

THE DEATH URGE

One of the most important parts of psychoanalysis is the investigation of the urges, drives or instincts, which, to a large degree determine our psychic and physical behavior. The general theory of instincts or urges has been discussed in this seminar at different times and I shall recall to you a few of the facts which were brought out in those seminars.

As psychoanalysis developed the classification of drives underwent considerable changes. On the beginning Freud interpreted the neurosis as a conflict between two groups of drives: the ego instincts and the erotic instincts. In this division he was guided to some extent the antithesis between hunger and love which is very popular in German speaking countries because of Schiller's distich "So lange als den Baue der Welt Philosophie zusammenhaelt, erhaelt sich ihr Getriebe, durch Hunger und durch Liebe. (In so far as the structure of nature is explained by philosophy, its operation is maintained by hunger and love).

It was known that the several erotic instincts, (such as oral, anal and genital eroticism) formed a closely knit group. They could replace one another under certain circumstances, and the libidinous tension of one could be transferred to another.

On the other hand, according to these early views, the ego instincts (hunger, thirst, and so forth) formed a separate group. When the ego instincts were threatened in their aims by one of the erotic tendencies, they could effect its repression into the unconscious and thus give rise to a neurosis.

In offering this classification of instincts, Freud makes the remark that the ego instincts serve the interests of the individual, while the erotic drives stand in the service of the genus or the phylum as securing the propagation of the species. This remark is very illuminating in that it reveals one of Freud's mental predilections. Even the most powerful minds, the greatest thinkers have their little mannerisms and foibles. And Freud's weakness runs to a propensity for biological analogies.

This correspondence between ego and eros, on one hand, and individual and genus, on the other, is not meant as a simple repetition implied in the nature of hunger and love. No, Freud seems to think that it makes the proposed division of the instincts more cogent and actually speaks of a biological foundation for the classification.

Now everybody knows that in the whole history of living beings the individual and the genus never existed apart from each other. The genus always consisted of individuals, and the individual was always the descendant or the forbear of a genus or both. There is, therefore, absolutely no a priori reason why these two entities should be served by two different types of instincts and not by the same. It is, therefore, hard to see how such a biological comparison can either strengthen or weaken a psychological law. The two things have simply no connection.

Of course, it is true that in the ultimate analysis psychology is a part of biology. However, in the present stage of our development we know so extremely little about the mechanism of psychophysical parallelism that the rift between the two sciences has not yet been bridged. For all practical purposes they are independent and psychology must stand or fall on its own merits. Freud himself never ceased to emphasize that psychological laws can be established only by psychological ~~positions which can stand on~~ evidence and was always ready to drop any theoretical position which was contradicted by facts obtained from psychoanalytical observation.

In the meantime psychoanalytic research was vigorously pushed forward, mainly by Freud himself. And before long he came across new facts which disprove the old division of instincts. The most important material in this connection was that relating to "~~maximal~~" narcissism". The results of psychoanalysis were as follows: When an erotic instinct has to give up its object (for instance, when the person which is the object goes away, or is no longer available for another reason) then the libido detached from it may get attached to the own self. This is called the "narcissistic state" of the libido after the mythological youth Narcissus who fell in love with himself. It is further found that the self attached libido serves to strengthen the selfish tendencies of self-assertion and self-preservation which constitute the ego instincts. In other words erotic instincts and ego-instincts can also replace one another. The main difference between them is in the object. However this is a secondary difference which does not justify any radical division of the instincts in two groups.

More than this, it was discovered that the earliest stage of organization of the libido is narcissistic. The new born infant has all his libido attached to his own self. For him ego instincts and erotic instincts are the same. In the later development of the libido is sent out to be attached to various objects in the service of the erotic instincts. But, as we have seen, it may be withdrawn from the objects and drawn back into the self. Thus narcissism forms the large reservoir of libido from which it may be lent out to the objects. When the libido is detached from an object and attached to the self, it is actually returned to its original home. The technical expression for this is "regression of the libido to the earliest narcissistic type of organization".

Thus the ego instincts and the erotic instincts are not different in kind, and the explanation of a neurotic conflict as a strife between them is not tenable. The question must be put therefore again, what is the internal conflict which causes the neurosis. Freud gave an answer to this in the same paper of 1913 in which he deals with narcissism. It is the conflict between the different parts of the psychic personality. The structure of the personality received its final elaboration ten years later when the different components were given the names of ego, id, and super-ego. The regressions do not go out from the ego instincts but from the ego itself. The ego is continuously harassed by three exacting claimants, the superego, the id and reality. And repression is sometimes the only way in which it can help itself. From the point of view of this theory the structure of adult narcissism is as

follows. The instincts go out from the id and their libido is attached to the ego as the object. But in the case of the primary narcissism of newborn infants the ego is not yet differentiated from the id and the term selfattached libido may be regarded as accurate.

