

Some Quotes on Aggression, Ego instincts and the Instinct for Mastery

International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis | Mastery, Instinct for

The expression instinct for mastery refers to an instinct whose aim is the appropriation of the object. For Sigmund Freud, this is a nonsexual form of instinct that can be blended with the sexual instincts. The introduction of this concept within the evolution of Freudian theory is representative of an early stage of the concept of the dualism of the instincts.

The instinct for mastery first appears in Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d), where it is initially included in the evocation of a *Bemächtigungsapparat*, or apparatus for mastery, and later under its direct name of *Bemächtigungstreib*. There are seventeen occurrences in Freud's work from 1905 to 1933.

This instinct has a central place in the "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" in that Freud places it in the service of the satisfaction of hunger and sexual needs and posits that sadism derives from it. The elements of the apparatus for mastery must be deduced from Freud's text; these include the sense of touch, the muscular apparatus, and the sensory organs in general. "The activity is put into operation by the instinct for mastery through the agency of the somatic musculature" (p. 198), he writes. The muscles of the body thus appear as the agent of mastery; the hand, whose movements involve the sense of touch and the musculature working in tandem, is thus an essential organ of the apparatus for mastery.

Freud clearly indicates the role of the instinct for mastery as it serves the sexual needs: "A certain amount of touching is indispensable (at all events among human beings) before the normal sexual aim can be attained" (p. 156). Moreover, in connection with masturbation: "The preference for the hand which is shown by boys is already evidence of the important contribution which the instinct for mastery is destined to make to masculine sexual activity" (p. 188).

He links the instinct for mastery and its derivatives—cruelty, the pleasure of looking, and the pleasure of showing—to bodily functions "that appear in a sense independently of erotogenic zones" (p. 192) or even in the case of cruelty "independently of the sexual activities that are attached to erotogenic zones" (p. 193). He further links the instinct for mastery to the "instinct for knowledge," which "cannot be counted among the elementary instinctual components, nor can it be classed as belonging exclusively to sexuality. Its activity corresponds on the one hand to a sublimated manner of obtaining mastery, while on the other hand it makes use of the energy of scopophilia" (p. 194).

The link between the instinct for mastery and cruelty is explained in a way that prefigures the notion of instinctual blends: "The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness—a drive to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing. Thus sadism would correspond to an aggressive component which has become independent and exaggerated and, by displacement, has usurped the leading position" (pp. 157-158).

The instinct for mastery thus begins to change in its status in Freud's work; it starts to appear more as an intermediary concept between the sexual and the non-sexual than as a

conceptual pole that can be opposed to the sexual. In his subsequent search for a dualism that is more clearly grounded in biology, Freud relegates the instinct for mastery to the background, preferring to focus instead on the notion of self-preservation instincts as the polar opposite of the sexual instincts ("Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis" [1909d]). The instinct for mastery nevertheless retains a place in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915c), but finally, from about 1920, in the dualism that pits the life instincts against the death instincts, the instinct for mastery is viewed as merely a derivative of the latter.

Bibliography

- Freud, Sigmund. (1905d). Three essays on the theory of sexuality. SE, 7: 135-243.
—-. (1909d). Notes upon a case of obsessional neurosis. SE, 10: 155-318.
—-. (1915c). Instincts and their vicissitudes. SE, 14: 109-140.
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I shall propose the thesis that psychoanalysis has neglected the overwhelming evidence that the need to learn how to do things, manifested in the infant's practice of its sensory, motor, and intellectual means for mastering its environment, is at least as important as pleasure seeking mechanisms in determining its behavior and development during the first two years of life. These functions were referred to frequently by Freud in his early remarks on the ego instincts, but never thoroughly examined nor developed by him.

Hendrick, I. (1942). Instinct and the Ego During Infancy. *Psychoanal Q.*, 11:33-58.

I have introduced the theory of an 'instinct to master'. This hypothesis was suggested to provide a dynamic explanation of the force impelling the development and exercise of ego functions.

The cornerstone of the hypothesis is the conviction that ego functions should be interpreted in terms of a dynamic theory, and that the basic postulates of Freud's instinct theory are the best for this purpose, regardless of what specific instinct may be defined ... the ego must be regarded as fundamentally dynamic, if we are to progress in its study, and we must therefore form some concept of its dynamic properties.

