

THE PSYCHIC APPARATUS (continued)

In Chapter III we discussed various topics in connection with the differentiation of the ego from the id, its gradual growth, and its functioning. We spoke of the basic psychic functions which are grouped together under the heading, "the ego," such as motor control, sensory perception, memory, affects, and thinking, and drew attention to the fact that the factors which influence ego development fall into two broad categories which we called maturational and environmental or experiential. We discussed the latter category at some length and pointed out the exceptional importance for ego development of one of the objects of the infant's environment, namely his own body. In addition we discussed the very great influence which other persons of the child's environment have on the growth and development of his ego via the process of identification. We turned then to what we call the mode of functioning of the various parts of the psychic apparatus and discussed the primary and secondary processes and primary and secondary process thinking. Finally we discussed the role played in ego formation and functioning by the neutralization of psychic energy deriving from the drives.

In this chapter we shall organize our discussion around two principal topics which in turn are closely related to one another. The first of these concerns the ability of the ego to acquire knowledge of its environment and mastery over it. The second deals with the complex and extremely important ways in which the ego achieves a degree of control and mas-

tery over the id, that is over the wishes and impulses arising from the drives. The one topic has to do with the ego struggling with the outer world in its role of intermediary between id and environment, the other with the ego in the same role struggling with the id itself, or as one might say, with the inner world.

Let us begin with the first of these topics, that is with the ego's mastery of the environment. It is clear that at least three ego functions which we have previously discussed are of fundamental importance in this connection. The first of these functions comprises the sensory perceptions which inform the ego about the surroundings in the first place. The second includes the ability to remember, to compare, and to think according to the secondary process, which permits a much higher level of knowledge about the environment than the elementary sensory impressions alone could ever provide. The third consists of the motor controls and skills which permit the individual to undertake to alter his physical environment by active means. As one would expect, these functions are interrelated rather than separated from one another. For example, motor skills may be essential in gaining sensory impressions, as is the case with the acquisition of stereoscopic vision or the use of the hands in palpation. However, in addition to these various and interrelated ego functions we also distinguish a particular one that plays a most significant role in the ego's relation to the environment and which we call *reality testing* (Freud, 1911, 1923).

By reality testing we mean the ability of the ego to distinguish between the stimuli or perceptions which arise from the outer world, on the one hand, and those which arise from the wishes and impulses of the id, on the other. If the ego is able to perform this task successfully, we say that the individual in question has a good or adequate sense of reality. If his ego cannot perform the task, we say that his sense of reality is poor or defective.

How does a sense of reality develop? We believe that it develops gradually, like other ego functions, as the infant grows and matures over a considerable period of time. We assume that during the first several weeks of its life the infant is unable to distinguish at all between the stimuli from its own body and instinctual drives and those from its environment. It develops the capacity to do so progressively, partly in consequence of the maturation of its nervous system and sensory organs and partly in consequence of experiential factors.

Freud (1911) drew attention to the fact that frustration was one of the latter. In fact he considered that it was of great importance in the development of reality testing during the early months of life. He pointed out, for example, that the infant experiences many times that certain stimuli, e.g., those from the breast and milk, which are important sources of gratification, are sometimes absent. As the infant discovers, this may be true even though the particular stimuli are highly cathected, that is, in this example, even though the infant is hungry.

Such experiences of frustration, which are inevitably repeated over and over in a variety of ways during infancy, Freud considered to be a most significant factor in the development of a sense of reality. Through them the infant learns that some things in the world come and go, that they can be absent as well as present, that they are "not here," however much he may wish them to be so. This is one of the starting points for recognizing that such things (mother's breast, for example) are not "self" but "outside self."

Conversely there are some stimuli which the infant cannot *make* go away. No matter how much he may wish them "not here," here they stay. These stimuli arise from within the body and are in their turn starting points for recognizing that such things (a stomach-ache, for instance) are not "outside self" but "self."

