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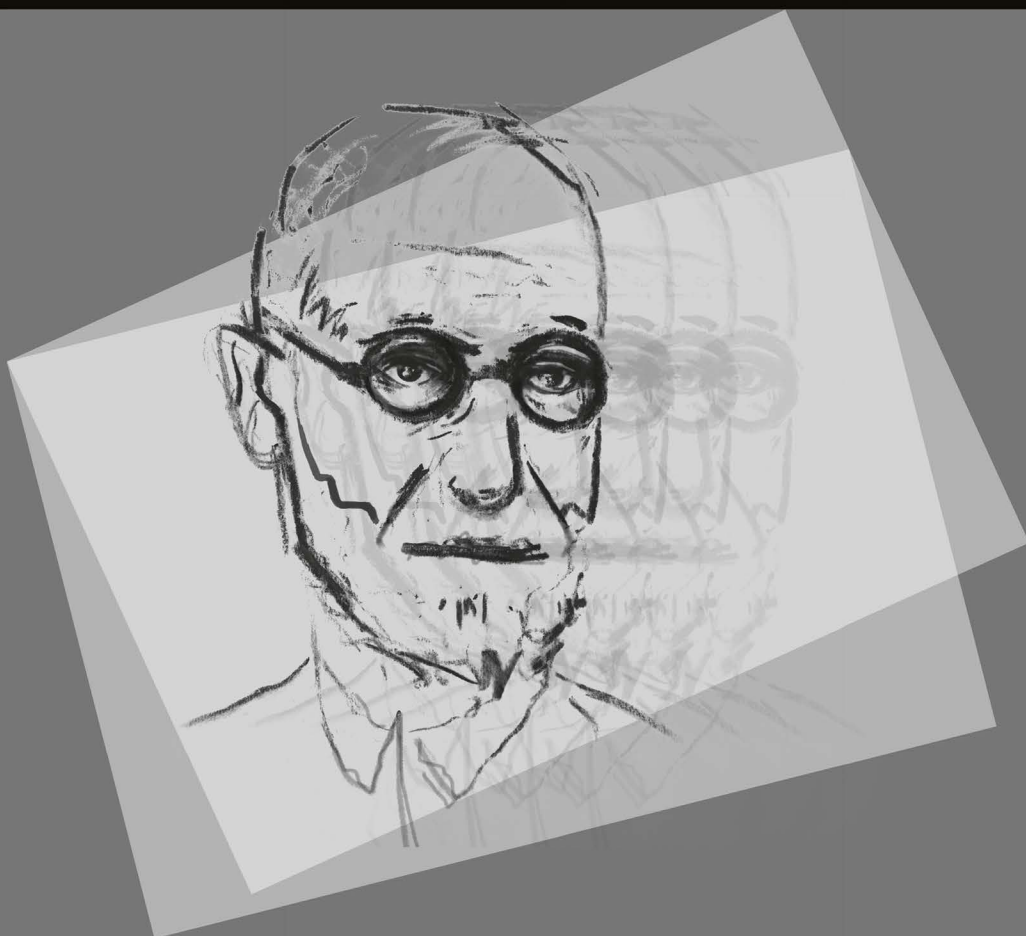
ROUTLEDGE

THE EGO AND THE ID

100 YEARS LATER

EDITED BY FRED BUSCH AND NATACHA DELGADO

SERIES EDITOR: SILVIA FLECHNER



"This book revisits and explores, with historical respect but also with lively intellectual freedom, a fundamental text of Freudian metapsychology, about which the editors Fred Busch and Natacha Delgado incidentally and sharply state that '*most parts have remained at the center of psychoanalytic thinking for 100 years, some were modified, and some were ignored*'. This book highlights The Ego and The Id's genial insights, undeniable grey areas, formidable conceptual strength and also premises present *in nuce* that have produced further theoretical-clinical developments in the decades since. The subject of the book is one, but the Authors' voices come to us from very different countries, cultures, and languages, demonstrating how contemporary psychoanalytic polyphony brings new light and new thoughts on this classic, in turn confirming their inspirational power".