The primary aim of our hypothesis is therefore to establish a concept explaining what forces make the ego function. Our starting point is Freud's general concept of the instincts as forces whose source is biological, producing tensions whose release is experienced as pleasure. Furthermore, instincts are classified by Freud according to their goals; the ego goals do not appear adequately defined by the libido theory ...

I ... find that there is a very specific aim of the executant ego functions, that of effective and integrated performance, and that this serves as an adequate guide in the definition of the goal of a specific instinct.

I have been surprised that only George Gardner has pointed out that the 'instinct to master' is essentially the same as Alfred Adler's 'will to power'. In fact, I readily acknowledge his prior contribution to this subject ...

But there is another important reason for the hypothesis of the instinct to master, and

that is to distinguish both the instinct and the functions it determines clearly from those 'instincts' originally formulated with another group of facts in mind. [It is not the same as aggression:] "aggression" has all the implications of its nontechnical usage; it refers to practically every human demonstration of force, unintegrated as well as integrated, and especially to destructive forces ... Personally, I incline to reserve 'aggression' for those forces motivated by the desire to destroy either the rival of a sexual object or the antagonist of a narcissistic need.

"Ego instinct" is a more appropriate name, but has been used by Freud himself in so many ways that I prefer to avoid the complication of scrambled definition this excellent term involves. I do, however, consider the instinct to master as one of the ego instincts, and should consider the needs for nourishment and for self-preservation as other members of this group.

Classical analysis was long accustomed to ascribe most of the phenomena I am discussing to sadism. This I wish particularly to avoid, not so much because it confuses the nature of ego functions and the sexual drives, as because it seems to me to vitiate the very valuable concept of sadism itself. "Sadism" should be confined to aggression toward a sexually cathected object; this itself is a sufficiently complicated clinical and theoretical problem, without extending the use of sadism to everything which in any way involves aggression or mastery.

[NB, as an example of the difficulty in separating mastery from sadism see this quototation from Eric Fromm's "The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness:"

By sadism we mean the drive to make another person or some creature a meek tool of one's own power, like "putty in one's hands." The particular form of sadism that forces the other person to endure physical tortures is only an extreme expression of this tendency ...

The sadist looks for a helpless object that he can tyrannize over boundlessly, that he can incorporate into his tyrannous purpose ... Although sadism often resembles hatred or destructiveness, ... they are fundamentally different. Destructiveness wants to destroy an object, sadism to keep it and rule it ...]

Hendrick, I. (1943). The Discussion of the 'Instinct to Master'—A Letter to the Editors. *Psychoanal. Q.*, 12:561-565

White (1963, p. 93) maintains that the child

has an intrinsic interest in how to deal with things, a push towards mastery and independence that does not borrow its energy from instinctual pressures [is not a product of neutralization] or from rewards administered by the mother.

This is a fundamentally adaptive urge to use and master the environment; White calls it *effectance*.

As White analyses them, effectance motivations (drives towards manipulation, exploration, independence, mastery) ... appear to ... [have] nothing to do with hunger or deprivation. They push towards further stimulation ... and away from drive reduction. Consequently, gratification of these motivations is not typically accompanied by the experience of satiation.

White, R. W. 1963 *Ego and Reality in Psychoanalytic Theory* (New York: Int. Univ. Press.)

In his review of White's monograph, Victor Rosen said:

In proposing the existence of 'independent ego energies', the author attempts to revise the concept of 'desexualized libido' proposed by Freud and the theories of detached 'neutralized' energies, 'instincts of mastery', etc. posited in a variety of contexts by Hartmann, alone and together with Kris and Loewenstein, Anna Freud, Hendricks, Fenichel, Erikson and others. He suggests that only with the added postulate of an 'independent ego energy' which has no genetic or economic connexion with the libidinal or aggressive drives of the id, can a general theory of personality and psychological functioning be derived from Freud's metapsychology. Citing a variety of clinical, normal, developmental and animal experimental phenomena, the author proposes that when all known drives are at rest, adults, infants, chimpanzees and rats alike examine new objects, explore, search, manipulate and learn with no other force motivating them than the consummation of the activities themselves. Neither hunger, thirst, sexual deprivation, nor the avoidance of pain are prerequisites for the continuation of these activities.

