaning of the pleasure principle that involves Freud in a flagrant contradiction, namely, the use of the pleasure

18. Fact and Fantasy in Freudian Theory – P. Kline, p. 127
principle to refer to the tendency of the organism to avoid disagreeable experiences as well as to seek pleasure.\footnote{19} The act of avoidance will have to involve preventing one's impulses from discharging fully and satisfactorily. Coveting a neighbour's wife and acting out covetous impulses upon her in the presence of her husband will be extremely disagreeable. Consequently, covetous impulses are to be held back. If a word is intended for a meaningful purpose, it cannot be used for opposite meanings. Thus, in case the pleasure principle is used for implying the control over impulses as and when anxiety threatens, the meaning of the reality principle seems to go otherwise.

Some eighteen different meanings were expressed by Freud by using the term, primary process. This only gives a poor picture of the concept, thereby making a bottle-neck in his theory. "... he subsumed under this one term more than eighteen logically distinct meanings - including the various regulating principles of the id, the feeling-states that accompany the release of energies, the characteristics of these energies, the modes of the perception that accompany them."\footnote{20}

A quite significant question had been raised by T.C. Sinha. "... Freud introduced his structural theory of mind and thought the inherited id formed only a part of the total unconscious. The major portion of the unconscious contained the repressed materials from the conscious. It is not clear,

\footnotesize{19. Ego and Instinct - D. Yankelovich & W. Barrett, p. 96
20. Ibid., p. 67}
however, whether any such repressed material of an individual are inherited like the id contents. In all probability it was not considered inheritable. If this view is correct then, what were the contents of the unconscious besides the id at the beginning of one's life? If repressed materials will accumulate in the unconscious gradually, then we can imagine or expect three deductions. First, the unconscious will expand in size and content with the accumulation of repressed materials. Second, some repressed materials having become conscious, the unconscious will become poorer in contents. Third, the sum total of the newly repressed materials and the released materials from the unconscious will remain constant, when a certain saturation is reached. These are matters not yet open to full and free understanding, although they ought to be so.

It is said that dream-works and neurotic symptoms are made instrumental in the postulation of the id. In other words, they are treated as the premises from which the existence of the id is inferred. But this is not all. On the other hand, they are explained by the id. It means that dream-works and neurotic symptoms depend on the id so that they may be understandable. The id also depends on them so that its existence may be established. There is a kind of interdependence for their mutual existences. But is this a good argument standing the crucial test of reason? There is an

21. Samiksa, p. 64
element of circularity which is logically unintelligible. It is quite philosophical rather than psychological.

About the actual nature of the relationships of the various contents of the id, two opposite views are found. There is no unity and there is no conflict. There is nothing wrong with these two views as long as they are on their own accounts. But Freud uses one term 'contradictory' which implies that there is contradiction, conflict etc. He often uses the phrase, 'unconscious conflict'. And this conflict, according to Freud, has much more to do with neurosis than what the conscious conflict has.

In its relation with the external world, the id has no sense of time and space. It knows neither good nor evil nor morality. How, then, does it follow pleasure-pain principle? This principle will have meaning and validity only when applied to the external world. So both the views cannot be right. Either of them must remain cancelled. This comment has reference to common language. Freud might have used it in his own way of which we are not aware.

The matter of earliest object-cathexis and identification now commands our attention. The question as to whether we can distinguish between object-cathexis and identification is another; but the mechanism is there at all in a weak state. It may be understood that even in the earliest stage, the tension and the release of it at the oral phase are experienced by the child as distinct and separate. Freud explains, "Object-cathexis proceeds from the id in which
the erotic trends are felt as needs." Who feels the tension of the cathexis in the id and who feels the erotic trends in the id as needs? Has the id any such capacity to put and direct the drives towards an object without the agency of the ego? It is not safe to think that the id has any directing capacity of its own. It is the ego which is to be considered as the monitor of the mind. It is this ego that co-exists with the id since its very inception. The ego can cause the drives of the id when felt as a tension to flow in a certain direction for the release of the tension by fixing an object.

Next comes the case of identification and its role in the character of the ego. It is permissible to ask if identification is a function of the id. The id cannot identify with any object of which it is not aware nor can be aware as explained by Freud about the relation of the id with the external world. The recognition of the object as such must be done by the ego. Also that if any object is to be given up, it must be done by the ego. The ego can identify with any object and give up its needs with the help of identification.

Freud further asserts that the character of the ego is a precipitate of the abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains a record of past object-choices. The author seems to intend to say that, when object-cathexes are abandoned, they leave a residue in the ego. If the object-cathexis is a primary property of the id, it is not supposed to leave any residue in the ego. Shall we suppose that, although the id
longs for an object for the fulfilment of a drive, the ego comes in the picture and takes up the role of the object to the id. Our objection to this view is constituted by that the id has no direct approach to the external world except via the ego. It is beyond the power of the id to experience any fulfilment or frustration of any kind.

Some complications about the process of inheritance and the role of the id and the ego in it, demand to be clarified. It is assumed that the experiences of the ego cannot be inherited, while the id is capable of inheritance. The next step follows that the repeated intensive experiences of the ego of successive individuals of many generations may transform themselves into experiences of the id. The same question as raised before arises as to how the id can be an experiencing agent. The ego is the experiencing agent and the id is the store-house of instinctual drives. It will be sound to say that the ego, along with its power to judge reality, controls and modifies the expression of the id drives. Instincts are modifiable by the workings of the ego. It seems with Freud that only more restrictions of the ego is sufficient to modify the ways of the instinct.

As explained by Freud, "when the ego forms its super-ego out of id, it may perhaps only be receiving images of egos that have passed away and be securing them a resurrection." This leads to nowhere except that ego also is inherited. It is not explainable as to how the new ego revives the images of the egos that have passed of which it has no knowledge. The
act of revival of the images of the ego that have passed will require one presumption that the present ego has a memory trace of the past one which can be revived under suitable conditions. Then it becomes necessary to think that ego also is inherited in some form or other. Thus both the ego and the id are inherited. This will baffle our attempt to have more accurate knowledge of the ego, as the inherited elements will complicate the nature of the ego.