

LIBIDO, AGGRESSION AND AGGRESSIVENESS

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Tough gives some answers about the relations between the drives and the ego. Hartmann's work, on the other hand complicates some questions about the nature of the drives. Is the aggressiveness primarily the process of neutralisation into nondestructive form?

POVZETEK

Referat, predstavljen na prvem Vzhodnoevropskem psihoanalitičnem seminarju, na Dunaju, (april 1993) predstavlja pregled zadnjih sprememb v psihoanalitičnem konceptu agresije. Zavzema se za doslednejšo rabo pojmov agresije in agresivnosti - prvega za destruktivne pojavne oblike, drugega za označevanje gonskih silnic, agresivnih teženj, ki se kažejo kot potreba po obvladovanju, samorazvoju, storilnosti, veljavi... Med obema, agresijo in agresivnostjo, obstaja prikrita povezava.

Osrednji del referata predstavlja predlagani koncept razumevanja libida in agresivnosti v njuni adaptacijski in razvojni funkciji. Na osnovi kliničnih psihoterapevtskih izkušenj ter epidemioloških študij otrok je postavljena trditev, da je pravi pomen libidnih in agresivnih teženj mogoče prepoznati šele potem, ko oba opazujemo v njuni medsebojni povezanosti. Libidna motivacijska energija, investirana v senzorične sisteme (in tako po prehodu iz cenestetičnega v diakritično zaznavanje povezana z ego-funkcijami), omogoča receptivne funkcije (input), medtem ko agresivna motivacijska energija, investirana v mišične sisteme (in povezana z motoriko, torej prav tako z ego-funkcijami), omogoča akcijo (output). Tako ustvarjene krožne reakcije predstavljajo otrokovo kapaciteto za interakcijo z okoljem in omogočajo vstop v objektni odnos. Ta je karakterističen, od drugih odnosov drugačen, po intenziteti libidne in agresivne izmenjave.

ABSTRACT

The paper was presented on the First East-European Psychoanalytic Seminar, (Vienna, April, 1993). It represents an overview of recent changes in psychoanalytic understanding of aggression. A clear differentiation in the meaning of the terms (Aggression and Aggressiveness) has been supported - the Aggression as a destructive

and even hostile tendency, and the Aggressiveness as a constructive motivational force, leading to assertiveness, mastery, individuation and separation.

The article offers an original proposition of understanding libido and aggressiveness in their common adaptive and developmental functions. Libido, invested into sensory systems, is supporting receptive functions (input), while aggressiveness, invested into muscular systems, is supporting action and externalization processes (output). Both drives, linked to the ego, represent someone's capacity for relatedness.

Drives, supporting circular reactions, become representatives of ongoing object relations.

DRIVES AND TABOOS

The Drive Theory has always been in the centre of psychoanalytic research. Aroused severe reactions show how much Freud's libido theory and theory of psychosexual development violated strong taboos. The idea of the Oedipal situation raised both the taboo on incest as well as the taboo on parricide; not only the question of sexuality but also the question of aggression had been raised.

It seems that the fear and threat of aggression was much stronger than the fear of sexuality, even for Freud. He needed more than fifteen years to reformulate libido theory into dual drive theory. On the other hand Adler, with his idea of a positive aggressiveness, and Jung with the concept of selfactualization, were close to reformulating the drive theory. But they were too impatient with their father Freud to avoid the castrative situations.

Freud, reconsidering the possibility of the second drive, was able to see only the destructive part of it - the death instinct.

CHANGING THE CONCEPTS

The psychoanalytic theory of aggression has been substantially reexamined of late.

The psychoanalytic world practically neglected Harold Schultz-Hencke's Göttingen neoanalytical school, which was able to bridge the differences between Freud, Adler and Jung (Bregant, 1986), bringing the nondestructive aggressive needs into focus, together with libidinal ones, but failed to see the developmental process of both of them.

Later, a number of authors, beginning with Bowlby (1969), Klein G.(1976) and others, have criticised instinctual drive theory, mostly by four components:

1. the definition of a drive's force as psychic energy,
2. drive discharge assumptions and the idea of drive reduction as motivation,
3. the idea, that drives ultimately motivate all behaviours,
4. the idea that drives are phenomena arising from the borderland between soma and psyche, body and mind.