White suggests that the energy propelling such behaviour be termed 'effectance', while the result of this force in producing changes in the surroundings be called 'efficacy'. Feed-back stimuli resulting from this 'efficacy' are said to reinforce the 'effectant' efforts. He equates 'effectance' with the 'inherent energy of the nervous system'. 'Competence' in coping with the environment is the biological reward for these activities which, according to White, have a wider range of function than those which are derived from the id drives. White points out that Freud did not overlook such considerations but that the scope of his task did not allow him leisure for the refinement of details. He considers his own proposal to be a revision rather than an innovation. The author is painstaking in marshalling his evidence and in arguing his case.

In my opinion, White's formulation of 'independent ego energies' neglects some of Freud's most important contributions. This is most apparent in his discussion of early deviations in ego development and the regulation of self-esteem. In his discussions of 'narcissism' Freud describes the fate of those instinctual drives that do not become directed towards objects. If his understanding of the complex nature of the ego-ideal, the self representation, and the regulation of self-esteem were accurate, White would not need to postulate the superfluous and sometimes contradictory notions of 'effectance' and 'efficacy'. What White is actually describing is the fate of the residual narcissistically invested libido.

Rosen, V. Review of *Ego and Reality in Psychoanalytic Theory* by Robert W. White.

What do we mean by the word 'aggression', which we use so freely and frequently in psychoanalysis? ... What Freud meant is not always unambiguous. In his earlier formulation of general conflict,—i.e., the ego instincts as opposed to the sexual instincts—the instinct of self-preservation included various separable grades or categories of impulse, including modalities of aggression. The participation of aggression in the manifestations of the sexual instinct, subject to excessive development at times, was recognized very early by Freud. The shift of the function of self-preservation to the broad canopy of Eros was a major change, although this function was still allocated to the ego. Later, aggression was separated from its original, largely instrumental place in the ego instincts and moved to a place of psychic origin in the id as a separate primal instinct ...

In his paper of 1924 on masochism, for example, Freud speaks of 'the destructive instinct, the instinct for mastery, or the will to power.' In 1937, in connection with the death instinct, he speaks of the instinct of aggression or of destruction, according to its aims. These are not inevitably congruent ideas; they are not necessarily serial ideas, although this may be the case; as alternatives, they may diverge widely ...

Certainly the ego aspect holds true if one speaks, as Freud did, of the instinct for mastery, *Bemächtigungstrieb*, as a manifestation of primary aggression—that is, if one does not quibble about the *trieb* part of the word. The impulse to mastery is an integral part of even the most complex ego activity ...

Stone, L. (1971). Reflections on the Psychoanalytic Concept of Aggression. *Psychoanal Q.*, 40:195-244.

Bach (1971) reports three cases of imaginary companions, in each of which the companion appears to protect the narcissism of the child involved. The imaginary companion seems in each case to compensate for the loss of omnipotent control over reality. In each case the imaginary companion represented some "vital aspect of mastery or competence, a core element of the active spontaneous self" (p. 169).

Bach, S. 1971 Notes on some imaginary companions *The Psychoanal. Study Child* 26:159-171 New York: Quadrangle.

Rangell argues for the superiority of the pre-1920s drive theory:

[This] brings us back full circle via primary ego motivational forces to Freud's original theory of ego instincts. Called ego interests and then ego drives by Hartmann (1950) or the instinct for mastery by Hendrick (1942), instincts would again exist toward the self and others, narcissistically and outer-directed as at the beginning. This is . . . to revert to some of his earlier hunches . . . as consonant with increasing data and continuing observations over the years ... Stone (1971) feels that ego instincts have as much claim to basic theory as the theory of aggression to which Freud changed. Coming from another direction, a depth study of the affect of shame, Wurmser (1981) expresses the same feeling and preference for the retention of Freud's original concept of ego instincts.

Rangell, L. (1982). The Self in Psychoanalytic Theory. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 30:863-891.

As Freud conceptualized it (Freud, 1914), the infant is entirely self-involved. The focus of its experience is the interior of the body (the rise and fall of tension). The sense organs are not cathected; consciousness is not attached to them. Motor activity is not action oriented to the alteration of reality, but is limited to affective discharge. A sense of omnipotence, expressed in the experience of hallucinatory wish fulfillment, and thought organized in primary process terms are characteristic of this period. The transition out of narcissism begins at about age 2. It involves a shift in interest from the body interior to the external world, a cathexis of the sense organs and the beginning of action aimed at the alteration of reality. This shift in interest (toward the external world) and in the functions of motor activity (to purposive action) carry with them a comprehensive psychological reorganization whose parameters are reflected in notions of the transition from pleasure to reality ego, primary to secondary process thought, and narcissism to object relatedness.