– **Stefano Bolognini, M.D., Training and Supervising Analyst, Italian Psychoanalytic Society, IPA Past President**

"In this rich new volume, an international group of psychoanalytic scholars discuss Freud's remarkably innovative essay from 1923 with profound implications for the analytic method. In their comprehensive introduction, Fred Busch and Natacha Delgado contextualize Freud's re-thinking of the entire metapsychological underpinnings of psychoanalysis leading to a new model of the mind. The outstanding and theoretically diverse chapters provide many bold and startling discussions, which when taken together, suggest that contemporary psychoanalysis would be inconceivable without Freud's epochal work".

– **Michael J. Diamond, Ph.D., Training and Supervising Analyst, Los Angeles Institute and Society for Psychoanalytic Studies; Author, *Ruptures in the American Psyche: Containing Destructive Populism in Perilous Times and Masculinity and Its Discontents: The Male Psyche and the Inherent Tensions of Maturing Manhood***

"The editors have gathered an impressive group of analysts from around the world to consider Freud's seminal essay, The Ego and Id, where he reconsiders his entire metapsychology. This new reading brings surprising insights, serious questioning, and admiration for what Freud accomplished. Analysts from every theoretical perspective will benefit from this fresh understanding of a classic".

– **Virginia Ungar, M.D., Past IPA President (2017–2021), Training and Supervising Analyst, Asociación Psicoanalítica de Buenos Aires**



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The Ego and the Id

The Ego and the Id: 100 Years Later revisits Freud's classic 1923 essay, which developed key psychoanalytic concepts and presented a radical revision of his earlier theory.

International contributors explore the themes of this remarkable work from their own perspective, with novel and surprising results. There are mysteries uncovered, questions raised about the validity of Freud's perspective, problems in psychoanalytic technique based on those clinging to Freud's earlier model of the curative process in psychoanalysis, cybernetics as a way of evaluating Freud's model, and many other gems. With contributors highlighting the significance of the essay and offering critiques based upon new understanding gathered over the last century, *The Ego and the Id: 100 Years Later* offers a fresh, international perspective on this classic paper.

This book will be essential reading for psychoanalysts in practice and in training and of great interest to scholars of psychoanalytic studies.

Fred Busch, Ph.D., is Training and Supervising Analyst at the Boston Psychoanalytic Institute. He has published over eighty articles on psychoanalytic technique and has been invited to give papers and clinical workshops nationally and internationally. His last four books are *Creating a Psychoanalytic Mind* (2014); *The Analyst's Reveries: Explorations in Bion's Enigmatic Concept* (2019); *Dear Candidate: Analysts from Around the World Offer Personal Reflections on Psychoanalytic Training, Education, and the Profession* (2020); and *A Fresh Look at Psychoanalytic Technique* (2021). Forthcoming in 2023 is *Psychoanalysis at the Crossroads: An International Perspective*.

Natacha Delgado is a member of the Argentine Psychoanalytic Association and the International Psychoanalytic Association Publications Committee. She is a clinical psychoanalyst in private practice.

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The Ego and the Id

100 Years Later

**Edited by Fred Busch
and Natacha Delgado**



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Contents

<i>List of contributors</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Series editor's foreword</i>	<i>xiii</i>
SILVIA FLECHNER	
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>xv</i>
FRED BUSCH AND NATACHA DELGADO	
1 Freud's error	1
MARK SOLMS	
2 The meeting of minds	14
CORDELIA SCHMIDT-HELLERAU	
3 <i>The Ego and the Id</i> and . . . the superego	25
GOHAR HOMAYOUNPOUR	
4 The capacious Freud	32
SUDHIR KAKAR AND AMRITA NARAYANAN	
5 Some thoughts of Freud's epochal work: 100 Years Later	44
HERIBERT BLASS	
6 The advent of the superego: an après-coup of <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i>	58
BERNARD CHERVET	
7 <i>The Ego and the Id</i>, and technique	73
CECILIO PANIAGUA	
8 The fate of the ego in <i>The Ego and the Id</i>	83
FRED BUSCH	

