
SELF-CONDEMNATION AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: IN CONTINUATION OF SIGMUND FREUD'S CRIMINOLOGICAL THEORY

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ABSTRACT

According to Marriam Webster Dictionary “Self – Condemnation” refers to “the act or an instance of condemning one's own character or actions : condemnation of oneself”. “Psychoanalysis” on the other hand is “a method of analyzing psychic phenomena and treating emotional disorders that involves treatment sessions during which the patient is encouraged to talk freely about personal experiences and especially about early childhood and dream”. Psychoanalysis treatment is used to cure the mental conflicts between “ID”, “SUPER EGO” and “EGO”. The cure is imperative because of the “Guilt” formation due to overdeveloped super ego which in itself results in the guilty person to want “Punishment”. On the other hand, when a person is reminded by own – self about the past emotions, deeds , experiences, certain self - acts or omission which led to a crime or some act which was opposite to the law of society in which he lives in, he/she is led to self – condemnation which is condemning one’s own self. The proposed idea is, at both described above situations, the guilty person either wants punishment or forgiveness from state authorities or by something or someone omnipotent or omnipresent to wash of his guilty away, respectively, which will result into him/her leading a new phase of life again without the constant feelings of guilt. The main idea of this research paper is to bring in the knowledge of the reader, that self – condemnation and one of the components of Psychoanalytical criminological theory, which is super ego and its treatment by “Psychoanalysis” is same in application, be it different in terminologies. Psychologist needs constant healthy relationship with patient to cure such mental conflicts, but, self – condemnation on the other hand needs forgiveness.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Self-condemnation, Sigmund Freud, ID, SUPER EGO, EGO.

I. INTRODUCTION: SIN AND CRIME, A RELATIONSHIP

“*Sin*” refers to ‘transgression of the law of God’ and “*Crime*” is an offence punishable by law. Sin and crime have often been distinguished to be different in nature, content, scope and consequences. Sin results in violation of rules of religion or morality while the crime involves breach of a law of the country. There is no direct injury in sin as is in crime. Even though sin and crime are very different in every aspect but it is vague to think that both are completely opposite to each other. The law of the society was created out of this set of moral rules in the earlier period of time and these laws were a commencing point where we humans were subjected to conform to some kind of norms to live in the society peacefully with each other. There are a lot of crimes which are basically termed as a sin in various religions e.g., Adultery, Murder, Theft etc. Commission of a sin often leads to self – condemnation and there is a dire need of punishment or forgiveness. On the other hand, commission of a crime is looked after by the state of the society which gives him/her certain defined punishment in the nature of Fine, imprisonment, community service etc. The proposed relationship created between sin and crime above is to lead the reader to earlier primitive society where the sin and crime were believed to be same in all its aspects. The criminological theories were made later to the existence of an omnipotent power capable of inflicting punishments and also capable of forgiveness which leads to vanishment of self – condemnation. The proposed idea is, that, the increased guilt formation which is cause of overdeveloped super ego, that is self – criticism could also be vanished of completely in matter of seconds of belief on something or someone believed to be the creator of this whole world, just as it can vanish self – condemnation.

The psychoanalysis is a criminological theory which uses the “*Free Association*” method to cure the patient. The patient is basically reminded of the past experiences and events in his life and those materials are brought into conscious state of mind which is further cured by the psychologist with healthy relationship between him and the patient which results into cure of the earlier set of emotions, which affects one, attached to such experiences and events. Super ego, which is the individuals social experience in a particular society and self – criticism leads to guilt due to internal desires caused by “*Id*”. Overdeveloped super ego is proposed to be cause of high moral education by the religion of an individual, though criminologist often try to look at the patient’s early life of childhood or a relationship with his/her parents. Relationship with one’s parents is looked to find out whether there was development of significant super ego or not, if it is found out that there was none, the patient is believed to lead to criminal activities

more often than one whose super ego was developed by morals of parents. This self – criticism is basically self – condemnation, which can occur before or after commission of the crime or sin, regarding the need of conforming to the society and its norms or the need to conform to the law of own religion. The need of punishment or forgiveness leads to one’s guilty state of mind to be cured completely and the person now can again live in the society guilt free with his head held up.

II. SIGMUND FREUD’S PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Sigmund Freud, a physician, worked together with Alfred Adler, Carl Jung and William Stekel and developed the “*Psychoanalytical*” theory and “*Psychoanalysis*” as a treatment therapy with which a psychologist can treat a patient who is not able to conform with the laws of society due to underdeveloped super ego, which is low self – criticism, and eventually commits crime.