With respect to the theory of the narcissistic conflict the division of the personality took over those functions which were previously attributed to the division of the instincts in two groups. There is, therefore, no theoretical a priori reason to require their division in two more types, and the whole question of the classification of instincts loses in importance.

Nevertheless, observations seemed to indicate the existence of a duality of another kind. In his paper of 1915 (Trieb und Triebchickuale) Freud points out the polarity of love and hate. Sometimes the tendency of the instincts is friendly and tender to the objects, sometimes it is a desire to harm and hurt them. This polarity eventually led to the division of instincts into erotic (including the ego instincts) and aggressive or destructive instincts.

The existence of the aggressive instincts was first noted in the anal phase of sexual organization. At the time of development of a child when he is particularly interested in the excretory functions, he usually has a desire for wanton cruelty and destruction. Hence the phase was called the anal-sadistic stage of development.

However, it was later found that in the other stages of development (the oral, the phallic and the genital) there also is a strong undercurrent of aggression. As soon as the infant begins to recognize an object the relation to it is bipolar: there is love and there is aggression.

An important property of the aggressive instincts is that they can be inverted, that is turned against one's own person. The mechanism of this inversion is worthy to be discussed a little more fully. Like the regression to narcissism (of which we spoke a moment ago) it occurs when an object of libido is lost. However the reaction of loss is here a somewhat different one. Suppose the object which binds the libido is no longer available, either because it is physically removed, or because it becomes unsuitable. One of the possible reactions is that the libido going out from the id and attached to an object is detached from it and attached to the own ego, either temporarily to be sent out to another object (as soon as it is found) or permanently, producing narcissism. This is the case we have discussed before. There is, however, another solution: the libido remains attached to the object, but the object itself is drawn into the ego by identification. As Freud expresses himself: the lost object is erected within the ego. This means that the ego assumes the main mental characteristics of the object, in other words, plays the role of the object and offers itself to the id instead of the object. The ideals and teachings, for which the lost object stood, are taken over by the ego and become a part of its own moral code; they form a part of the super ego. This mechanism of identification is the way in which the infantile Oedipus complex is liquidated, when the ~~child's~~

child realizes that the parent is not a suitable object of erotic libido. Therefore, it plays an enormous role in the development of every man.

It was first discovered in the analysis of manic depressives and described in Freud's paper on "Melancholia" (Trauer und Melancholie) of 1917. Since the lost object concentrated on itself not only love but also hate, that is, had attached to it the aggressive instincts, the ego becomes now the butt of self-hate and self-criticism. Freud could trace in his analyses (and every psychoanalytic practitioner has his own cases to confirm this) how the self accusations of melancholics are in reality meant as accusations of other persons, usually their close relatives. Self reproaches and self hate which may go as far as suicide mean actually the hate towards somebody else turned against the hater's own person by absorbing the former hated object. In a popular form material tending to prove this has been presented in Menninger's book "Man against himself".

This brings us at last to the subject of our talk "The death instinct". If aggressive instincts can be inverted and turned against one's own self, then it may be possible that they can be inverted also the other way, namely, back from self hate to object hate, from self destruction to object destruction. The question may, therefore, arise which instinct is the original and primary and which the secondary inverted. Do we harbor a primary instinct of self-destruction or as Freud calls a "Death instinct"?

It is certain that this question did not arise in Freud's mind until later? In the paper of 1917 in which he introduces the aggressive tendencies as a separate group of instincts, he writes emphatically: "We have recognized as the primary state of instinctual life such a vast self love of the ego; we observe in anxiety which is produced by danger of life the development of such enormous amount of narcissistic libido, that we cannot conceive how the ego could agree to its self destruction. Of course, we knew for a long time, that no neurotic plays with the intention of suicide, who does not turn against himself the desire to murder others, but it remained inexplicable by what interplay of forces such an intention can be converted into a fact". Then he goes on to explain the mechanism of identification which he has just described.