9	Modern ego psychology: the new ego	93
	ERIC R. MARCUS	
10	A generative paradox: the subject who is the unconscious master in his own house	105
	H. SHMUEL ERLICH	
11	Melancholia as a clinical and metapsychological agent: a look over the ego/superego	118
	IGNÁCIO A. PAIM FILHO	
12	Consequences of the new structure of the mind	130
	CLAUDIA LUCÍA BORENSZTEJN	
13	The legacy of complexity	141
	RAÚL TEBALDI	
	<i>Index</i>	154

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Series editor's foreword

The Publications Committee of the International Psychoanalytic Association is pleased to present a new book included in the International Psychoanalytic Series on Contemporary Freud, Turning Points, and Critical Issues: *The Ego and the Id: 100 Years Later*.

Fred Busch, Ph.D. (Boston, USA), and Natacha Delgado, Psychoanalyst and Translator (Buenos Aires, Argentina) – editors of this volume – belong to our Publications Committee and had selected very prominent psychoanalysts from our different regions to contribute with their ideas on the 100th anniversary of this breaking paper by Freud where he revised his basic theory. Our goal is to share with the psychoanalytic community new reflections and ideas that have arisen since Freud wrote his essay.

The Ego and the Id is a prominent essay by Sigmund Freud; it is an analytical study of the human psyche. His original title was *Das Ich und das Es* and was first published in April 1923. In his introduction, James Strachey states:

The Ego and the Id are the last of Freud's major theoretical works. It offers a description of the mind and its workings that is at first sight new and even revolutionary, and indeed all psychoanalytic writings that date from after its publication. But, despite all its fresh insights and fresh syntheses, we can trace, as so often with Freud's apparent innovations, the seeds of his new ideas in earlier, and sometimes in far earlier, writings.

Bear the unmistakable imprint of its effects – *at least regarding their terminology*. The key term phrase in Strachey's prediction is in *italics*. As Fred Busch has written, it is fascinating that this new model was never fully accepted by most psychoanalytic theories, with the French being an exception. This had important consequences for how different theories envisioned the best way to reach the unconscious.

We find the origin of the term "das Es" (Id or It) first used by Nietzsche and was taken up by Groddeck in a book he published named *Das Buch vom Es* just weeks before Freud's own book appeared in print.

Every creative mind has always taken a lot of seeds from others; perhaps the creative act is to take those seeds and make them ours in a new exercise of creation. One hundred years later, we see the validity of this text; let's ask ourselves why. Freud presents in this book a synthesis of the wholesale reorganization of a psychoanalytic theory, which was typical of his thinking from the 1920s on. Did we find another reorganization since then?

We can't set aside other concepts in psychoanalysis, such as, for example, narcissism and many others, but at the same time, we need to recognize the magnitude of this text. In *The Ego and the Id*, Freud concentrates on a strictly psychoanalytic point of view, reminding us that psychoanalysis is based on a fundamental premise: the distinction between what is conscious and what is unconscious.

Freud wrote this essay when he was 67 years old. In February 1923, he discovered a growth in his jaw, which he had removed just after *The Ego and the Id* was published. He had the feeling that his physicians might tell him to stop smoking, but instead of consulting a renowned specialist, he was treated by a physician not particularly competent as a surgeon. He underwent thirty-three operations for recurrent leukoplakia and received radiotherapy, this was very painful, and he was unable to work for six months.

But what struck me about this situation was that for several months, his physician and other friends said nothing to Freud about the cancerous nature of the tumor because they were afraid he might commit suicide. Maybe they never understood Freud's essential concepts about "knowing" what is not talked about or "thinking" what is not known. A clever mind like Freud's, who was also a physician and a great searcher, knows about his body signals. The way to pay attention to them is an individual matter. For Freud, his theory, writings, thoughts, and reflections were his priority.

I am writing this recommendation keeping in mind the terrible and painful time we are going through. It was not enough with the lockdown and isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic also, the Russia and Ukraine war added a complex global instability. Freud also dealt with both situations, to have their boys as soldiers in the First World War and to survive the death of his beloved daughter, Sophie, from Spanish fever. We can't think about suicide ideation in Freud's mind. We need to think like Freud's mind. *We need to believe that a creative mind survives beyond life's avatars' limits.*

We will be able to continue delving into the work of the authors of this book on the influence that this text by Freud has left.