The capacity to tell whether something is "self" or "not

self" is obviously a part of the general function of reality testing, a part to which we refer as the establishment of firm ego boundaries. Actually, it would probably be more accurate to speak of self-boundaries than of ego boundaries, but the latter phrase has become solidly established in the literature by now.

Under the influence of such experiences as we have just outlined, the ego of the growing child gradually develops a capacity to test reality. We know that in childhood this capacity is but partial and varies in effectiveness from time to time. For example, we well know the tendency of the child to experience a game or fantasy as real, at least as long as it lasts. In addition, however, we must recognize that even in normal adult life our view of reality is constantly influenced by our own wishes, fears, hopes, and memories. There are few if any of us who ever see the world clear and see it steady. For the vast majority of us our view of the world about us is more or less influenced by our inner mental lives.

To take a simple example, think how different a foreign people seem to us to be when our respective countries are enjoying peaceful relations from what they seem to be when our countries are at war. They become transformed from pleasant, even admirable people to despicable and vicious ones. What has really caused the change in our estimate of their characters? I think we should have to agree that the decisive factors producing the change have been psychic processes occurring within ourselves. No doubt, these psychic processes are quite complex ones, but one can readily guess that at least one important one is an arousal of hatred for the enemy, a desire to hurt or destroy him, and the resultant guilt, that is fear of punishment and fear of retaliation. It is in consequence of such turbulent feelings within us that our erstwhile admirable neighbors become despicable and vicious in our eyes.

The incompleteness or the unreliability of the capacity of our egos for reality testing is thus reflected in the prevalence

of prejudices such as we have just discussed. It is also apparent from the widespread and tenacious belief in superstitions and magical practices, whether religious or not, as well as in religious beliefs in general. Nevertheless the adult normally attains a considerable degree of success in his ability to test reality, at least in usual or everyday situations, an ability which is lost or considerably impaired only by a severe mental illness. Patients who are sick with such an illness have much more serious disturbances in their ability to test reality than one is accustomed to see in normal or neurotic people. As an example, one may merely cite the mentally ill patient who believes his delusions or hallucinations to be real, for instance, when in fact they have their origins primarily in the fears and wishes within himself.

Indeed, a disturbance in reality testing is such a regular feature of various, severe, mental illnesses that it has become a diagnostic criterion of them. The serious consequences of such a disturbance serve to emphasize to us the importance of the capacity of reality testing to the ego in its normal role as executant for the id. An intact reality sense enables the ego to act efficiently upon the environment in the interests of the id. It is thus a valuable asset to the ego when the latter is allied with the id and attempting to exploit the environment with regard to opportunities for gratification.

Let us now look at the other aspect of the ego's role as an intermediary between the id and the environment which we proposed to consider in this chapter. In this new aspect we find the ego delaying, controlling, or otherwise opposing discharge of id energies rather than furthering or facilitating their discharge.

As we understand the relationship between ego and id, the capacity of the ego to control the discharge of id energies is in the first place something which is necessary or valuable for the efficient exploitation of the environment, as we mentioned above. If one can wait a little bit, he can often avoid some un-

pleasant consequence of gratification or increase the pleasure to be gained. As a simple example, a year-and-a-half-old child who wants to urinate may be able to avoid the unpleasure of a scolding if his ego can delay the onset of urination till he gets to the toilet, and at the same time he can gain an extra pleasure of praise and affection. In addition, we have seen that some delay of discharge of drive energy is an essential part of the development of the secondary process and of secondary process thinking, which is certainly a valuable asset to the ego in exploiting the environment.

We can understand, therefore, that the very process of ego development results in a certain degree of delay in the discharge of id energies and a certain measure of control of the id by the ego. Anna Freud (1954a) expressed this aspect of the relationship between the id and the ego by comparing it to the relationship between the individual and the civil service in a modern state. She pointed out that in a complex society the citizen must delegate many tasks to civil servants if he wants them done efficiently and to his own best interests. The creation of a civil service is therefore to the individual citizen's advantage and brings him many benefits which he is happy to enjoy, but at the same time he discovers that there are certain disadvantages also. The civil service is often too slow in satisfying a particular need of the individual and seems to have its own ideas of what is best for him, ideas that do not always coincide with what he wants at the moment. In a similar way the ego may impose delay on the id drives, may argue the claims of the environment against them, and even appropriates for its own use some of the energy of the drives by means of neutralization.