Two central aspects of this formulation are incompatible with contemporary notions about infants. First, while in Freud's view infants' focus of experience is the interior of their bodies, without cathexis of the external world, recent highly productive approaches to infant observation have been based on the premise that infants are sensitive to and in interaction with their human and nonhuman environments from the beginning. Second, while the conception of infantile narcissism posits that the infant's motor activity is aimed at affective discharge, not adaptive action, a central focus of infant observation has been on the character of infants' increasingly sophisticated interactions with their environments from the time of birth.

In the face of these difficulties, proposals are being made that the psychoanalytic notion of narcissism be discarded as not useful for the understanding of infancy or that it be significantly modified in order to achieve congruence with what is now known about infants. Lichtenberg (1979) shows that currently available data derived from infant observation require modification of generally accepted psychoanalytic formulations of drive theory, ego psychology, object relations theory, and affect theory. Among the increasingly well established and accepted notions current in infancy research he cites and documents are ones specifically relevant to psychoanalytic formulations of infantile narcissism and incompatible with them, for example that infants are, from the time of birth, interested in their environments, and that from the beginning their activity occurs in mutual adjustment with the environment and grows in skill and complexity. Stechler and Kaplan (1980) on the basis of their and their colleagues' extended study of infants, undertaken within a psychoanalytic framework, conclude that psychoanalytic metapsychology, specifically including the concept of narcissism, is not applicable to the data flowing from direct infant observation. And Peterfreund (1978) cogently evaluates a number of psychoanalytic terms, among them the concept of narcissism, and shows them to be without clear and acceptable application to infancy in their present form.

Fast, I. (1985). Infantile Narcissism and the Active Infant. *Psychoanal. Psychol.*, 2:153-170.

the relationship of mastery always ... involves an attack on the other as a wishing subject who is characterized as such by his singularity and his own specificity. What is aimed at is thus in all cases the wish of the other, precisely to the extent that it is fundamentally alien, by its nature eluding any possibility of seizure. Mastery therefore reflects a basic tendency to neutralize the wish of the other, i.e. to diminish any otherness or difference and to abolish any specificity; the aim is to reduce the other to the function and status of a totally assimilable object.

Dorey, R. (1986). The Relationship of Mastery. *Int. R. Psycho-Anal.*, 13:323-332.

The second set of proposals for modification are seen in the thinking of Hendrick (1942), and White (1964). These proposals posit a separate system to explain mastery, competence, etc. on a basis that is independent of aggression. Freud did entertain this notion, once early in the development of the theory when he spoke of ego instincts (1910, pp. 214-216). That idea was soon dropped from the theory. The second time (Freud, 1920, pp. 16-17), it was introduced as more of a passing idea. This idea, that the most universal of human psychological mechanisms is the tendency to turn passively experienced anxiety into active mastery, was never withdrawn. It was rather passed over with the rather casual remark that since it was so universal and so normal it

would not be addressed any further. As a ubiquitous, normal mechanism it did not offer Freud the explanation he was looking for to understand the problems of the repetition compulsion as associated with the traumatic neuroses. In the current model both of these ideas, that is, of aggression as a reactive process secondary to narcissistic injury, and of assertion as a derivative of an independent biopsychological system that is proactive, and engages the world as a primary function, are brought together.

Stechler, G. (1987). Clinical Applications of a Psychoanalytic Systems Model of Assertion and Aggression. *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 7:348-363.

The essential feature of the defense against depression is omnipotence and the omnipotent denial of psychological reality, which of course leads to a distorted and defective sense of external reality. The denial relates especially to the ego's object-relations and its dependence on its objects, as a result of which contempt and depreciation of the value of its objects is a marked feature, together with attempts at inordinate and tyrannical control and mastery of its objects. It is not difficult to see how characteristic [this] most conspicuous feature of [omnipotence] is of our refractory patients with their narcissistic resistances. Their inaccessibility is one form of their [omnipotence]; implicitly they deny the value of everything we say. They literally do not allow us to do anything with them, and in the sense of co-operation they do nothing with us. They control the analysis, whether or not they do it openly.