[1] Page numbers are those of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 19.

Dra. Silvia Flechner
Chair, Publications Committee IPA
Asociación Psicoanalítica del Uruguay

Introduction

In this monumental work, Freud rethinks the entire *metapsychological underpinnings of psychoanalysis*, based on clinical observation. He says in his preface:

In these pages things are touched on which have not yet been the subject of psycho-analytic consideration, and it has not been possible to avoid trenching upon some theories which have been put forward by non-analysts or by former analysts on their retreat from analysis. . . . If psycho-analysis has not hitherto shown its appreciation of certain things, this has never been because it overlooked their achievement or sought to deny their importance, but because it followed a particular path, which had not yet led so far. And finally, when it has reached them, things have a different look to it from what they have to others.
(Freud, 1923, p. 21)

Here, we find the result of Freud's brilliance as a clinician-scientist, leading to a new model of the mind that potentially had profound implications for psychoanalytic understanding and the psychoanalytic method.

The major themes are the following:

- 1 **Consciousness and What Is Unconscious** – Freud begins this work with a revolutionary reexamination of consciousness and what is unconscious, along with the introduction of a new conceptualization of the ego as a *structure*.

The decisive elements he points to are the difference between the *descriptive* and *dynamic* unconscious, and the ego as the source of repression. From a technical perspective he introduces the idea that the *analyst's main task consists in removing the resistances*. However, he came upon the puzzling fact that patients are unaware of these resistances, leading to the ground-breaking conclusion that a part of the ego itself are unconscious. He concludes that, "We recognize that the *Ucs.* does not coincide with the repressed; it is still true that

all that is repressed is *Ucs.*, but not all that is *Ucs.* is repressed. A part of the ego, too – and Heaven knows how important a part – may be *Ucs.*, undoubtedly is *Ucs.*”.

(p. 18)

The Ego and the Id – In this part of the essay, Freud emphasizes the importance of the preconscious, that parts of the ego are unconscious, the discovery of unconscious defenses, and the ego’s role in serving the id.

He opens this section with a series of questions: “We can come to know even the *Ucs.* only by making it conscious. But stop, how is that possible? What does it mean when we say ‘making something conscious’? How can that come about?” (p. 20). He then refines this by stating, “‘How does a thing become conscious?’ would thus be more advantageously stated: ‘How does a thing become *preconscious*?’ And the answer would be: ‘Through becoming connected with the word-presentations corresponding to it’” (P. 20, italics added). This is an idea Freud (1915) already presented in his paper on “The Unconscious”. He goes on to say that we bring the repressed to preconscious attention by supplying “preconscious intermediate links through the work of analysis” (p. 21). Although the idea that resistances are unconscious was first suggested by Freud in 1893, its importance in the analytic process was highlighted again in this 1923 essay. Freud mentions in passing that the ego is the actual seat of anxiety (p. 123) and elaborated this crucial point three years later in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. This set the stage for a new guideline for psychoanalytic technique, where unconscious ego resistances need to be uncovered and worked through, leading to clarifications of preconscious links to the repressed.

Here, Freud also presents one his most famous analogies:

The functional importance of the ego is manifested in the fact that normally control over the approaches to motility devolves upon it. Thus, in its relation to the id it is like a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse; with this difference, that the rider tries to do so with his own strength while the ego uses borrowed forces. The analogy may be carried a little further. Often a rider, if he is not to be parted from his horse, is obliged to guide it where it wants to go;¹ so in the same way the ego is in the habit of transforming the id’s will into action as if it were its own.

