

Forgotten Analysts and Their Legacy
Edmund Bergler and Psychic Masochism
By Joseph Reppen, PhD

Introduction

Why bother to recall the legacy of forgotten analysts? If their contributions were really important perhaps they would have been remembered, but there are changes of fashion in analytic theories. Some theorists may have received such unfair or negative press that they have been prematurely assigned to the dustbin of history. It is important to remain alive, have a fan club, have an institute named after you, or your name have become an adjectival noun such as Kleinian or Kohutian or Jungian. Fortunately for Dr. Lothane and myself, the number of forgotten analysts appears to be legion. This suggests that we may not be running out of forgotten analysts any time soon. As we continue this discussion group we expect more forgotten analysts will be created. After Dr. Lothane's presentation about Sabina Spielrein in June we will be soliciting presentations from members of the American Psychoanalytic Association for our twice a year presentations.

I believe that everyone here can come up with the names of ten forgotten analysts. Two names come to mind as examples of decline in interest and of rehabilitation. When I was in graduate school David Rapaport's work inspired hundreds of doctoral dissertations including my own. His *Collected Papers* (Gill, 1967) was a best seller. Reprinted many years later it evoked little interest. The publisher resorted to giving away promotion copies to

support his book club. In contrast, Sandor Ferenczi's work was omitted from the reading lists of training institutes because of the negative and hostile comments of his former patient, Ernest Jones and his former analyst, Sigmund Freud. Today he is widely read, a hero of the relational school, his letters with Freud have been published in three volumes and there is a Sandor Ferenczi Society.

Edmund Bergler

In choosing Edmund Bergler as the first analyst to be presented by our Discussion Group an even cursory review of Bergler's life and work easily qualifies him as forgotten, neglected or unread. In an unscientific questioning of some young and not so young colleagues, almost all had never heard of him. This response was unusual as the colleagues questioned were from a contemporary Freudian cohort. I shudder to think what my results might have been from another group of analysts.

What was it about Bergler and his work that he was so widely read in the 40's and 50's (his books were best sellers with many printings) and he now is a somewhat obscure and even maligned figure. Why was he disliked and even ridiculed by the analytic establishment? Was it envy or was there something about his personality, his ideas, or his expressive style?

Let me introduce Edmund Bergler and his enormous contribution of 27 published books, of which 24 are in English, with an additional 24 unpublished volumes and book projects as well as over 300 published papers.

I shall begin with a brief biographical sketch. There is not an abundance biographical material. This will be followed by an outline of his

major theoretical contributions, his work style, the many less-than-positive and often negative responses to his work and hostility to him personally. The personal attacks on Bergler appear to have been frequent and may have contributed to his subsequent obscurity. I will mention most of his published volumes as well as book reviews of his work. The Marianne and Edmund Bergler Psychiatric Foundation founded by his widow has republished six of his books in new editions with new introductions, and one previously unpublished work *The Talent for Stupidity* (1998).

Full disclosure! My emphasis on books and reviews is influenced by my association with book publishing and book review journals. I resumed an interest in Bergler when as editor of *Psychoanalytic Books* I was receiving review copies of IUP's reprints. I owned a number of Bergler's books that I had bought in the 50's that were gathering dust on my bookshelves.

A Wikipedia entry contains very little information as does the archive of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, which is particularly sparse for a member who achieved such prominence during his lifetime. I did not consult a doctoral dissertation in German by Gabriele Flory (1976) *Edmund Bergler: Leben und Werk* written at the University of Mainz. The most reliable information on Bergler can be found in Elke Muhlleitner's (1992) *Biographisches Lexikon der Psychoanalyse* that utilizes the Flory biography, and in an article by Melvyn Iscove in DeMijolla's *International Dictionary of Psychoanalysis* (Iscove 2002, pp. 192-193).