We might expect from what we have learned so far about the relationship between ego and id that the relationship between the ego and the environment would never be strong enough to force the ego into serious or long-continued opposition to the instinctual demands of the id. After all, we have

said repeatedly that the relationship of the ego to reality was primarily in the service of the id and we should expect therefore that in the event of a really major conflict between the id wishes and the realities of the environment, the ego would be substantially allied with the id.

What we find to be the case, however, is rather different from our expectation. We learn that the ego may in fact array itself against the id under certain circumstances and may even directly oppose the discharge of its drive energies. This opposition of ego to id is not clearly evident until after there has been a certain degree of development and organization of the ego functions, of course, but its beginnings are no later than the latter part of the first year of life. A simple example of such opposition would be the ego's rejection of a wish to kill a sibling. As we know, very small children often act upon such a wish by attacking the sibling, but with the passage of time and under the pressure of environmental disapproval the ego eventually opposes and rejects this id wish, to such an extent in fact that at last it seems to cease to exist. At least as far as external behavior is concerned, the ego has prevailed and the wish to kill has been given up.

Thus we see that although the ego is primarily the executive of the id and continues to be so in many respects throughout life, it begins to exercise an increasing degree of control over the id rather early in life and gradually comes to be in opposition to some id strivings and even in open conflict with them. From being the obedient and helpful servant of the id in every respect, the ego becomes in some part the opponent and even the master of the id.

But this revision of our conception of the role of the ego must raise some questions in our minds which deserve to be answered. How are we to account for the fact that the ego, a part of the id which began as the servant of the drives, becomes to some extent their master? Also what particular

means does the ego use for keeping the id impulses in check when it succeeds in doing so?

The answer to the first question lies partly in the nature of the infant's relation to its environment and partly in certain psychological characteristics of the human mind. Some of these characteristics are new and some are already familiar to us from our previous discussion. What they have in common is that they are all related to ego functioning.

First for the environment. We know that the infant's environment is of very special, biological significance to it, or rather that parts of its environment are. Without these parts, which are at first its mother and later both parents, it could not survive. It is not surprising to us, therefore, that the human infant's unusually great and uniquely prolonged physical dependence on its parents is paralleled by its psychological dependence on them. For the infant, as we have seen, is dependent for most of its sources of pleasure upon its parents and we realize that it is in consequence of these several factors that the infant's mother, for example, can become such an important object of the infant's environment that in case of a conflict between a demand of the mother and a direct id wish of the infant, the ego sides with the former against the latter. For example if the mother forbids the expression of a destructive impulse, such as tearing the pages out of books, the ego will often take the mother's side against the id.

This part of our answer is easy to understand and requires no very technical or involved discussion. In passing on to the rest of our answer to the first of the questions which we asked above, we shall have to discuss more than one factor and at some length.

First of all we may re-emphasize that ego formation and ego functioning use energy which comes either wholly or in large part from the id. Unless we are to assume that the id is an infinite reservoir of psychic energy, we must conclude that the mere fact of the existence of the ego and its function-

ing implies a reduction in the amount of drive energy in the id. Some of it has been used up to make and run the ego. Indeed, in looking about us at our fellow men we sometimes have the impression that there is no id left in some particularly passionless members of the species and that *all* of their psychic energy has gone into ego formation, even though we know that such an extreme is an impossible one. The important point, however, is that the development of the ego results inevitably in some degree of weakening of the id. From this point of view one may say that the ego grows like a parasite at the expense of the id, and this may well contribute in some measure to the fact that the ego eventually is strong enough to become in part the master of the id rather than remaining forever and completely its servant, although, as we have said earlier, it seems unlikely that it can fully explain this outcome.

At this point we may profitably mention several processes which are of importance in ego formation and functioning and which contribute significantly to the process of diminishing the psychic energy of the id and of increasing that of the ego.