In what way Freud came to the conclusion that a primary instinct of self-destruction is probable, we cannot say. One guess is as good as another. If I may venture a hypothesis, he may have started from the fact (mentioned above) that, beginning with the oral stage, we find in every phase of development both ~~erotic~~ and destructive instincts. How then about the narcissistic stage which precedes the oral. Subject and object are not yet differentiated and it was pointed out that the erotic libido is self attached. If the primary state of the erotic instincts is self binding, why not of the destructive instincts. This would give to the two groups a certain apparent symmetry. Freud makes a remark to this effect in his New Series of lectures of 1933. However, the analogy

between the two instincts is incomplete and the argument unconvincing. The mechanism of inversion is in the two cases quite different, the erotic instinct is turned against one's own person directly without intensification, the aggressive needs identification. It is, therefore, questionable whether we have a right to expect symmetry. (revers, irrever)

Be this as it may, when Freud advanced for the first time the hypothesis of the death instinct, he tried to base it on an entirely different kind of argument. He had just discovered a new principle - the so called "compulsion of repetition", and this gave him a chance to attach the death instinct to it by indulging his propensity for biological analogies.

The ~~repress~~ compulsion of repetition is supposed to supplement the pleasure principle as the guiding law of psychic life. A brief explanation of it is here in order. Let us connect the explanation with the specific example of a shell shock neurosis which we present here in a schematic, simplified way to bring out the essentials. Suppose that a shell explodes at a short distance from a soldier. The fright of this dreadful experience terrifies the soldier and brings him into a state of enormous emotional tension. The normal response to release the tension would be a violent motor reaction consisting of a horrified face expression, frantic gesticulation, and piercing screams for help. However, the soldier has no time to obtain relief in this way because he is in danger of another explosion and has to run for cover. The unreleased tension with its associations is, therefore, repressed into the unconscious where it may become the cause of a neurosis combining itself with with earlier repressions. The feature of such a neurosis which interests us most is that night after night the patient dreams a dream reproducing the traumatic scene. The purpose of these dreams is obvious, the repressed emotional ~~excitement~~ excitement is pressing for release, and this cannot be accomplished without the circumstances of the repression becoming conscious. The dream is the prerequisite for working off the tension. Freud points out that neither the traumatic scene nor the anticipated motor reaction of working off the tension are in the least pleasurable, on the contrary, both are intensely painful. The pleasure principle contended that the only ruling principle of the id is seeking pleasure and avoiding displeasure. According to Freud, we have in the tendency of the unconscious to reproduce the traumatic scene, a case which cannot be explained by the pleasure principle but is beyond it. This observation and many others of a similar purport induced him, therefore, to introduce in addition to the pleasure principle a new fundamental psychôc law: the principle that the id tends to reproduce former situations, even painful ones, when they are associated with repressed emotional tensions. This is the compulsion of repetition.

On the instinctual level it means that the essence of an instinct is to strive for the release or diminution of an emotional excitation. It has been questioned whether the compulsion of repetition is really beyond the pleasure principle or might not be an indirect consequence of it. However, we need not discuss this to-night since it is irrelevant to our subject. We may accept it that an instinct is not gratified until its ~~instinctual~~

emotional excitation is removed. Freud sees in this a property of the instincts which is more fundamental and primeal than the pleasure principle. It is the nature of the instincts to decrease tension and to establish a state of tensionless quiescence, for this tendency Freud accepts the name Nirvana-principle proposed by Barbara Low. He thinks that the pleasure principle is less fundamental and appeared later in the history of the development of animal life. The pleasure principle has modified a part of the instincts, namely the erotic ones, so that excitement, especially sexual tension, is sometimes felt as pleasurable. However, this is only a secondary thing. We may freely admit that from a certain limit of tension on every instinct strives for the decrease of excitation.

Now comes the great jump in Freud's argument. Granted that the tendency of an instinct is to remove tension and to reestablish an earlier state of quietude, is not the most peaceable state that can be imagined the state when there is no life at all, the state of death? And is not inanimate nature historically older than animate life? Should there not exist an instinct ~~tending to~~ tending to do away with the tensions and excitations of life and reestablish inanimate peace? In Freud's opinion there should be. He sees in this line of reasoning a strong support for the existence of the death instinct.

This was the situation in the early 1920's when Freud first advanced the death instinct, and in a considerable measure it is the situation to-day. That many of his disciples could not understand and follow him was nothing unusual. Many of his earlier theoretical constructions had been presented with insufficient illustrations from case histories and had left his audience perplexed and puzzled. In due time, however, the case histories were supplied by other analysts. In 19 cases out of twenty Freud's constructions turned out to be correct and were generally accepted.