(P. 25)²

It is only in 1933 that Freud explores the role of the ego in more depth, with a decidedly clinical focus, and introduces the term “ego psychology”. He is *prescient* in suggesting that this “ego psychology” will be difficult to understand in that there is something “in the material itself and of our being unaccustomed to deal with it. In any case, I will not be surprised if

you show yourself even more reserved and cautious in your judgment than hitherto" (ibid., p. 58).³

The Ego and the Superego (Ego Ideal) – Although Freud noted *an unconscious sense of guilt* in patients as early as 1897 (p. 273), here, he introduces the concept of a *superego*. The idea stems from his clinical observation that there are patients where self-criticism and conscience dominate their mental functioning. He "reluctantly" describes an unconscious sense of guilt that he views as more prevalent than he at first realized and how he gradually came to see that in a great number of neuroses, an unconscious sense of guilt of this kind plays a decisive economic part and puts the most powerful obstacles in the way of recovery (pgs. 26–27). He notes that the "character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices" (p. 29). He also states that an erotic object choice can be transformed into an alteration of the ego helping to gain control of the id.

Freud then turns to the significance of the first identifications in early childhood and the ego ideal as the result of an identification with the father.⁴ He describes what he calls the more *complete* Oedipus complex, which is both positive and negative, due to the inherent bisexuality in children. He concludes: "The broad general outcome of the sexual phase dominated by the Oedipus complex may, therefore, be taken to be the forming of a precipitate in the ego, consisting of these two identifications in some way united with each other. This modification of the ego retains its special position; it confronts the other contents of the ego as an ego ideal or super-ego" (p. 34). He then continues: "Its relation to the ego is not exhausted by the precept: 'You ought to be like this (like your father)'. It also comprises the prohibition: 'You may not be like this (like your father)' – that is, you may not do all that he does, some things are his prerogative'" (p. 34).

The two classes of instincts

The two classes of instincts Freud proposes here are the sexual and death instinct, described first in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1920). While the sexual instincts were well known to analysts, the death instinct was controversial, even to this day. Freud states, "On the basis of theoretical considerations, supported by biology, we put forward the hypothesis of a death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state" (p. 40). He goes on to say: "both the instincts would be conservative in the strictest sense of the word, since both would be endeavouring to re-establish a state of things that was disturbed by the emergence of life. The emergence of life would thus be the cause of the continuance of life and also at the same time of the striving towards death. and life itself would be a conflict and compromise between these two trends" (p. 40). The death instinct is seen expressing itself in destruction directed towards the external

world. He concludes this section with the following thought: "Over and over again we find, when we are able to trace instinctual impulses back, that they reveal themselves as derivatives of Eros. If it were not for the considerations put forward in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and ultimately for the sadistic constituents which have attached themselves to Eros, we should have difficulty in holding to our fundamental dualistic point of view. But since we cannot escape that view, we are driven to conclude that the death instincts are by their nature mute and that the clamour of life proceeds for the most part from Eros" (p. 46).⁵

The dependent relationships of the ego

In this section, Freud delves into the effect of the superego upon the ego and introduces the concept of the *negative therapeutic reaction*, which he describes in the following way:

There are certain people who behave in a quite peculiar fashion during the work of analysis. When one speaks hopefully to them or expresses satisfaction with the progress of the treatment, they show signs of discontent and their condition invariably becomes worse. . . . One becomes convinced, not only that such people cannot endure any praise or appreciation, but that they react inversely to the progress of the treatment.

(p. 49)

Freud elaborates that these patients suffer from a sense of guilt, finding satisfaction in illness. The patient feels no guilt, making it difficult to overcome except by slowly uncovering its unconscious roots and "gradually changing it to a *conscious sense of guilt*" (p. 50, italics added). He adds a fresh hypothesis to how the superego is formed in these individuals (i.e., a destructive component had entrenched itself in the superego and turned against the ego). What is now holding sway in the superego is, as it were, a pure culture of the death instinct due to an instinctual defusion where the exotic element "no longer has the power to bind the whole of the destructiveness that was combined with it, and this is released in the form of an inclination to aggression and destruction" (p. 53).

Finally, one momentous idea appears briefly (i.e., "The ego is the actual seat of anxiety" [p. 57]). This was elaborated on in Freud's (1926) paper, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, differentiating it from his earlier idea of anxiety stemming from repressed libido.

While the unconscious sense of guilt has been accepted as an important part of understanding patients, the concept of a death drive has had mixed acceptance;⁶ and it has been my view for some time that Freud's insights regarding the significance of analyzing unconscious resistances, the role of the preconscious in bringing what is unconscious to consciousness, and the