One such process which we have seen to be a principal part of ego development and which must operate in the manner just described is the neutralization of drive energy. This process of denaturation, which we described at some length in Chapter III, clearly results in a reduction of the libidinal and aggressive energies of the id and an increase in the energy which is available to the ego.

Another of the factors which we know to be important in ego development and which plays a significant role in diverting psychic energy from the id to the ego is the process of identification. Identification was also discussed in Chapter III, and the reader will remember that it consists essentially in the individual becoming like an object (person or thing) of the outside world which was psychologically important to

the individual, that is, which was highly cathected with drive energy.

The "becoming like," as we have seen, produces a change in the ego, and one of the consequences of this change is that either all or part of the cathexes which were previously attached to an external object become attached instead to the copy of that object in the ego. The fact that some of the id energies are now attached to a part of the ego contributes to the enrichment of the energies at the disposal of the ego at the expense of the id and to the strengthening of the ego vis-à-vis the id.

There is still another way that deserves our attention by which id demands are weakened and thereby rendered more liable to control by the ego and that is the process of fantasied gratification. It is a remarkable, though a commonplace fact that a fantasy, whether a daydream or a dream during sleep, in which one or several id wishes are represented as fulfilled, results actually in a partial gratification of the id impulses which are concerned and in a partial discharge of their energy. Thus for example a sleeper who is thirsty may dream of quenching his thirst and may feel sufficiently satisfied by the dream so that he goes on sleeping even though the water tap is only in the next room.

It is obvious even on brief reflection that the part played in our mental lives by fantasy is a very great one indeed, and we do not propose even to outline the general importance of the function of fantasy at this point. We wish only to point out that one effect of fantasy may be that an id impulse is so nearly satisfied that it is relatively easy for the ego to check or control it thereafter, and that fantasy therefore can play a role in making it possible for the ego to master a part of the id. We may add what should be obvious, namely that such fantasies occur frequently in normal mental life.

We come now to the final one of the psychological characteristics which we wish to discuss as playing a part in

enabling the ego to become to some extent the master of the id. This characteristic is probably the decisive one in the entire situation and is the one which is really responsible for the ability of the ego to oppose and master the impulses of the id to a certain degree and at certain times. It is the human tendency to develop anxiety under certain circumstances, a tendency which will not only require a rather lengthy and technical discussion to elucidate it, but also a considerable introduction, since the current, psychoanalytic theory of anxiety cannot be understood without first presenting what Freud (1911) called the pleasure principle. This hypothesis we have not yet discussed and we propose to do so now.

Expressed in simplest terms, the pleasure principle states that the mind tends to operate in such a way as to achieve pleasure and to avoid its opposite. The German word which Freud used to express the opposite of pleasure is *Unlust*, which has often been translated as "pain," so that the pleasure principle is sometimes alternatively called the pleasure-pain principle. However, "pain," unlike *Unlust*, also denotes the physical sensation of pain, as well as the opposite of pleasure, and in order to avoid ambiguity on that score it has been suggested by more recent translators that the somewhat clumsy, but unambiguous word "unpleasure" be used instead of "pain."

Freud added to the concept of the pleasure principle the ideas that in earliest life the tendency toward achieving pleasure is imperious and immediate and that the individual only gradually acquires the ability to postpone the achievement of pleasure as he grows older.

Now this concept of the pleasure principle sounds very much like the concept of the primary process which we discussed in Chapter III. According to the pleasure principle there is a tendency to the achievement of pleasure and avoidance of unpleasure, a tendency which in earliest life brooks no delay. According to the primary process, cathexes of drive energy must be discharged as soon as possible, and we further

assume that this process is dominant in mental functioning at the start of life. In addition, in connection with the pleasure principle Freud asserted that with age there was a gradual increase in the individual's capacity to postpone the attainment of pleasure and the avoidance of unpleasure, while in connection with the primary process he formulated the idea that the development of the secondary process and its increase in relative importance permitted the individual to postpone the discharge of cathexes as he grew older.