Edmund Bergler was born in Kolomea Galicia, now part of the Ukraine, on July 20, 1899. He died in New York on February 6, 1962 at age 62. There was an appreciative obituary in the New York Times on

February 7th (Obituary, 1962). He was the son of the pharmacist Alexander Bergler and his wife Ernestine Schapira Bergler. The family moved to Vienna sometime before World War I, Bergler graduated from the Staatsgymnasium in 1917 and immediately served at the front during World War I. In the winter semester of 1918-1919 he began the study of medicine at the University of Vienna, which he completed in 1926. During the time of his medical studies he also worked as a journalist to support himself thus suggesting the prolific professional writer he was to become. His proficiency in English was longstanding and in the United States he even published in such popular magazines as *Coronet*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Charm*. In 1919 he left Judaism, which he returned to later in life. His medical specialty was internal medicine. In 1926, he began his studies at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute where he was analyzed by Wilhelm Reich and Helene Deutsch. He assisted at the Socialist Society for Sexual Information and Sexual Research founded by Wilhelm Reich and Marie Frischauf. He completed his studies at the Vienna Institute in 1932. From 1927 to 1938 he was engaged in private practice in Vienna. From 1933 to 1935 he was an associate director of the clinic of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society. In 1929 he married the photographer Marianne Leitner-Blumberger. With the Anschluss he escaped to France and then to the United States where he became a member of the New York Psychoanalytic Society from 1941 to 1962. He taught at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute for a very short time from 1941 to 1943. His courses were: A clinical approach to the psychoanalysis of writers, working through, and eight prerequisites for the treatment of homosexuality.

A search of major psychoanalytic journals reveals that the most recent book reviews are “briefly noted” reviews that I wrote in 1991, 1992, and 1994 in *Psychoanalytic Books*. For the last 25 years, there has been virtually no mention of Edmund Bergler in psychoanalytic journals. The one exception to this silence is a brief mention by Elizabeth Auchincloss in her introduction to Arnold Cooper’s collected papers *The Quiet Revolution in American Psychoanalysis* (Cooper 2005). What she wrote is a partial explanation of the silence:

Early in his psychoanalytic career, Cooper became interested in the work of Edmund Bergler, a brilliant intellectual figure whose abrasive personality and originality led to his being largely banished from official analytic publications. In Cooper’s opinion, Bergler’s emphases on pre-Oedipal development, the importance of narcissism in individual development, the role of the superego, and the broad use of various masochistic defenses, were significant precursors of Kohut, Kernberg, and other innovative psychoanalysts. Cooper’s own development of these themes is a significant part of his work. (p. 7)

Arnold Cooper appears to be one of the few recent writers who finds value in Bergler’s contributions or even mentions him at all. There is no review of a previously unpublished book *The Talent for Stupidity* (1998) in spite of the fact that the Marianne and Edmund Bergler Psychiatric Foundation distributed 500 free copies. Writing in the Introduction to *The Talent for Stupidity* Melvyn Iscove, the Trustee of the Foundation, notes the following:

Above and beyond Bergler’s completed book manuscripts the Foundation has identified and catalogued dozens of unpublished

scientific papers in different stages of completion, from preliminary jottings and partial drafts to completed papers typed and ready for publication. We have also catalogued well over one hundred unfinished book manuscripts, ranging from jottings or preliminary outlines to manuscripts at various stages of completion. Each of these manuscripts contains Bergler's application of basic psychoanalytic principles – as well as his own personal extensions of analytic theory – to specific problems of everyday life and to the field of psychopathology. These working drafts also demonstrate Bergler's rigorous self-discipline in working out his ideas; we can see where he repeatedly revised his formulations to incorporate a newly discovered subcategory of a phenomenon or an additional application of an idea, in an attempt to further clarify the issues considered. (p. xv)

With this level of both published and unpublished work it becomes harder to understand the neglect of his work. There is certain irony in Bergler's comment that "to convince the world of your own ideas... you have to live a few generations after your own death." (p. xii)

As a further example of the negative attitudes toward Bergler, Richard Sterba (1982) in *Reminiscences of a Viennese Psychoanalyst* wrote about Bergler in Vienna:

Edmund Bergler became notorious for his fecundity in producing papers. What set him apart from the group was that he spoke with a somewhat coarser Viennese dialect and used less cultivated language than that spoken by most of the members of the society, which was a Viennese version of High German. He was widely read and a diligent researcher. I always found it amazing that an analyst

during his lifetime would be able to find thirty writers with writer's block, about which Berger published a well-known study in the United States. However, it is meritorious that he established the oral masochism as a common character trait in writers.