It was more than obvious that each author tried to discuss Freud's concept of the aggressive drive from the standpoint of his own clinical approach and/or theoretical concept, but it was quite clear that Freud's concept of aggression was much more problematic than the concept of libido as sexual drive.

Freud's dual - drive theory has brought an important contribution to clinical practice and theory in understanding narcissism and sadism and even the self preserva-

tive forces of the ego, but unfortunately not adding much to understanding healthy development.

A further important step was taken in 1923 with Freud's assumption that libido and aggression can be neutralised. This idea has been one of the central topics of long lasting research by Hartmann and his co-workers. They doubted that destructiveness was the only aim of aggression. Further they maintained that the ego develops the specific capacity to neutralise the destructive drive and make its energies available to the ego (Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein, 1949). The progress from primary to secondary process (from the pleasure principle to the reality principle) changes aggression into mastery, learning and self-esteem.

Tough gives some answers about the relations between the drives and the ego. Hartmann's work, on the other hand complicates some questions about the nature of the drives. Is the aggressiveness primarily destructive and later socialised through the process of neutralisation into nondestructive forms?

There are several authors who support that idea. Fairbairn (1952-78), opposing Freud, asserts that there is no such thing as the aggressive drive and holds that aggression is only a response to frustrations.

Rochlin (1973-82) asserts the intimate link between narcissism and aggression. He holds that "when narcissism, this love of self through which preserving the self is assured, is threatened, we are humiliated, our self-esteem is injured and aggression appears". (Parens 1989). From this point of view aggression appears as a result of a block of the libidinal investment into self-object.

Kohut (1972) is not far from that point of view, though he asserts that "man's destructiveness as a psychological phenomenon is secondary; it arises originally as the result of the failure of the self-object environment to meet the child's need for optimal empathic responses". Like Rochlin, Kohut holds that destructive rage is always motivated by an injury to the self.

The question is, whether the ways of seeing aggression only as a lack or block of libidinal investments, and recognizing it only in the form of destructiveness, and later as a disintegration product, is not too narrow.

NONDESTRUCTIVE AGGRESSIVENESS

There are many authors who assert that aggression in the primary form is nondestructive (though opposing Freud's concept of thanatos they are not using the word "constructive").

As response to Hartmann's work, Rank B. (1949) suggested at least two differing aspects of aggression - the adaptive one and aggression as a reaction to frustration. Solnit later (1966) emphasised the second as the destructive one.

To the adaptive aspect we can add a developmental one, both linked to the ego and mastery and to self and assertiveness.

Such a point of view should turn our thinking back to postulate aggression as primarily nondestructive. Lantos (1958), Solnit (1966, 1970) and Greenacre (1971) found many arguments of that kind, not seeing aggression only in the adaptive function, but also "in the force of growth" (Greenacre, 1971). Not only clinical experience, but also the method of direct observation of children, have given enough evidence of that kind (to mention only Spitz 1965-69, Winnicott 1950, Bell 1957 and Mahler 1965-75). Gunther (1980) has introduced the concept of "healthy aggressiveness" - as a signal of a need or the force developing assertiveness. Regarding the

developmental lines, I should promptly add, that there would be no process of separation and individuation, leading to triangulation, without "healthy aggressiveness".

Parens (1979-84) has proposed an explanation for the transformation of healthy aggressiveness (nondestructive aggression) into hostile destructiveness. The experience of excessive unpleasure plays a key part in transforming benign aggression into hostile destructiveness. Lately, Parens returns to understanding aggression as an instinctual drive, connected to activity. This idea was also advanced by Spitz (1965), who equates aggressiveness with activity, viewing a child's most innocuous aggressiveness in his need for sheer activity.

RECENT FINDINGS

Currently proposed assumptions are gathering around some basic questions viewing aggressiveness as a drive, the aims and major trends of aggression and the development of aggression.

Aggressiveness as a drive: Brenner (1982) holds that the concept of instinctual drives, though a theoretical construct, is heuristically valuable because manifestations of drive derivatives and their influence in the analytic situation are convincing and pervasive. He agrees that we are justified in regarding all psychic events as somatopsychic phenomena - as an aspect of the functioning of the central nervous system. Further on, we can join Parens, who is adding hormonal and biogenetic activity and even physiological states. That, of course, does not mean that we can accept Freud's formulations without certain changes. First of all the hypothesis, about the source of the aggression and libido, requires redefinition. It is more than obvious that Freud's idea about sensory systems or erogenous zones as the source of libido has to be rejected, though a strong connection between these body parts and the libido in the sense that libido is being invested into sensory systems, is indisputable. Then again the question arises, what should be the source of aggression and where should it lie?