In most of its essentials, therefore, Freud's early concept of the pleasure principle corresponds to his later one of the primary process. The only real difference, as distinct from terminological ones, is that the pleasure principle is formulated in *subjective* terms while the primary process is formulated in *objective* ones. That is to say, the words "pleasure" or "unpleasure" refer to subjective phenomena, in this case to affects, while the phrases "discharge of cathexis" or "discharge of drive energy" refer to the objective phenomena of energy distribution and discharge, in this case within the id. It should be noted, by the way, that according to our theories an affect or emotion is an ego phenomenon, however much it may depend for its genesis on processes within the id.

Freud was naturally well aware of the great similarity between the formulation of the pleasure principle and the formulation of that aspect of id functioning which he had named the primary process. In fact he tried to unify the two concepts and it is really because he felt that his attempt to do so was unsuccessful that we must discuss the two hypotheses separately at this point.

The attempt to unify the two concepts was made on the basis of a very simple assumption, the assumption in fact that an increase in the amount of undischarged, mobile cathexes within the mental apparatus corresponds or gives rise to a feeling of unpleasure, while the discharge of such cathexes, with a corresponding lessening of their remaining amount,

leads to a feeling of pleasure. In simpler and somewhat less precise terms we may say that Freud (1911) originally assumed that an increase in psychic tension caused unpleasure while a decrease in such tension caused pleasure. If this assumption were correct, the pleasure principle and the primary process would come to be merely different wordings of the same hypothesis.

The argument would run about as follows: The pleasure principle says that in the very young child there is a tendency to achieve pleasure through gratification which may not be postponed. The primary process says that in the very young child there is a tendency to discharge of cathexis, that is, of drive energy which may not be postponed. But, according to Freud's original assumption the pleasure of gratification is one with or perhaps one aspect of the discharge of cathexis. If the assumption were true, therefore, the two formulations would say the same thing in different words and the pleasure principle and the primary process would be merely two alternative formulations of the same hypothesis.

Unfortunately for our natural longing for simplicity in our theories Freud (1924c) concluded that although pleasure accompanied a discharge of mobile psychic energy in the vast majority of cases, while unpleasure was the consequence of the accumulation of such energy, still there were important cases in which this did not seem to be so. In fact he asserted that there were even cases where the reverse was true. As an example he pointed out that at least up to a certain point an increase in sexual tension is experienced as pleasurable.

Freud's final decision, therefore, was that the relationships between the phenomena of the accumulation and discharge of mobile drive energy, on the one hand, and the affects of pleasure and unpleasure, on the other, were neither simple nor determinable. He offered one guess, namely that the rate and rhythm of increment or discharge of cathexis might be a determining factor and left the matter about at that. There

have been subsequent attempts to develop a satisfactory hypothesis about the relationship between pleasure and the accumulation and discharge of drive energy, but none of them is widely enough accepted at present to justify its inclusion here (Jacobson, 1953).

The consequence of these facts is that we cannot yet satisfactorily formulate the pleasure principle in terms of later concepts which deal principally with psychic energy. We must therefore hold to the earlier version of it which is formulated in terms of the subjective experiences of pleasure and unpleasure: the mind, or the individual in his mental life, seeks to attain pleasure and to avoid unpleasure.

The reader will recall that our reason for introducing a discussion of the pleasure principle at this point was to pave the way for the subject of anxiety and it is to this latter topic that we shall now turn our attention. The importance of the pleasure principle in the psychoanalytic theory of anxiety will become apparent in the course of our discussion.

Freud's original theory of anxiety was that it resulted from a damming up and inadequate discharge of libido. Whether the abnormal accumulation of libido within the psyche was the result of external obstacles to its proper discharge (Freud, 1895) or whether it was due to inner obstacles such as unconscious conflicts or inhibitions concerning sexual gratification was relatively unimportant from the point of view of the theory of anxiety. In either case the result was an accumulation of undischarged libido which might be transformed into anxiety. The theory did not explain how the transformation took place nor what factors determined the precise time when it took place. It is also important to note that according to this theory the term "anxiety" denoted a pathological type of fear which was, to be sure, related phenomenologically to the normal fear of an external danger, but which had a distinctly different origin. Fear of external danger was, presumably, a learned reaction, that is, a reaction based upon experience,

while anxiety was transformed libido, that is, a pathological manifestation of drive energy.