The case of the death instinct was, however, different from the others in two respects.

(1) In the first place, Freud himself did not seem to be completely convinced of its reality since he profusely apologizes for offering it both in the beginning and in the end of "Jenseits des Lustprinzips". His own words are: "One could ask me whether and to what extent I am myself convinced of the developed theory. My answer would be that I am neither convinced myself nor do I try to attract the belief of others. More correctly: I do not know in what measure I believe in them".

In his later writings Freud stated his case more confidently - but only in abstract discussions -, when it came to concrete case histories he continued to express himself with great caution.

(2) In the second place, the whole theory is formulated in such a way that its test by case histories is an extremely delicate and difficult matter. In his paper of 1924 "On the economic problem of masochism" Freud elaborates it in the following way.

The infant is born with the primary death instinct and the self attached, narcissistic erotic instincts which Freud calls now life instincts. As the erotic instincts turn to objects they also influence the death instinct and cause it, in a way whose mechanism is as yet unknown, to turn outside. Thus the larger part of the death instinct is converted into instincts of destruction directed against outer objects, while the smaller part remains in the id in the form of an unconscious masochism. When we observe self-reproaches, self-castigation or even suicide in cases of melancholia or masochism the genesis of them is twofold. On the one hand, the aggressive instincts are inverted and turned against the ego by the process of identification described a little while ago. On the other hand, they are supported in their self-destructive work by the masochism, that is by that part of the death instinct which did not change and always remained an unconscious tendency of self-destruction. The trouble is only, that the first part of this causation, namely, the turning in of the aggression, is completely assured and manifest and easily verifiable by any analyst. It seems, moreover, sufficient to explain the whole effect. The second part, on the contrary, is entirely hypothetical. The difficulty which I mentioned is caused by the fact that the analyst would need some delicate quantitative estimate of the strength of the inverted aggression in order to say whether it is a sufficient explanation or must be supplemented by the death instinct. There is certainly no unanimity among the analysts whether this second factor of causation really exists. However, if existent, it would be the only proof of the truth of the whole theory and of the existence of the death instinct itself which is obtainable by psychological methods.

We must remember this peculiar situation with respect to the death instinct when we come to its criticism. Naturally the criticism divides itself into a theoretical part - or a critical appreciation of the theory itself - and an empirical part - or the test of the death instinct in the light of psychoanalytical case histories.

Let us begin with the theoretical side. I gave you only a brief summary of Freud's reasoning in favor of the death instinct for a good reason. The admirable clarity characteristic of Freud, which makes the reading of his papers so delightful, is lacking in his writings about the death instinct. To state it bluntly, the pages relating to this subject are a little confused. Unfortunately, most of Freud's critics who wrote on the death instinct in recent years - either in an approving or disapproving sense - did very little bring order into the matter but only sank deeper into the disorder. An exception should be made in favor of Dr. Fenichel's very penetrating paper which is in a class by itself as to lucidity and to which we shall refer to later.

If I may be permitted to offer an explanation for the reason of the confusion, I submit that it is due to the fact that Freud, does not sufficiently differentiate between two things which are distinct and in no way interchangeable: we mean on the one hand an active ~~striving~~ desire and striving for self-destruction, which the death instinct should be, - on the other hand a passive slipping

a sinking towards death, because of organic deterioration, which is not an instinct at all.

Some of the recent writers have tried to bring the death instinct in connection with the entropy principle of physics. This must be taken with a grain of salt because strictly speaking the entropy principle does not apply to systems standing in heat exchange with the outer world, that is to say, it cannot be applied to a living organism as long as it breathes and takes nourishment. We can speak here only of an analogy with that principle, however, the analogy is very instructive. The entropy is not something active, added to the forces of nature, but something passive working through these forces and inherent in them. It is the principle of gradual dissipation of energy and of the running down of the universe. However, the processes of nature are gradually stopped not because they are opposed by active forces but they are checked off because of their own inherent inefficiency and wastefulness.

