THE "EMPTY BAG" TYPE OF NEUROTIC
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In analysis, some neurotics present a particular problem when an attempt is made to solve a specific sector of their personality difficulties: For an interminable period, they cling to pseudo-aggressive tactics in their relations with other people. Time and again during treatment, both in the transference repetition and outside it, they are shown how senselessly they provoke their fellow men, only in order to prove unconsciously to themselves that they are not masochistic but "aggressive."* At bottom, they gain little by this technique; the inner conscience, for whose benefit the show is produced, remains unconvinced, and the victims of their provocation retaliate, usually with interest. Nevertheless, the technique is persisted in, and is in some cases unchangeable.

Why is this so, and what is the reason for the tenacity of the specific defense?

In analyzing these deeply masochistic neurotics, the writer has found that in addition to the so obvious defense against inner passivity, another element enters the genetic picture; an ego so weak and empty that—bereft of its typical defense—it has nothing to offer, and is incapable of finding a substitute. This "empty bag" attitude reinforces the defensive technique which is typically encountered in orally regressed cases,** and at times makes the defense insurmountable.

Neurotics whom the writer has in mind are people with artistic aspirations but without corresponding performance. They are advertising executives, editors in publishing firms, critics, literary agents: in short, half-parasites, nourished on other people's achievements. There are exceptions, of course, persons who do these jobs creatively, but they are not the rule. The choice of the mechanically-performed profession may, perhaps, not be accidental, and may correspond to the previously-mentioned inner unproductivity and emptiness. Characteristic, and curious, on the part of these neurotics, is their contempt for the "poor suckers"—meaning the creative artists—who make their parasitism possible. Al-

*For a differential diagnosis between normal and neurotic aggression: See table, p. 27, in the author's Battle of the Conscience (Washington Institute of Medicine, 1948).
**Details in The Basic Neurosis (Grune & Stratton. New York. 1949).
though these people sometimes ironically admit that they are "like a kite which cannot fly without a string," their attitude toward the "string" is, nevertheless, one of ironic contempt, and rejection, covering thinly disguised envy.

Neurotics of the "empty bag" type are so fully engulfed in their psychic masochism—and that makes them unproductive*—that instead of producing a sublimation, they come up with, at best, a neurotic defense. Building up that defense, from early childhood on, has sapped all their inner energy; the removal of the defense would leave them completely deflated. To avoid that specific denouement and danger, of which they are unconsciously aware, the defense is perpetuated.

Here are three representative examples, taken from an extensive material.

An editor in a big publishing concern, in analysis because of impotence, constantly quarrelled with the authors "under his supervision," the phrase which, in his megalomania, he devised to describe his type of mechanical and not creative editing. Most of these conflicts grew out of his technique of making objections. Money-making authors were handled with kid gloves, those whose books sold less well, were not. In a rather cowardly fashion, he capitalized on the fact that the less successful the author, the less chance there was of rebellion against his tactics. He got into trouble when a younger author complained to an older friend (also the "property," but in this case highly valued, of the same publisher). The established writer was amazed. "Incredible! He is submissive to me in a rather disgusting fashion." The older writer was so indignant that he called the matter to the attention of the editor-in-chief; the patient was energetically called on the carpet. It was this, coupled with his poor potency, which pushed him into treatment. But even in analysis, his peculiar superciliousness remained static for a long time. The patient denied being overbearing and disagreeable; his claim was that he just did his "duty."

Another patient, an executive in an advertising firm, used the identical technique with his subordinates, especially the "so-called creative bunch," as he put it, tactfully. He got himself fired; and when he was later re-hired under humiliating circumstances, his