This was the status of the psychoanalytic theory of anxiety until 1926. In that year there was published a monograph by Freud called *The Problem of Anxiety* in its American translation and *Inhibition, Symptom, and Anxiety* in the British one. In this monograph Freud pointed out that anxiety is the central problem of neurosis, and he proposed a new theory concerning anxiety which was based on the structural hypothesis and which we shall presently summarize.

Before we do so it is worth while to note in passing the close relationship between the subject matter of *The Problem of Anxiety*, that is Freud's second theory of anxiety, and that of two earlier works to which we have frequently referred during the course of Chapters II and III, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *The Ego and the Id*. These two monographs contain the fundamental concepts which differentiate modern psychoanalytic theory from what went before. These concepts are the dual theory of the drives and the structural hypothesis. They permit a more consistent and more convenient way of viewing mental phenomena than was possible before, as well as of understanding their complicated interrelationships. The new theories also paved the way for important advances in the clinical application of psychoanalysis. An outstanding example of this has been the development of ego analysis and of the entire field of psychoanalytic ego psychology which has taken place during the last twenty-five years.

Freud himself wrote several papers in which he showed how the new theories could be fruitfully applied to clinical problems (Freud, 1924b, 1924c, 1924d, 1926). *The Problem of Anxiety* is by far the most important single instance of such a fruitful application. In it Freud advanced a clinically applicable theory of anxiety which was based on the insights afforded by the structural hypothesis.

In attempting to understand the new theory we must realize first of all that Freud considered anxiety to have a biological, inherited basis. In other words, he believed that the human organism is congenitally endowed with the capacity for reacting with the psychological and physical manifestations which we call anxiety. Indeed, he pointed out that in man as in lower animals this capacity has a definite survival value for the individual, at least in his "natural" state. If a human being, without the protection of his parents, could not be frightened by anything, he would soon be destroyed.

What Freud tried to explain in his theory of anxiety, therefore, was neither the nature nor the basic origin of anxiety, but rather its place and its importance in the mental life of man. As we shall see, the formulations that he proposed in *The Problem of Anxiety* in part included his earlier formulations and in part went far beyond them.

In addition one major part of his earlier theory was completely abandoned: he gave up entirely the idea that undischarged libido was *transformed* into anxiety. He took this step on clinical grounds and demonstrated the validity of his new position by a rather detailed discussion of two cases of childhood phobia.

In his new theory Freud proposed to relate the appearance of anxiety to what he called "traumatic situations" and "danger situations." The first of these he defined as a situation in which the psyche is overwhelmed by an influx of stimuli which is too great for it either to master or to discharge. He believed that when this occurs anxiety develops automatically.

Since it is part of the function of the ego both to master incoming stimuli and to discharge them effectively, it would be expected that traumatic situations would occur more often in the early months and years of life when the ego is still relatively weak and undeveloped. Indeed Freud considered that the prototype of the traumatic situation is the experience of birth as the emerging infant is affected by it. At that time the

infant is subjected to an overwhelming influx of external and visceral sensory stimuli and responds with what Freud considered to be the manifestations of anxiety.

Freud's chief interest in birth as a traumatic situation accompanied by anxiety was apparently that it could be viewed as a prototype of later, psychologically more significant traumatic situations and as such fitted in with his new ideas rather neatly. Otto Rank (1924) attempted to apply this idea of Freud's clinically in a much bolder way than Freud had himself intended and proposed the notion that all neuroses were traceable to the birth trauma and could be cured by reconstructing what that trauma must have been and making the patient conscious of it. Rank's theories created a considerable stir among psychoanalysts at the time they were first proposed, but they have been pretty well discarded by now.

