Mourning and Melancholia

Main Idea:
Melancholia:
1. **similar to mourning**: both involve a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, sleeplessness and refusal to take nourishment.
2. **different from mourning**: mourning has an “unknown loss,” leads to a lowering of the self-regard → an impoverishment of the ego. It may be caused by the death of a loved person (pathological mourning), but it may also occur when something has been lost as an object of love, or even when one cannot see clearly what has been lost.
3. **In mourning it is the world that has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself.** (Vol 14: 245-46)
4. Melancholia shares features of both mourning and narcissism. (587)
5. different situations leading to melancholia: 689

Contradictions of Melancholia re. self and object-choice:
1. loss of self-regard combined with narcissism: (Pp 585 “Feelings of shame … are lacking in the melancholic…One might emphasize the presence in him of an almost opposite trait of insistent communicativeness which finds satisfaction in self-exposure.”
2. the self-reproach are reproaches against a loved object (p. 586)
3. **from object-loss to ego-loss**: (586) – “owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from this loved person, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different, for whose coming-about various conditions seem to be necessary. The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced onto another object; it was withdrawn into the ego. There, however, it was not employed in any unspecified way, but served to establish an identification of the ego with the abandoned object. Thus the shadow of the object fell upon the ego, and the latter could henceforth be judged by a special agency, as
though it were an object, the forsaken object. In this way, an object-loss was transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification.” (vol 14: 249)

4. In between sadism and identification/love, in between love and suicide (treating itself as an object), the ego is overwhelmed by the object (589)

Work Cited


Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through

Definition: **Abreaction**

Emotional discharge whereby the subject liberates himself from the affect* attached to the memory of a traumatic event in such a way that this affect is not able to become (or to remain) pathogenic. Abreaction may be provoked in the course of psychotherapy, especially under hypnosis, and produce a cathartic* effect. It may also come about spontaneously, either a short or a long interval after the original trauma*.

History of psychoanalysis: with three segments psychoanalysis shaped its theory and practice
1) Hypnosis
2) free association and interpretation.
3) Increased focus on the present with the skills of transference

“Within the new technique of transference an important observation needs to be made in regard to the patient’s way of relating in the analytic situation. The patient, instead of remembering the past situation will act it out unconsciously in a compulsive way, by repeating the past repetitively instead of remembering it. The compulsion to repeat is actually an act of transference. The essence of transference is repeating the past unconsciously.”

“Freud now explains the process of ‘working through’, working through begins with uncovering of the resistance via interpretations. It may happen that after pointing out the resistance the resistance intensifies, however this intensification is actually a
sign of success. After the analyst names the resistance the analysand needs time to become acquainted and conscious of his resistance, which allows the process of working through the resistance to take place. The reason why the resistance escalates is because when the repressed impulses are being uncovered they amplify, these impulses feed the resistance which causes the resistance to heighten. Only with the analyst and analysand in alliance and in common ground can the resistance be processed and eventually removed.”