Firstly, “*Super ego*” is self – criticism and reflects requirements that stem from the individuals social experience in particular societal norms. The super ego works on “*Ego – Ideal*” principal which is, an ideal conception of what he/she should be and due to which the individual tries his/her level best to achieve it, even by committing crime. *Secondly*, “*Id*” is a term used to describe the biological and psychological drives, urges and impulses which is found in every human being. *Lastly*, “*Ego*” is conscience personality and well aware of its surroundings. This is how Mr. Freud explained conscious and unconscious state of one’s mind and also the personality of offenders in such terms.

Mr. Freud suggested that at least some individuals performed criminal acts because they possessed an overdeveloped super ego, which led to constant feelings of guilt and anxiety.¹ This is due to “*Ego – Ideal*” as mentioned above. Even by committing crime, they want to achieve their Ego Ideal.

On a better footing, Mr. August Aich – Horn, a psychologist, suggested an alternative of what Freud suggested and it is in consonance with the researchers view also. He suggested that though overdeveloped super ego leads to crime as per Mr. Freud, but as per his own experience for years of running an institution for delinquents, he found out that many children committed crime not due to overdeveloped super ego but underdeveloped super ego, leading to low self –

¹ Sigmund Freud, “Criminals from a sense of guilt”, 14 *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud* 322 – 33 (1916).

criticism, and the delinquency and criminality were primarily expressions of an unregulated Id. You must have found out very strange with the apprehended alleged criminals that they do not even either find their act or omission to be crime or even feel guilty. This is all due to underdevelopment of their super ego.² Mr. Aich – Horn treated these delinquent children by providing them good and pleasurable environment so as to promote the type of identification with adults that the child failed to experience earlier. Later, Freud approved these techniques in his forward to Aich-horn's book and was of the view that this technique was appropriate for children and adult criminals who were dominated by their instincts.³ Redl and Wineman had an extended viewpoint and said that these children not only lacked adequate super ego, but their egos had been organized to defend the unregulated expression of their Id desires.⁴ They called this the “*Delinquent Ego*”. The treatment suggested to this Delinquent Ego was same as the one experienced by Aich – Horn.

Psychoanalysis is treatment applied on patients who are in a mental conflict and due to which they commit crime. The central idea of it is, Free Association. The patient is relaxed completely and talked about his current thoughts of mind. The Psychologist while exploring his thoughts is able to bring out certain kind of thoughts which he thinks is affecting the patient to the patient's current state of consciousness. Once the patient is aware of those events again, those events lose their unconscious power and the patient again finds peace and harmony.⁵

All the treatment techniques as suggested by Mr. August and Mr. Freud are testable as per several empirical researches and the results have supported the theory.⁶

III. SUBLIMATION AND REPRESSION

The next question which arises is, How does the Ego handle the conflicts between self – criticism (super ego) and normal desires (Id)? One of the main component which leads while handling the normal desires, which is “Id” is “Guilt”. It is pertinent to note that “*Id*” works on “*Pleasure Principal*”, which is, if it feels good, do it. The guilt arises due to the person whose current state of consciousness demand from him a righteous approach to such desires and also

² August Aich-horn, *Wayward Youth* (Viking, New York, 1963).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Fritz Redl and David Wineman, *Children who Hate* (The Free Press, New York, 1951).

⁵ George B. Vold, Thomas J. Bernard, *et.al.*, *Theoretical Criminology* 91 (Oxford University Press, New York, 1998).

⁶ Seymour Fisher and Roger P. Greenberg, *The Scientific Credibility of Freud's Theories and Therapy* (Basic Books, New York, 1977).

to conform by the social norms of the society, which he transgresses and leans towards the desires of Id, and commits crime. If the act is not committed, but there is desire to commit such act, the Self – criticism arises and stops one from doing any kind of acts which might lead to him getting punished, while if the act is committed due to low super ego development in one's own self, then the self – condemnation arises, after commission of the said crime. In both of these situations, one person demands either punishment or forgiveness for reverting back to *Status Quo Ante*, which means “the status before”. The state in which he had not committed that crime. Punishment is believed to reach that status, while forgiveness makes one believe that you have been forgiven of the crime or sin committed, that he had not committed a crime at all or as believed in some prominent religions, that his act is covered with the cloth of righteousness of someone else, who is believed to be way before Adam himself or even through taking a dip in sacred waters. Self – Condemnation and self – criticism, due to super ego leads to guilt and guilt in-turn leads one to want punishment. The researcher purposes, that, the forgiveness is not to vanish off the superego development completely, because if this happens your underdeveloped super ego, which is low self – criticism would lead you to committing crime again, but it is purposed that forgiveness can wash the guilt formation caused due to self – condemnation after commission of crime or even the guilt formation due to super ego before its commission and as a result you would not be demanding punishment. In other words, the forgiveness would not lead to vanishment of one's superego, but only removes guilt formation and the self – condemnation, which is constant reminder of one's wrong acts would be removed from conscious state of mind and clear the fog.

