

The Structure of Guilt

A. Levitsky
3/25/81

I. Terms

- A. Ordinary language: conscience; moral sense
- B. Gestalt: toxdog
- Psychoanalytic: superego

II. Fritz's formulation: guilt is simply unexpressed resentment. I find this too simple.

III. My categories: real, existential, neurotic, actualization.

A. Real: You've betrayed a friend. If you don't have guilt, you're peculiar, i.e., lacking in moral sense. You should feel guilt.

B. Existential: Its features are....

1. Built into human existence
2. Ineradicable
3. Not a symptom which can be removed
4. Easily intertwined with and often hard to distinguish

from neurotic guilt.

C. Neurotic

1. Origins
 - a. Behavior defined by authority as bad
 - b. The mistreated child assumes he is bad, hence, guilty, hence in need of punishment.
2. Associated with "archaic" superego
 - a. Unconscious
 - b. Not subject to ordinary development and growth
 - c. Operates primitively
 - d. Highly resistive to learning and experience
3. The fear of responsibility: responsibility-anxiety and how it functions
4. The mature conscience or superego
 - a. Distinguishes between guilt and responsibility
 - b. Definition of mature conscience: capacity for self-evaluation minus self-punishment

IV. Is there an answer?

- A. Fritz: chewing and assimilating the introject
- B. Jung: the nature of individuation
- C. Tillich: the two kinds of courage

Suggested reading:

1. Ernest Becker: The Denial of Death
2. Paul Tillich: The Courage To Be
3. Irvin Yalom: Existential Psychotherapy

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