Novick J, Novick KK (1991): Some comments on masochism and the delusion of omnipotence from a developmental perspective. *J Am Psychoanal Assoc.* 39: 307-31.

Note: This passage is practically cribbed from Riviere, who said:

Now this particular anxiety-situation, the depressive, has its own special defence-mechanism ... The essential feature of the manic attitude is omnipotence and the omnipotent denial of psychological reality, which of course leads to a distorted and defective sense of external reality. ... The denial relates especially to the ego's object-relations and its dependence on its objects, as a result of which contempt and depreciation of the value of its objects is a marked feature, together with attempts at inordinate and tyrannical control and mastery of its objects.

Riviere, J (1936): A contribution to the analysis of the negative therapeutic reaction. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 17: 304-20.

The development of a sense of efficacy (White, 1963) cannot be managed without a feeling of entitlement. Efficacy is not achieved unless one experiences a right to act upon the world to pursue satisfaction and to avoid pain. These early initiatives must be met with reasonable success.

The work of Spitz (1945) and Bowlby (1958), (1960), (1961), (1963) clearly demonstrated that when these initiatives were chronically unattended by success, depressive symptomatology ensued. On the other hand, when initiative is successful, the experience can be very pleasurable and even exhilarating. There is joy in being a cause: a sense of personal agency is confirmed.

An instinct for mastery was postulated long ago by Freud (1905), and later by Hendrick (1942), who emphasised the pleasure premium associated with mastery. Wolf (1988) refers to this as 'efficacy pleasure'. Both Lichtenberg (1983), (1989), (1990) and Basch (1988) regard the striving for efficacy as a basic motivational aim. In his remarkable little

text, *The Basic Fault*, Balint speaks of the 'work of conquest', which is the 'ability to change an indifferent or hostile object into a cooperative partner' (1968, p. 74). Tolpin speaks about 'getting the object to act right' (1986, p. 120) ... failures in efficacy and entitlement predispose to depressive and masochistic tendencies, and compromise the development of initiative. The search for pleasure, the repudiation of pain, and the evolution of an authentic self are obstructed.

Markson, E.R. (1993). Depression and Moral Masochism. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 74:931-940.

Early in his theorizing Freud did not have a theory of the aggressive drive and did not feel the need for one: "I cannot bring myself to assume the existence of a special aggressive instinct [Trieb] alongside of the familiar instincts [Trieben] of self-preservation and sex, and on an equal footing with them" (1909, p. 140). Obviously, Freud was perfectly well aware of the many forms of aggressive behavior and hostility in the analytic situation, including resistance and ambivalence. He had noticed the hostile intent of many jokes and parapraxes in everyday life. He was well aware of the hostile component of the Oedipus complex in addition to loving feelings and dependent needs.

His attempts to explain aggressive manifestations can be divided into three phases. As with Freud's other theoretical revisions, in each new phase he adds something new without discarding earlier affirmations. In the first phase (1905), he saw aggression as a component of normal male sexuality striving to achieve its aim of union with a sexual object: "The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness – a desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing" (pp. 157-158). Sadism was "an aggressive component of the sexual instinct which has become independent and exaggerated" (p. 158). Thus, Freud's first conceptualization of aggression was as a force bolstering the sexual instinct when something gets in the way to prevent the desired contact and union with the object. This function of aggression would be equivalent to overcoming a sexual obstacle.

Freud's second phase presents his new thinking about the instincts in *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes* (1915): "I have proposed that two groups of such primal instincts should be distinguished: the ego, or self-preservative, instincts and the sexual instincts" (p. 124). The feelings evoked by the transference neurosis convinced Freud that "at the root of all such affections there is to be found a conflict between the claims of sexuality and those of the ego" (p. 124). Survival and the avoidance of unpleasure are the sole aims of the ego: "The ego hates, abhors and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are a source of unpleasurable feeling for it, without taking into account whether they mean a frustration of sexual satisfaction or the satisfaction of the self-preservative needs. Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of the relation of hate are derived not from sexual life, but from the ego's struggle to preserve and maintain itself" (p. 138). Furthermore, "Hate, as a relation to objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego's primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli" (p. 139).