Bergler gained a certain reputation in literary circles because of his work on writer's block. Waelder, who was an editor of the German *Imago*, told me a few years ago that in Vienna, the editorial staff of the journal accepted only every third paper by Bergler, whereas in the United States, the journals, in their eagerness to fill their publications, accepted everything he wrote. (p. 150)

In a letter written by Laurence Kubie to Sandor Rado (New York Psychoanalytic Society Archives) on October 24, 1938, in support of Bergler's application for immigration to the United States, Kubie provided a summary of the information that he had about Bergler and noted that he was "an unpleasant personality" that there were some analytic problems at the Vienna clinic, that he "drives patients hard" but that he is "very prolific as a writer" and "the Vienna folk don't like him as a human being" but "I don't know on what grounds you would exclude him." Edward Hitschmann, who thought highly of Bergler wrote a praiseworthy letter of support for his entry to the United States. On February 24, 1942 he was elected a member of the New York Psychoanalytic Society. He lectured at Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital, the Cooper Union, The University of Cincinnati, and gave several scientific papers at the New York Psychoanalytic Society. He practiced during most of his career at 251 Central Park West. He had several vacation homes (Iscoe, personal communication) the last being in a village in Vermont. He vacationed from June 15 to September 15th during which time he wrote his enormous

number of contributions. He got up at 4AM every morning to read and write, had total recall and could repeat sessions verbatim. Although he wrote in an aggressive manner audio recordings of sessions reveal a kindly manner (Iscove, personal communication). Bergler never established a school and had few if any followers.

If Edmund Bergler is to be remembered it is for his contributions to the understanding of the importance of oral regression and psychic masochism, which he characterized as the basic neurosis and to which all neuroses are related. Like the Kleinians, his emphasis on the oral phase of development is paramount to understanding all later neurotic development. In addition, the role of the superego and its relation to the repression of aggression during the oral phase is crucial. The two major works in which Bergler's theories are most clearly stated are in *The Basic Neurosis* (1949) and *The Superego* (1952).

For Bergler development begins in the oral phase and progresses to the anal and phallic phases while Freud's emphasis was on the phallic phase and then later the anal phase and had little to say about the oral phase. The fury of the child at the frustrations of the mother that the child is unable to express because of the motoric helplessness of the infant leads to inhibition and later reproaches and punishment. The fury of the child is out of proportion to the child's ability to express it. Bergler wrote in *The Basic Neuroses*:

A decisive dichotomy starts: one child takes the 'triad of retribution' (punishment, moral reproach, guilt) in its stride, adapts himself more or less diplomatically to the environment, shifts manifestation of aggression to less holy subjects and objects. Another child persists in

its original aims and subjects with the unavoidable external, later internal punishment in the form of guilt. (Bergler 1949, p.3)

These children become psychic masochists and out of awareness become unconscious lovers of humiliation, defeat and refusal. Their later solution is to derive pleasure from displeasure and libidinous satisfaction from punishment and guilt. The triad of the mechanism of orality repeats the masochistic wish of being deprived by mother by substituting someone who will refuse them. Bergler defines the triad of orality:

(1) 'I shall repeat the masochistic wish of being deprived by my mother, by creating or misusing situations in which some substitute of my pre-oedipal mother-image shall refuse my wishes.'

(2) 'I shall not be conscious of my wish to be refused and initial provocation of refusal, and shall see only that I am justified in self-defense, righteous indignation and pseudo-aggression because of the refusal.'