There were many problems with understanding the drives as psychic energy. Brenner asserts that the two driving forces can be understood as "psychic energy", the very wellsprings of human motivation, important in psychic life.

The term "energy" however, an analogy borrowed from physics, does not imply (yet) an object to measure, though psychic energy has its magnitude and quantity.

Holder, 1970, (ac. to Kernberg, 1990) called our attention to Freud's differentiating psychological drives from biological instincts, which was lost during inconsistent translating into English language. Although he recognized ultimate biological sources of instincts, there was a lack of information available regarding transforming these biological predispositions into drives as purely psychic motivation.

Nowadays, knowing more about neurophysiological, hormonal and biogenetic background of instincts, it remains somehow more acceptable to understand instincts as a source of energy, while drives, linked to experience of pleasure and pain, tension and discharge, affects and emotions and the process of maturation and development, show their face only through their psychic representatives.

Kernberg (1990) considers the concept of drives as hierarchically supraordinate psychic motivational systems as valid. The drives, supporting our basic needs, represent the link between instinctual (biological) background and the nature of environmental stimulation and as such play an important role in human's relatedness.

THE AIMS OF AGGRESSION

Freud's proposition about the gratification of a need and the discharge of a tension as the aim of a drive, was widely broadened recently, mostly by including the aspect of object relations.

Parens (1989) stipulates at least two aims:

1. the assertion of self, upon self and environment and
2. the destruction of the object (including self).

The first aim is sought by nondestructive aggressiveness while the destruction of the object subsumes two distinct trends in aggression - hostile destruction of the object and the nonhostile or nonaffective destruction of the object. Nondestructive aggressiveness is a primary, innate motivational force, the aim of which is to assert oneself, to remove the obstacles to the gratification of one's needs, to master self and environment (Parens, Storr, Rochlin, Kohut, Gunther), but also the wish to be dominant, potent, productive as well as to have power. (Schultz-Hencke, in Bregant, 1976). the nonaffective form of destructive aggression is probably derived phylogenetically from prey aggression and is of little clinical consequence, while hostile destructiveness, extending from rage, anger through hostility and hate, is not an inborn factor. It is rather provoked in the self by experiential events and that is why it can be the subject of treatment and prevention.

Differentiating these aims of aggression, Parens raises the question of linking the drives and the affects, a problem that was not resolved even for questions of the libido.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGGRESSION

Though it seems that libido and aggressiveness are inborn and differentiated very early in childhood, development flows down from the experience. On the one hand, development modifies the aggressiveness itself and on the other, the nondestructive aggressiveness enables the development of some very important processes, for example the separation - individuation process (Mahler, 1975), creativity, assertiveness, learning, practising skills and mastery. Destructive aggression, rather provoked than inborn, leads to deficits in self cohesion, ego structuring and object relatedness, to ambivalence, maladaptation, intrapsychic conflicts and so on.

There is an intimate link between nondestructive and destructive aggression. Nondestructive aggressive needs and derived developmental processes can very often be distorted by severe and frequent obstacles and frustrations. Under these circumstances aggressive needs gradually link to unpleasure, hatred and destructiveness.

ADDING SOME ASSUMPTIONS AND THOUGHTS

It may seem a bit overambitious, but I wish to discuss some propositions and assumptions which have crystallised from more than twenty five years of clinical work with children, their families and adults, from long lasting preventive work, including epidemiological research and from the integrative clinical and developmental psychology that I have been teaching.

Relations between libido and aggressiveness: It seems that the questions of aggressiveness could not be raised for a long period of time because the threat of taboo

was even stronger than was the case with sexuality. But when they were finally raised, psychoanalysis started to be preoccupied with the theory of aggression, sometimes neglecting the possibility that aggressiveness may show its proper face only in relation to libido. There is enough evidence that libido and aggressiveness differentiate in the first months of life and more than that - we can trace some rudiments of both in fetal life and behaviour. On the other side, they operate and develop hand in hand.