It is clear that the entropy is an analogue of that passive decline towards death of which we spoke a moment ago. It is of course, a truism that all our instincts in striving to realize their aims have to contend not only with the opposition of other instincts but also with the obstacles of reality and in particular with what we may call the inertia of the human body, the limitations of the human organs. As the individual advances in age, the inertia increases because the physiological processes become less and less efficient. At the same time the energy and drive of the instincts themselves may decline because of a general lowering of the tonus of vitality. However, it is impossible to call this process of deterioration an instinct. Although it takes place in our own body the resistances which it offers to our actions are of the same kind as the obstacles of the outer world. They must be classified, therefore, as part of outer reality and our psyche, certainly, regards them as such. When the first signs of lowered vitality appear, we have no desire to increase them, as a death instinct would imply. On the contrary, we run to the doctor and have him give us a tonic to remove them. This, of course on the conscious level, but the evidence of dreams tells us that organic deterioration is not any more welcome to the normal unconscious. When we finally resign ourselves and submit to the inevitable, we submit to it as to any external calamity. We regard the result as a destruction even though the laws work within our body. (Decrease of resistance)

All this would be very trivial if it were not for the fact that the biological analogies given by Freud and some of his supporters - for instance, Therese Benedek - are exactly of this inertia type. Reviewing the facts about primitive animals, such as protozoa, Freud comes to the conclusion that their very life has the seed of death in it. This is very likely, but what does it prove? All the observations which Freud adduces and Benedek elaborates only tend to show that the processes of life decline in their intensity and ultimately stop because the organism gets clogged up with waste products due to the imperfections of the processes themselves, as Freud calls them dissimilatory products. They are examples of a passive decline of vitality. In no case do we see in the material offered as proof an active strife for

self-destruction.

We have already pointed out that a passive slipping toward death unquestionably exists in human beings, but it has nothing to do with the death instinct because it is not an instinct at all. On the other hand, the existence of an active death instinct is not proven. Although Dr. Fenichel in his paper of 1935 approaches these questions from an entirely different point of view, I believe that my conclusions are so far in complete agreement with his. He goes on, however, to say that theoretical considerations disprove the existence of a death instinct. Although this is more than I am prepared to admit, I think that also in this point the difference between us is more apparent than real. Dr. Fenichel's starting point was the fact that the only arguments ever advanced for the death instinct were the theoretical ones of Freud and Benedek. If these arguments are unsound, the death instinct is from his point of view finished. On the other hand, the question which I am trying to answer in this talk is "whether the death instinct exists", whether it is proved or can be proved either by theory or observation. Thus Freud's theories or any theories are for me only an incident and I claim that they have simply no bearing on the question of the existence of the death instinct. For this reason I have to talk more on it.

The paper of Dr. Fenichel was particularly interesting to me because of his temperament and general philosophical outlook are considerably different from mine. He rates very highly the methods of theoretical speculation and the general principles of psychoanalytic theory established by these methods, while I am by ~~profession~~ ~~profession~~ profound empiricist. Some of you know that I am by profession a theoretical physicist. Inventing theories is my ~~profession~~ business and my daily occupation. Permit me, therefore, to address you - in the capacity of a theoretician and not of a psychoanalyst - a few words against the overestimation of any speculative theories. These theories are valuable and helpful only as long as they are not stretched beyond their range. For instance the notion of the instinct was built by Freud on the analogy with the excitation by an external physiological stimulus. It is according to him the psychic representative of an internal physiological excitation which tends to work itself off. This idea, very probable in itself, has almost become a certainty since the discovery of the sexual and other hormones. However, this is about the sum total of our physiological knowledge about instincts. It seems to me a very slender foundation for any theory or classification of instincts that cannot be used without additional assumptions which are much less secure. Without denying that the theories based on physiological analogies may be valuable, I should like to remind you that they have led psychoanalysis more than once astray. This happened with the division of the instincts into erotic and ego instincts and, as I believe, again now with the deduction of the death instinct from physiological processes. You may say that in these cases we did not apply the analogies correctly, but we usually know what is correct and what is wrong only looking backward, after having returned to the straight and narrow path of facts. At least in the first case we were returned to that path by empirical psychoanalytic observation.

Similar considerations apply to the principles derived in close connection with this interpretation of the instincts, as for instance the pleasure principle and the Nirvana principle. I should not like to treat them as absolute truths, but I am rather inclined to regard them as immensely valuable heuristic principles which may be subject to modification and refinement in the light of accumulating evidence. At least the pleasure principle has undergone considerable changes. In the beginning Freud believed that every excitation is connected with displeasure, its release with pleasure. The pleasure principle was thus practically identical with the Nirvana principle. There came, however, two changes: In the first place, Freud admitted the existence of pleasurable excitation, that is excitation without displeasure. In the second place, he discovered the release of excitation with displeasure, whence it became necessary to supplement the pleasure principle with the Nirvana principle.

