

## THE CATCH-PHRASE, A WEAPON OF THE ID

It is the most classical of life's themes, the battle between good and evil. As long as humans have been leaving a recorded history, one finds the story of the war between the dark side and the light. Thanks to Freud's revolutionary notions of the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, since his time most thinkers about this battle have discussed the dark side, the *id*, as the remnants in the human brain of our genetic inheritance of *instinctual drives* from our animal ancestors. The light is discussed as the *superego*, our perhaps uniquely human ability to feel compassion toward our fellow human beings and our desire to ease their suffering as well as to put off our own short-term ephemeral pleasures for something more meaningful and long term.

As human history shows, we have a solid record of inflicting unimaginable torment upon our fellow beings. The *id* is a force of great power. The tool, "Fog of Emotions, It Can Kill" is grim testimony showing the *id's* power in overwhelming the *superego*. In a less dramatic case, yet of importance to the daily decisions we have to make is the assist the *id* gets in overwhelming the *superego* from what might be called "catch-phrases" that have become readily accepted words to live by in our society. By catch-phrase I mean the sort of saying that is often used to justify a choice when someone faces a dilemma, for example, "I chose to follow my heart."

Most choices we face whether in our personal life or in our careers, really do boil down to *id* versus *superego*. Women who ask "why do I always get involved with the wrong kind of guys?" or the male equivalent, "she was hot but I knew she was high-maintenance from the start" reflect the results of a battle between the *id* and the *superego* for control of our decisions. The equivalent on the business side: "Why did I ignore the

risk?" All these comments have the Monday morning quarterback aspect to them. Once the result is in, it seems disturbingly clear how bad a decision we made.

At the time the decision was made the downside was readily apparent. Yet knowing it was a dicey proposition you went ahead anyway. In terms of the relationship decisions, in most cases it was *id* related issues that drew you on, the sexy woman who got your juices flowing or the "bad boy" with a lure of good times and from the career side, wealth and power. The *id* with its lust and need for power won the battle over the *superego* with its attempt to rein in your obtaining pleasure, the consequences be damned.

At some point in the decision making process you had both the pluses and the minuses in mind and just did not know what to do. The *id* was pulling one way and the *superego* the other, your *conscious* struggle to make the right choice, your *ego*, was being pulled from both sides. It is not a stretch to say that euphemistically, "go with your heart not your head" is a fine summary of the dilemma. The heart with its fog of emotions represented your *id* while your head, with its logical approach, represented the *superego*, and poor you, meaning your *conscious ego*, stuck in the middle.

In looking for a way out of the tension of the conflict, you may have looked to a friend for advice and they said: "listen to your heart" or the equivalent "go with your gut." Bingo cries the *id*, recognition at last of the importance of the biological *instinctual* side of things, heart and gut. Chalk up another victory. Forgot your concerns about where the long-term future with a "bad boy" will lead, after all what women does not enjoy the feeling of being used, or the impact on your bank account trying to keep the hot babe in the lifestyle that at least she feels she so justly deserves.

More catch-phrases: “haste makes waste,” “the early bird catches the worm,” “keep it simple,” “don’t think too much,” and “life’s too short.” There are of course many others in the book: *List of Socially Approved Catch-Phrases to Use to Justify Illogical Decisions*. The important decisions of our life are never easy. We all have conflicts in our lives between short-term, have it now pleasure and the other side that represents the long-term best interests choice.

It is only natural we want the easy way out. Our *id* exerts great pressure to have its needs instantly satisfied. The *superego* with its needs to do the “right” things is clearly the weaker of the two. In addition, and the list seems to grow longer decade by decade, our society provides us with a list of catch-phrases, perhaps socially approved excuses would be a better description, as to why we should give in to the short term desires of our hedonistic side.

An awareness of how the *id* injects catch-phrases into our conscious experience as a way to win its battle with the *superego*, is a very straightforward and very useful tool for managing your psyche. Look out for the *id* with its list of socially approved excuses to justify its choices, it may make for a heck of a night, but the hangover may last for a very long time.