The super ego tries to conform with the societal norms and our Ego finds out way to reduce the mental conflicts between Id and super ego requirements. There are various ways through which this mechanism works.

First, In Sublimation, the drives of this *Id* are diverted to activities such as sports or an activity which requires excess energy because you need to divert your excess energy formation in your body due to hormones or other scientific issues to something which is acceptable by the super ego and if not paid attention, it might lead to bad health effects. It is believed to be a healthy way to reduce such mental conflicts.

Second, In Repression, on the other hand, those drives of *Id* are reverted back to the unconscious state of mind and the patient tries to believe that those desires do not exist in him

at all. The latter way of handling such conflicts might lead to certain absurd effects on behaviour. One of it is, *Reaction Formation*, which the researcher too believes it to be very dangerous for personal growth. Reaction formation is when a person becomes flabbergasted about such facts which he/she repressed in the past.⁷ Due to repression of such *Id* desires which might be sexually related in one self, a person becomes closed, introvert and shy about such desires which might and does lead to strained marital situations between spouses in a country where the marriage is not just based upon “consortium”, but also, requirements of fulfilling one’s biological desires which are believed to be satisfied upon marriage. On the other hand, *Projection*, is when a person with repressed urges frequently sees those kinds of tendencies in other individuals e.g., homosexual urges, inferiority etc.

IV. SELF – CONDEMNATION: CAUSE AND EFFECT

As per Merriam Webster Dictionary “*Self – Condemnation*” means “*the act or an instance of condemning one's own character or actions : condemnation of oneself*”. In other words, it refers to criticising own self, regarding an action which the person committed irrespective of the fact that he was warned by the super ego not to commit it. Self - Condemnation is when a person is again and again reminded of his mistakes of the past by his mind and due to which the guilty person now believes that he wants some of a punishment or forgiveness. The term “Self – Condemnation” was first used in 1581.

Sharon Lamb in 2003, in his article published in *Brooklyn Law review* talked about the underlying emotions and symbolic expressions in condemnation. Opinions were as follows,

*“Judgments are anchored by social standards of behaviour, which may shift by way of changes in time and differences in place. In contrast, condemnation is more unpredictable and less controllable, stemming as easily from an emotional impulse as from an awareness that someone has violated an important social norm.”*⁸ *“Condemnation serves a social function, communicating to members of society that we don't do that (whatever the transgression might be) - that we abhor that act, that way of thinking and that lack of feeling that may have led to the transgression! The law provides*

⁷ *Supra* note 5 at 92.

⁸ Sharon Lamb, “The Psychology of Condemnation: Underlying Emotions and their Symbolic Expression in Condemning and Shaming” 68 *Brooklyn Law Review* 929 (2003).

*boundaries around behaviour serving as "a continuous, repetitive set of instructions as to how we should think about good and evil, normal and pathological, legitimate and illegitimate, order and disorder"*⁹

Similarly, Jeffrie Murphy, back in 1999, in his article on Shame, published in *Law & Phil*, the main contention was that “*shame creeps through guilt and feels like retribution*”, suggesting complex and buried emotions underlying the urge to condemn.¹⁰ The researches clearly suggest to us that self – condemnation is related to self – criticism caused by super ego due to desires of “*Id*”.

V. CONCLUSION

From all the above discussions, we can come to a conclusion, that, the guilt formation due to overdeveloped super ego and self – condemnation are very closely related to each other, in both of which the suffering individual demands either punishment or forgiveness, either from state authorities or from someone capable to offer forgiveness. As already proposed by the researcher earlier, the guilt formation due to both overdeveloped super ego and self – condemnation can be treated with all the techniques and psychoanalysis therapy treatment, but it can also be cured by forgiveness, either self – forgiveness or due to righteousness of someone else. The proposed idea is not testable as psychoanalysis is, as mentioned earlier, due to involvement of supreme being able to offer forgiveness because of our determined belief on him, but it is true to our conscious that the moment you place yourself before a forgiving individual or supreme being, your all sins or crime, when asked for forgiveness, loose its unconscious power over you and all your self – condemnation is vanished off completely.

⁹ *Id.* at 931.

¹⁰ Jeffrie G. Murphy, “Shame Creeps Through Guilt and Feels like Retribution” 18 *Law & Phil* 327,342 (1999).