I am mentioning to you these general problems of methodology because I think them very important. But they are really quite apart from the special situation which confronts us in the question of the death instinct to which we now return. Granting that Freud's biological demonstration of the instinct has failed, can we conclude that it does not exist at all. I think not; all that biology tells us is negative, that we do not know what the physiological agents of the death instinct might be, since obviously they are not the dissimulatory waste products suspected by Freud. In view of our pitifully small physiological knowledge I cannot regard this as a serious objection against the existence of the d.i.

To repeat my point of view, it is as follows. The existence of the death instinct is not proved by biological speculation, but it is not disproved by it either. It is very probably that in the present state of our physiological knowledge it even cannot be proved or disproved by theoretical arguments.

This makes it necessary for me to proceed to the second part of the criticism, the test of the existence of the death instinct in the light of clinical experience. In this connection I am at a disadvantage, since I have no clinical material of my own. I hope that the practicing psychoanalysts here present will favor us with their observations in this matter. All I can do, is to make a few general observations and to present to you the opinions expressed in literature.

My general remarks are two: (1) In the first place, the concept of the death instinct grew out of theoretical speculations and not out of clinical observations. If its theoretical foundations are spurious, as I believe, then its existence in the clinical picture would be an accident. Still such accidents are not impossible and sometimes they do happen. (2) In the second place I should like to repeat what I said before about the great difficulty of observing the death instinct, if it exists. In the cases of men turning against themselves we always have other sources for the driving power of their fury. There are the powerful destructive

instincts turned against the ego by identification. And in cases of advanced age or organic illness we may, perhaps, add to this the general lowering of the drive of the life instincts- of the will to live- through physical decline of vitality and through mental submission to reality. For the death instinct remains only a small field.

We may add, that even if the existence of active death instincts were unambiguously established, there would still remain the question whether they are the prototype of the aggressive instincts as supposed by Freud.

Considering this difficult situation, it is not surprising that literature of the subject is very meager. Apart from a few remarks of Freud himself in connection with case histories, I am aware only of one paper relating to this matter, namely, that by Wilhelm Reich entitled "Der Masochistische Charakter" and published in 1932.

The neuroses in which self-torture and self-destruction play a role are Masochism and Melancholia. With respect to masochism Freud says: "An assumption of such far-reaching nature should not be made for the only reason that a few poor fools made their sexual gratification dependent on a strange condition".

Thus he, obviously, attaches little importance to the evidence offered by masochism. Melancholia does not fare much better. After briefly reviewing a case history Freud writes: "Theoretically speaking we are not sure whether we should assume that all the aggression returning from the outer world is bound by the super-ego and thus turned against the ego, or that a part of it exerts its silent and weird action in the form of a free instinct of destruction within the ego and the id. Such a distribution is probable but we know nothing about it".

Mind you, Freud speaks here about a part of the aggressive instincts "returning from the outer world" which may be re-converted into free death instincts, and he does not mention the primary death instinct (remaining all the time in the id) at all. However, his words answer nevertheless our question: if it is impossible to ascertain the existence of the one, it is equally impossible to discover the presence of the other. In fact, the death instinct in the id - whether primary or secondary- is so intangible that it is never mentioned in any discussion of concrete psychological problems. For instance, whenever Freud uses the term death instincts in his "Civilization and its Discontents" he means it as an equivalent for the destructive instincts, its only perceptible manifestations. The words death instincts could be deleted and replaced by destructive instinct, without in the least changing the sense or Freud's intentions.

The paper by Reich is quite interesting but his conclusion is negative. He finds that the mechanisms based on the pleasure principle are sufficient to explain his clinical observations and sees no evidence for a death instinct. For this reason it is unnecessary to go here into details, especially as this talk is already very long.

There are very interesting and important questions upon which I have not touched. Namely: Is the compulsion of repetition really beyond the pleasure principle, or could it be subjoined to it by a slight extension of the pleasure principle? Are the aggressive instincts entirely different from the erotic? And a few more questions I do not enter into their discussion, partly, because they do not form a necessary element of my topic - the death instinct; partly, because I would have nothing to offer but vague speculations.

I conclude, therefore, with a brief summary: The theoretical arguments of Freud and his followers prove only the existence of a passive slipping towards death which it would be entirely unjustifiable to call an instinct. The existence of an active death instinct does not follow from any physiological considerations, nor is it supported by the clinical evidence which was available to me.

Paper read by Prof. Paul S. Epstein before the Psychoanalytic Study Group, Febr. 3rd, 1939.