Narcissistic personalities, Freud observed years later (1931), devote most of their efforts to self-preservation and their ego has a large amount of aggression at its disposal (p. 218). A year earlier, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud had commented on the relation between the parental authority's interference with the child's satisfaction of

instinctual needs and the increment of the child's aggression. He suggests that the enforcement of the demand for the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction prompts the child's hostility and aggression which would then be transformed into guilt. The enforcing authority "now turns into the superego" (p. 129). In our view, Freud's description of the parent figures presents them, simultaneously, as the object of erotic wishes and as the obstacle to their satisfaction if self-preservation is to prevail. Aggressiveness, whether directed to the object or to the self, is a reactive response to threats to self-preservation and to unpleasure.

The third phase starts in 1920 with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where Freud reclassifies the instincts: "now ... we describe the opposition as being, not between ego instincts and sexual instincts but between life instincts and death instincts" (p. 53). The death instincts oppose the erotic instincts and tend to "lead what is living back into an inorganic state" (1933a, p. 107). Later elaboration of these concepts (1933b) presented Eros as the instinct tending to preserve and unite, while "those instincts which seek to destroy and kill we group together as the aggressive or destructive instinct" (p. 209).

Freud's new division of instincts keeps the sexual and self-preservative instincts as separate but aggression belongs to neither: "The instinct of self-preservation is certainly of an erotic kind but it must nevertheless have aggressiveness at its disposal if it is to fulfill its purpose" (p. 209). Love too needs the instinct of mastery "if it is in any way to obtain possession of that object" (p. 209). Freud's theorizing that started with clinical observations had moved now to nondemonstrable metapsychological postulates about life and death.

In summary, in Freud's thinking, aggression evolved from being part of the sexual instinct to a nonsexual life instinct (ego instinct) to part of the death instinct. In phase one, the purpose of aggression was to help the sexual instinct overcome the obstacles to unsuccessful wooing. It may also have served to punish the frustrator, but this was unclear. The aggression, though, facilitated contact with the sexual object. In the second phase, aggression aimed at preserving the self; it was a reaction to danger or to instinctual frustration. This, again, suggests a need to overcome obstacles posed by the external world or the internalized authority figures. In the third phase, Freud's thinking became more difficult to connect with clinical material. Aggression, in the form of destructiveness, now was a manifestation of a postulated death instinct, neither related to making contact with objects nor a reaction to their interference with the satisfaction of instinctual wishes. Aggression thus became primary, and was not just a reaction to unsuccessful contact with the object, or to unpleasure or to self-preservation. Nonetheless, aggression can also be used to fulfill the aims of the sexual and self-preservative instincts. Therefore, in Freud's last formulation, aggression is both a primary instinct, and an instinct in the service of overcoming obstacles.

Freud completed his life work leaving psychoanalysts with a confusing drive theory of aggression that has been followed in the last 50 years "by repetitions and reassertions of original opinions" by authors with "clouded vision" as Anna Freud (1972) indicated in commenting about the state of the theory to the 1972 International Congress on aggression (p. 173).

A sense of efficacy involves more than just a mastery of the physical environment; it requires competence in the interpersonal world, and interpersonal competence in turn requires sensitive responsiveness from primary caregivers. In other words, feelings of efficacy rest on good-enough parenting, on shared experiences with significant others ... experiences of efficacy produce feelings of interest—excitement or enjoyment—joy—the affective core of healthy narcissism ... experiences of efficacy or of interpersonal communion produce feelings of interest—excitement or enjoyment—joy—the affective core of healthy narcissism—and disruptions of efficacy or of interpersonal communion, by contrast, result in shame.

Auerbach, J.S. (1995). Shame and the Self: Francis J. Broucek. New York: Guilford Press, 1991 *Psychoanal. Psychol.*, 12:159-163.

When Freud moved away from the ego instincts-sexual instincts dualism, he no longer featured the ego instincts in his instinct theories, but he did not leave them completely behind. He was, in fact, able to give some attention to ego instincts other than hunger. For example, he noted (Freud, 1930) that one of the component sexual instincts stood out from the rest because its aim was very far from being loving. Sadism was, "moreover, attached to the ego instincts: it could not hide its close affinity with instincts of mastery which have no libidinal purpose" (p. 117). While Freud did not pursue his inquiry into "instincts of mastery" or question how mastery and aggression might be linked, some of his followers did—and those who did all came to the conclusion that the concept of the ego instincts needed to be revived in order to account for all that mastery entailed. Freud himself, on the other hand, turned to the topic of anxiety, and eventually came back to mastery as mastery of trauma.