Freud paid considerable attention in his monograph to the traumatic situations which occur in early infancy after birth. As an example of such situations he chose the following. An infant early in life is dependent upon its mother for the gratification of most of its bodily needs and for the achievement of the gratification that in this period of life is primarily connected with the satisfaction of bodily needs, as for example in nursing, where the infant experiences oral gratification as well as the pleasure of being held, warmed, and fondled. The infant, before a certain stage in its life, cannot achieve these pleasures, that is, these instinctual gratifications, by itself. If, when the mother is absent, the infant experiences an instinctual need which can be gratified only through the mother, then a situation develops which is traumatic for the child in the sense in which Freud used this word. The infant's ego is not sufficiently developed to be able to postpone gratification by holding the drive wishes in abeyance and instead the infant's psyche is overwhelmed by an influx of stimuli. Since it can neither master nor adequately discharge these stimuli, anxiety develops.

It is worth noting that in our example, and of course in all the other cases which our example is intended to typify, the flood of stimuli giving rise to this primitive, automatic type of anxiety is of *internal* origin. Specifically it arises from the operation of the drives or more precisely of the id. For this reason anxiety of the automatic type which we have been discussing has been referred to at times as "id anxiety." This name is rarely used today, however, since it permitted the misconception that the id was the *site* of this kind of anxiety. Actually, Freud's idea, contained in the structural hypothesis, was that the ego is the site of all emotions. The experiencing of any emotion is a function of the ego, according to Freud, and of course this must be true of anxiety also. What facilitated the misconception that the id was the site of automatically induced anxiety was that the ego hardly exists as a differentiated, much less an integrated structure at such an early age as the one to which our example of the preceding paragraph refers. Tiny infants, as we have said before, have only the rudiments of an ego and even the little bit that has begun to differentiate from the rest of the id is still hardly distinguishable from it. Nevertheless, whatever ego *can* be differentiated in such young children is the site of the anxiety which develops.

Freud also believed that the tendency or capacity of the mental apparatus to react to an excessive influx of stimuli in the way described above, that is, by developing anxiety, persists throughout life. In other words, a traumatic situation, in Freud's special sense of this word, may develop at any age. To be sure, such situations will develop much more often in very early life for the reason which we gave above, namely that the ego is as yet undeveloped, since the better developed the ego, the better able it is to master or discharge incoming stimuli whether of internal or of external origin, and the reader will of course remember that it is only when such stimuli can

not be adequately mastered or discharged that the situation becomes a traumatic one and anxiety develops.

If Freud was correct in his assumption that birth is a prototype of later traumatic situations, then the birth experience is an example of a traumatic situation in infancy which is caused by stimuli that are principally of external origin. In other cases the offending stimuli originate primarily from the drives, that is their origin is an internal one, as was true for example of the infant whose mother was not there to supply the gratification for which its id was clamoring and which only she could give.

As far as we know, traumatic situations arising as a consequence of the demands of the id are the most common and the most important in early life. Freud also believed that such situations arise in later life in those cases which he classified as "actual" anxiety neuroses (see Chapter VIII) and that the anxiety from which those patients suffer is in fact due to the overwhelming influx of stimuli arising from sexual drive energy which has not been adequately discharged because of external hindrances.

However, this particular assumption of Freud's has relatively little practical significance, since the diagnosis of actual neurosis is rarely if ever made at present. Another application of the same basic idea has assumed more clinical importance, however, namely the assumption that the so-called traumatic neuroses of adult life, as, for example, battle neuroses and what used to be called shell-shock, are the result of an overwhelming influx of *external* stimuli which has then automatically given rise to anxiety. Freud himself raised this possibility and many authors have subsequently appeared to assume that it was true, or at least that Freud believed it to be true. Actually Freud (1926) expressed the opinion that a traumatic neurosis probably could not arise in such a simple way, without what he called the "participation of the deeper layers of the personality."