(3) 'Afterwards I shall pity myself because such an injustice can happen only to me, and enjoy once more psychic masochistic pleasure.' (Bergler 1949, p. 5)

Masochists thus feel justified in righteous indignation and pseudo aggression and pity themselves and enjoy masochistic pleasure. And the same goes for "injustice collectors" (a term coined by Bergler) who construct an imaginary situation in which they are refused, then become angry with indignation and then take pleasurable pity and psychic masochistic pleasure in the hurt.

Although Bergler agrees with the English school with its emphasis on infantile aggressiveness projected onto the mother he is critical because, as he sees it, there is a neglect of any masochistic elaboration. In every one of his papers this triad of psychic masochism is introduced in one

form or another that has led to a view of Bergler as reductionist, a criticism, it seems, that is not without merit.

Bergler's first book written with Edward Hitschmann in German is translated as *Frigidity in Women* published in Vienna in 1934. It was later translated and published in English in 1936 as well as in French and Japanese. This was the first psychoanalytic monograph on frigidity in women based on Freudian principles and on the authors' experiences at the Vienna Psychoanalytic Clinic. Hitschmann and Bergler (1949) restated their position in English in an article in *The Psychoanalytic Review* that frigidity is a defense. They saw frigidity to be solely defined as the incapacity of a woman to have a vaginal orgasm. The article went on to critique gynecologists who misunderstand sexual excitation and undervalue the man's frictionary movements or "thrusts" leading to orgasm. They concluded that frigidity is the result of an unconscious disturbance by libidinous and aggressive factors and that these problems are the result of infantile fixations. It should be noted that Bergler's co-author Hitschmann was a much respected, senior member of the Vienna group and that Bergler was only 34.

In 1935, also in German, the *Internationale Psychoanalytische Verlag* published *Talleyrand-Napoleon-Stendhal-Grabbe* an early exercise in applied psychoanalytic biography. I was unable to obtain information about this book except a brief comment by Melitta Schmideberg (1934) in *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* that "The author comes to the conclusion that Talleyrand signified for Napoleon (1) a good father-*imago*; (2) a father *imago* who permits the murder of the father; (3) the hated father; (4) the revenging father" (p. 328). Iscove (personal

communication) remarked that Hitler had expressed interest in the book because of his interest in Napoleon.

The Talleyrand-Napoleon book was followed by a book in German translated as *Psychic Impotence in Men* (1937), a companion volume to *Frigidity In Women*. Reviewing this book in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly* in 1939, Martin Grotjahn wrote: “Bergler has now written a new book about the clinical picture, psychoanalytic theory and treatment of impotence.... followed by a detailed description of the different forms of impotence which are systematically described according to the psychoanalytic conception of their psychogenic structure” (p. 123).

At the 1936 IPA Marienbad Congress Bergler was a presenter at the famous “Symposium on the Theory of the Therapeutic Results of Psychoanalysis”. Bergler was 36. The panel consisted of Herman Nunberg, Edward Glover, Otto Fenichel, James Strachey and Edward Bibring.

Mark Kanzer (1970) suggests that this was the high point in the career of Edmund Bergler and I agree. The symposium attempted to reformulate topographic concepts of therapy such as making the unconscious conscious in relation to the structural theory. Bergler’s views were very much in line with the Kleinian School. He accepted the notion of the death drive, saw the oral stage as a primary force in neurosis to the exclusion of the Oedipus complex, and elaborated on the primitive superego of the infantile period instead of placing it at the close of the oedipal phase. Kanzer (1970) wrote:

Had Bergler settled in England when events soon uprooted the Viennese analysts, his career might well have taken a different course. In the United States, where the structural school of Anna Freud and Heinz Hartmann regarded as distortions the features of

the personality that Bergler and the Kleinians saw as normal, he found himself distinctly an outsider. For two years, he was an instructor at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute. Then academic doors closed for good. (p. 414)

Thus, 1936 and 1943, when he last taught at the New York Psychoanalytic Institute are turning points in Bergler's career. In 1936 he parted company with the structural school and in 1943 he left teaching and academia for good.