When Freud, and later Hartmann with his co-workers, speak about neutralisation of aggressiveness, they neglected the fact that there is a case of mutual neutralisation between libido and aggression. In clinical situations we can often trace a form of nonneutralised libido involved in narcissistic fantasies as we can find nonneutralised aggression in the paranoid position or in omnipotent fantasies.

The process of mutual neutralisation, in my opinion, means more than the socialisation of the drives. It represents the bridge between one drive and the other and enables us to overcome the dualistic state of the psyche, to overgrow the splitting between good and bad self and object representations. In other words, neutralisation facilitates the process of fusion, not in the sense of merging but in the sense of gathering good and bad representations into a gestalt.

I agree with Brenner's and Parens' opinion that the two driving forces can be understood as "psychic energy" which becomes defined by emerging as a need and - in interaction with outside world- transformed into motivation. Speaking of the original aims, libido seems to be connected to receptive functions (internalisation processes) as aggressiveness is connected to activeness (and externalization processes). Those characteristics are leading me back to the phenomenon of cathexis (Besetzung or in other words "investment of psychic energy") as conceptualised by Freud. If we hypothesised that early investments of libidinal energy are directed into the sensory system, first into the oral erogenous zone which establishes the prototype experience of the receptive functions or internalisation, I may propose that aggressive energy is being invested into the muscular systems and motor activity.

Not only such functions as consuming food and air, but also reception of stimuli, constitute the complex pattern of internalisation; at least in the so called coenesthetic phase (Spitz), while diacritic perception becomes linked to the ego. On the other hand all those functions would hardly be possible without muscular activity, by which external contents can be internalized (swallowing), but also rejected (spitting) or, once they are internalized, they can be externalized (vomiting, excreting). If we shifted this concept towards psychic life, we can see libido supporting internalization processes such as: introjection, symbiotic imitation, identification, remembering, learning...as we can see aggressiveness supporting repression (forgetting), projection and, among others, individuation and separation.

If we observe both sides, the receptive functions, supported by libido, and motor activity, supported by aggressiveness, we can discover specific "circular reactions" which, in fact, represent the basic capacity of our relatedness and development, where both drives play the role in an interdependent position. Libido supporting input, and aggression enabling output, provide the source of experience about the outside world and the self. Perhaps it should not be overlooked that the described concept of understanding is leading us close to Piaget's concept of circular reactions as an important factor of development.

Now, if we accepted the fact that we have observed libido and aggressiveness fragmented, we are facing the task of reconsidering the whole concept of psychosexual development through the prism of libido and aggressiveness intermingling

throughout development. Though we can trace the aggressive needs mainly in the anal phase, when the growth of muscles and the separation and individuation process are being put forward, we can speak about oral aggression, anal, phallic aggression and so on.

The relations between the drives and affection: This is another problem we have to reconsider. My point of view is that during the process of transforming biological predisposition (instincts) into drives, under certain conditions of object relations, affection is being linked to libido or aggressiveness or to both in a certain connection. The link depends on experience and relatedness. Very often we overamplify as if libido meant pleasure and love, and aggressiveness meant unpleasure, pain and hostility. A careful observer can notice evidence of affection of all modalities linked to both - libido and aggressiveness. This way love can become suffocating and even destructiveness can become pleasant, not even speaking about joyful muscular activities and other complex experiences. Affects, in short, become the signals or representatives of both, drives and object relations.

The terms: Greek and Roman origins of the term aggressiveness or aggression obviously included both - the constructive and the destructive meaning.

Agredior or agressus sum included meanings such as: to step forward, come closer; to make a request, to undertake, start, try and to attack.

Aggressio included: to take a run, to start (oration). (Bradač, 1980, p. 29)

Agreuo or agreeo: meant to hunt, to catch and imperative - agrei, agreite: Go on! On your feet! (Dokler, 1915, p. 7).

During the era of the middle ages, the constructive meaning was lost and aggressiveness was understood as destructiveness. Within psychoanalysis the constructive meaning was refound by Adler and carefully worked out by Schultz-Hencke.

Comprehensive Psychological and Psychoanalytical Dictionaries include two terms: aggressiveness and aggression. Aggressiveness has lost all suggestion of hostility. It expresses tendency to be enterprising, energetic, active. The destructive meaning was somehow preserved in the term aggression, to refer to acts of aggression and destructiveness as a state of mind (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1967-73).

It is time to accept a clear agreement about the application of those terms in psychoanalysis.

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