Near the beginning of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, as he was discussing how war neurotics' traumas reappear repeatedly in their dreams and how children use play to replay everything that has made a great impression on them in real life, Freud linked such repetitions to the instinct of mastery—as noted earlier, an ego instinct ...

Freud's American contemporary G. Stanley Hall emphasized ego instinctual mastery, but the first to study it specifically was Ives Hendrick (1943). Robert White (1963) surveyed the history of psychoanalytic concern with the ego instincts and proposed to call mastery "effectance." Recently Eric Plaut (1979, 1984), has emphasized ego instinctual play and argued for thinking of three types of instincts (sexual, aggressive, and ego).

Young-Bruehl, E., Bethelard, F. (1999). The hidden history of the ego instincts. *Psychoanal. Rev.*, 86:823-851.

Lichtenberg (1989) has presented a theoretical model [of a] motivational system organized around the need for exploration and assertiveness ...

[He] begins his discussion of the exploratory-assertive system by citing Broucek's (1979) study that found infants actively respond to a problem-solving experimental situation and were able to quickly recognize potentials in the situation for their assertive response and that "acting on this recognition, they explored the possibilities for establishing an efficient contingent relationship between their activity and an occurrence in the environment" (p. 125). Infants were observed to sustain an activity that seemed to amplify their pleasure, which derived from the experience of efficacy or competence ...

These experiments with infants suggest that the experience of active assertiveness is in itself pleasurable, to the extent that it is central to one of the systems of motivation.

Lichtenberg's exploratory–assertive system draws on the earlier psychoanalytic concept of Hendrick (1942), who proposed an instinct for mastery, and White's (1959) concept of “competence,” the capacity to interact effectively with the environment, which White suggested could not be motivated wholly “from sources of energy currently conceptualized as drives or instincts” (p. 297).

Fisch, J.M. (2000). Chapter 4 The Active Exploratory and Assertive Self as Manifested in Dreams. *Progress in Self Psychology* 16:55-66

[Hendrick] had to establish the new concept that functioning in order to master is itself pleasurable. The pleasure in doing provides an affective goal that is separate from the pleasure gained from “pleasure-seeking mechanisms” (p. 388) of traditional libidinal theory, in which pleasure was associated primarily or exclusively with sexual drive. Hendrick also had to separate the concept of mastery as an end in itself for the child learning to deal with his or her entire environment, people included, from the traditional association with sadism ... [He denies] the false limitation of pleasure to sexual drive when he states that the aim of the instinct to master is “the pleasure in executing a function successfully, regardless of its sensual value” (p. 395).

[He redefines] compulsion by ... turning it into the ordinary, repetitive practicing of a yet-to-be-mastered skill or unfulfilled desire ... This led [him] to make two remarkable proposals: that the compulsive “process of learning is ... the foundation of ego development” (p. 399), and that “function initiates the wish” (p. 402, italics in original). The latter statement turns drive theory on its head. [He] then moves on to pragmatism: “In many cases what we may desire or choose is determined by what we are able to get”; “the general principle [is] that what a baby is able to do, it wants to do” (p. 403).

Lichtenberg, J.D. (2007). Brilliance before its Time: A Commentary on “Instinct and the Ego During Infancy.” *Psychoanal Q.*, 76:433-438.

This short paper looks at Freud's use of the term '*Bemächtigungstrieb*' and its translation by Strachey as 'instinct for mastery' when Freud was describing the motives behind his grandson's game with the wooden reel and string in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. The word 'Macht' [power], which is contained in the word '*Bemächtigung*' points to Freud's difficult relationship with Alfred Adler, whose early theories on the aggressive drive and later theories on 'striving for power' were initially rejected by Freud. Looking at the changes in Freud's reception of Adlerian terms, some of which he later integrated into his own theory, throws light on his choice of the word '*Bemächtigungstrieb*' in 1920, when he was just beginning to introduce his thoughts on the death instinct.

White, K. (2010). Notes on '*Bemächtigungstrieb*' and Strachey's translation as 'instinct for mastery'. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 91:811-20.