There is an understandable absence of book publication until 1946 when Bergler wrote in English *Unhappy Marriage and Divorce* published by The International Universities Press. *Unhappy Marriage and Divorce* immediately contributed to Bergler's popularity. He now wrote about psychoanalytic concepts as popular subjects for a large audience and developed a successful psychoanalytic practice. Indeed, it could be argued that Bergler was a pioneer writer of the self-help books. In *Unhappy Marriage and Divorce* Bergler wrote that neurotics are incapable of tender love and cannot enter into satisfactory marriages. He further elaborated: "The fact is neurotics are unfit for good marriage, the majority of people today are neurotic and therefore incapable of love." (p. 102). Writing in *Psychoanalytic Quarterly* Richard L. Frank (1947) wrote, "The book suffers from the author's attempt to cover so much material in small compass. It has led him to make dogmatic pronouncements...." (p. 104)

In 1948 Bergler wrote *The Battle of the Conscience*, his first detailed statement on psychic masochism. The book received two reviews in the *Quarterly* the first a nasty review by Nathaniel Ross (1949) in which he characterized Bergler as "an indefatigable collector of variations

on a clinical theme” (p. 368). Ross claimed that Bergler’s psychological theory makes all personalities look alike, that the book is really about the death instinct, that it has endless lists, that it covers too wide a variety of psychological phenomena from habitual smoking to homosexuality, and that he chooses clinical data to prove his thesis. Bergler wrote to the editor of the *Quarterly* complaining about the nature of the review. In an unusual move, the editor of the *Quarterly*, Henry Bunker, wrote a lengthy, positive review the following year (1950) “this extremely readable and in the reviewer’s opinion highly rewarding book is dedicated (in general), as its title indicates to the proposition that...every analysis is confronted with a loser in the battle of the conscience.” Bunker highlighted Bergler’s emphasis on the mechanism of orality, the role of the injustice collector and an elaboration of Bergler’s three-layer structure of every neurotic symptom, namely 1) id wish 2) defense resulting from superego protest 3) protest against the defense again as the result of the superego protest.

In the same year Bergler (1948) wrote *Divorce Won’t Help* a book published now by Harper, a trade book publisher, and reviewed in *The New York Times* (Bender, 1948)

Dr. Bergler emphasizes that the vast majority of divorced couples are neurotic. He says that there are four parties to every marriage – two people who took out the license, and, for each of them, an invisible unconscious partner. This unconscious partner is really the deepest part of the person himself, but works so silently that the person is unaware even of its existence. Yet, so powerful are the unconscious partners and so efficient is their work, that they determine the whole course of marriage.

Bergler wrote that a woman who rejects motherhood and does not provide a comfortable home atmosphere is neurotic. Dogmatic statements like this predominate in Bergler's writing and make his ideas on marriage and later homosexuality rather dated.

Divorce Won't Help was followed by *Conflict in Marriage* (1949). Reviewing it in *The New York Times* Patrick Mullahy (1949) wrote that unconscious neurotic problems related to the past are destructive to marriages. Conflicts arising in marriage are never resolved and repeat themselves in endless neurotic behavior in marriage.

In the same year, 1949, Bergler wrote his major opus *The Basic Neurosis: Oral Regression and Psychic Masochism*. The book contains one of Bergler's favorite devices that of lists. In this case he presents 27 clinical pictures of oral regression that include gambling, writer's block, aspermia, homosexuality, frigidity, retirement neuroses, and overeating among others. Reviewed by John Frosch (1950), later to become the editor of *The Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Bergler received a hostile review.

It is regrettable that the author did not simply rely on presenting his thesis with arguments for its validity instead of permitting his 'pseudo aggression' to infiltrate almost every page. He attacks, accuses, vilifies, ridicules, and criticizes all and sundry who have opposed his viewpoints in the past or whose criticism he anticipate in the future. These features lend the book a polemic quality which, while making for amusing reading, hardly does justice to the more serious contribution the author might make. (p. 423)

Again, in 1949 Bergler wrote a best seller *The Writer and Psychoanalysis* published by Doubleday. The book was well received by

the literary establishment. Bergler coined the term “writer’s block” in that work and highlighted the role of alcoholism among writers. In spite of the book’s popularity, the review in the *Quarterly* was less than positive. Bergler was accused by Geraldine Pederson-Krag (1951) of making uncompromising assertions, and parading his five-layered structures of oral regression and psychic masochism. She wrote:

Dr. Bergler’s books are widely read, and such concepts are presented with more attention to the reader’s intellect than to his feelings. For instance, the tone which pervades the writing, a tone both messianic and at the same time belligerent, makes more difficult than necessary the acceptance of formulations in themselves damaging to the narcissism of all those associated with the author’s craft. (p. 117)

In the course of three short years, Bergler produced five books, all of which had popular appeal. Bergler had now established himself as a major writer of self-help books and a popularizer of psychoanalytic concepts.

In 1951, he wrote *Money and Emotional Problems* in which he proposed that the neurotic approach to money is again a case of masochism. He wrote about the success hunter, the gambler, the gold digger, the playboy, the miser, the imposter, the embezzler, and other character types for whom money is a neurotic problem. The book is replete with interesting clinical vignettes but always highlighting the role of psychic masochism.

Following his book on money, he wrote in the same year *Neurotic Counterfeit Sex* (1951) which repeats much of the material in earlier

books on impotence and homosexuality. And later (1952) *The Superego*, which repeats much of the material from *The Basic Neurosis*.

In 1953, Bergler again demonstrated his virtuosity by publishing *Fashion and the Unconscious*. Based on his analysis of a considerable number of male homosexual clothing designers, that clothes owe their origin and function to the castration complex. A fear of the female body thus leads men to insist that women be clothed and for the homosexual this fear amounts to panic. The reviewer, J. C. Flugel (1954), author of *The Psychology of Clothes*, gave it a favorable review in the *Quarterly*.

The Revolt of the Middle-Aged Man published in 1954 again repeats Bergler's notion of psychic masochism as the cause of disappointment. Similar to adolescence, middle age leads adult men to rebellion and a seeking of new relationships as a form of pseudo aggression. Bergler saw middle age as a second adolescence marked by hypochondria, fear of death, and heightened psychic masochism. In the same year, 1954, Bergler wrote with William S. Kroger a gynecologist *Kinsey's Myth of Female Sexuality: The Medical Facts*, which was an attack upon the two Kinsey books but primarily the second volume. It was generally not well received because of its strident and critical tone.

In *Homosexuality: Disease or Way of Life* (1956) Bergler again emphasized the role of orality but the totality of his statements expressed an extreme and hostile position. Writing in *Psychoanalysis and Male Homosexuality* (1988) Kenneth Lewes offered a reminder of Bergler's critical attitude toward homosexuals in general as well as his statement that there are no happy homosexuals. Lewes wrote:

It would simplify matters if we could divorce this tone of abuse and scorn from Bergler's substantive ideas, but such a

distinction is neither possible nor desirable. Whatever the truth or usefulness of Bergler's ideas, his tone clearly suggests extremely strong countertransference reactions that simply would not be tolerated by psychoanalysts, for example, in supervised training. That a psychoanalyst should be so angry at his patients or make jokes at their expense surely must have affected the course of treatment. So Bergler's reports of noncooperative patients must be regarded as suspect. It is shocking that Bergler's colleagues let such unprofessional conduct and attitudes without rebuke (p.102).

Although what Lewes wrote from a 1980s perspective it is not reflective of attitudes toward homosexuality at that time.

In 1956 *Time Magazine* in a long article about Bergler and homosexuality he is quoted as saying that homosexuality is neither biologically determined nor bad luck, but due to pleasure in displeasure and unconscious psychic masochism. The homosexual wallows in self-pity, collects injustices, and provokes hostility. Bergler considered the idea of bisexuality as an outright fraud maintained by naïve homosexuals. Bergler is further quoted as saying that homosexuals are generally unreliable a conclusion based on his treatment of numerous homosexuals and interviews with many others who refused treatment. For Bergler there are "no healthy homosexuals." (December 10,1956)

In 1956 he wrote *Laughter and the Sense of Humor*, which was followed by *Psychology of Gambling* (1957) whose thesis was that the gambler has an unconscious wish to lose and that losing is necessary to establish the cruelty of fate. *Counterfeit Sex* (1958) repeated much of the material of previous books on sex and homosexuality.

A major work *Principles of Self-Damage* (1959) followed. In the introduction to the reprinted edition Cooper is quoted as stating that he had found value as long ago as 1949 in Bergler's attempt to understand masochism in terms of pre genital object-representations. Cooper is quoted as having written:

I have adapted my model for understanding masochism from the work of Bergler, who regarded masochism as the basic neurosis from which all other neurotic behaviors derive. As long ago as 1949 Bergler attempted to understand the masochistic character in terms of the role of narcissism in character formation and of the significance of pregenital object-representations....he felt, and I agree, [that the mechanism of orality] is paradigmatic for the masochistic character. (Iscoe, 1992, p.xxiii)

In the same volume Bergler has an interesting critical section on Theodor Reik who was also writing about masochism at the same time. Bergler saw Reik as failing to understand the role of the primitive critical super-ego and unable to comprehend his own deep masochism. He further claimed that Reik set up MD analysts as straw men and that Reik's associations to patient material was highly personal and flawed. (Bergler, 1959) I must agree with Bergler on this account having experienced Reik's loose personal associations to patient material.

One Thousand Homosexuals: Conspiracy of Silence (1959) was followed by *Tensions can be Reduced to Nuisances* (1960) a dated self-help book written only for the non-neurotic individual. Next was *Curable and incurable Neurotics* (1961) and *Parents not Guilty of their Children's Neuroses* (1964) published posthumously in which parents are excused from responsibility and guilt because the child has a unique personality at

birth and unavoidable biological frustrations. Naturally the role of innate megalomania and oral frustrations lead to child's misperception of the parents no matter how kind. The psychic masochism of the child is not produced by the parents, but by the child's fantasies.

His *Selected Papers* (1969) is an extraordinary volume consisting of 79 of Bergler's more than 300 papers. Mark Kanzer's reviewed it in *Contemporary Psychology*:

All neuroses and psychoses, if not all human activities came to be seen by Bergler as 'rescue stations' from psychic masochism. No doubt such patterns are recognizable and common, but to most psychoanalysts this unitary formula was reductionist, insufficiently explained, and an inadequate basis for analytic therapy. It came to serve as a 'one-man school of thought,' bolstered by innumerable 'clarifications' and scorn heaped upon the unconvinced. (1970, p. 414)

Selected Papers, however, contains some absolute jewels. I will mention two that struck me as particularly interesting. A study of *Little Dorrit* by Dickens is suggestive of Dickens's innate knowledge of masochism and another on Oscar Wilde's masochism reveals the enormous range of Bergler's reading knowledge. Other papers are on beating fantasies, the day residue in dreams, writers block, Victor Hugo, Hamlet, agoraphobia, stage fright, and obscene words, and smoking and its infantile precursors among many others. Some of the individual papers stand out as superior to his books that suffer from repetition. His reading of both contemporary and classical writers was considerable and he wrote about literature and philosophy with ease and deep understanding.

In *The Talent for Stupidity* (1998) written over 40 years ago but recently published Bergler highlights the role of masochistic elements in intellectual inhibitions developed in childhood and their consequences in later life. He continues his list-making with 17 genetic types of incompetence, a 20-point list for the criteria for the diagnosis of stupidity.

What is Bergler's legacy? It is his continuous reminder of the role of oral and psychic masochism, the child's helplessness in relation to the mother, and an awareness of the masochism of everyday life. But it is the reductionism of his ideas, his dated ideas both about sexuality and homosexuality and his dismissive and often hostile tone that made him into a too easily dismissed and neglected theorist.

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