Freud's concept of traumatic situations and of the automatic development of anxiety in traumatic situations constitutes what we might call the first part of his new theory of anxiety. It is the part which is closest to his earlier theory, although it differs substantially from the earlier one with regard to the mode of production of anxiety. The reader will remember that according to Freud's earlier view anxiety arose from the transformation of libido, while according to his later view it developed as the result of an overwhelming influx of stimuli which might or might not arise from the drives.

We may now summarize the first part of 'Freud's new theory as follows:

(1) Anxiety develops automatically whenever the psyche is overwhelmed by an influx of stimuli too great to be mastered or discharged.

(2) These stimuli may be either of external or of internal origin, but most frequently they arise from the id, that is, from the drives.

(3) When anxiety develops automatically according to this pattern, the situation is called a traumatic one.

(4) The prototype of such traumatic situations is birth.

(5) Automatic anxiety is characteristic of infancy, because of the weakness and immaturity of the ego at that time of life, and is also found in adult life in cases of so-called actual anxiety neurosis.

The second part of the new theory is that, in the course of growth, the young child learns to anticipate the advent of a traumatic situation and to react to it with anxiety before it becomes traumatic. This type of anxiety Freud called signal anxiety. It is produced by a situation of *danger* or the anticipation of danger, its production is a function of the ego, and it serves to mobilize the forces at the command of the ego to meet or to avoid the impending traumatic situation.

To illustrate the meaning of the words "danger situation" Freud returned to the example of the infant left alone by its

mother. The reader will recall that if, while still alone, the infant should be assailed by some need for whose gratification the mother's presence was necessary, the situation would become traumatic and anxiety would develop automatically. Freud argued that after it has reached a certain stage of development the infant's ego will recognize that a relationship exists between its mother's departure and the development of the highly unpleasurable state of automatically induced anxiety that sometimes appears after she has gone. In other words, the ego will know that if mother is present, anxiety will not develop, while it may do so if she is gone. As a result the ego comes to consider separation from the mother as a "danger situation," the danger being the appearance of an imperious demand for gratification from the id while mother is away, with the consequent development of a traumatic situation.

What does the infant do in such a danger situation? Part of what it does is familiar to anyone who has had experience with children. By various expressions of distress the child attempts to keep mother from leaving or to summon her if she has already left. However, Freud was more interested in what goes on intrapsychically in the infant than in the various ego activities which are intended to alter the external environment, important as these may be. He suggested that in a danger situation the ego reacts with anxiety which it actively produces itself and which he proposed to call signal anxiety, since it is produced by the ego as a signal of danger.

But one moment before we proceed. How can the ego actively produce anxiety, whether as a signal or for any other purpose? The answer to this question depends upon our recalling that the ego is after all a group of related functions. We believe that in a danger situation certain of these functions, e.g., sensory perception, memory, and some type of thought process, are concerned with recognizing the danger, while other parts of the ego, or other ego functions react to the danger with what is perceived as anxiety. Indeed we can

even guess from our clinical experience that the perception of danger probably gives rise to a fantasy of the traumatic situation and that this fantasy is what causes signal anxiety. Whether or not this guess is correct, we can say that some ego functions are responsible for recognizing the danger and others for reacting to it with anxiety.

Let us continue now with Freud's exposition of what happens when the ego recognizes a danger situation and reacts to it by producing signal anxiety. It is at this point that the pleasure principle enters the picture. Signal anxiety is unpleasant and the more intense the anxiety, the more unpleasant it is. We assume of course that in some degree the intensity of the anxiety is proportional to the ego's estimate of the severity or of the immediacy of the danger or of both. So we expect that in the case of any considerable danger situation the anxiety and the unpleasure will also be considerable. The unpleasure then automatically sets into action what Freud called the "all-powerful" pleasure principle. It is the operation of the pleasure principle which then gives the ego the necessary strength to check the emergence or continued action of whatever id impulses might be giving rise to the danger situation. In the example of the infant left by its mother these impulses might be expressed by the desire to be nursed and fondled by her, for instance.

Freud outlined a series of *typical* danger situations which may be expected to occur in sequence in the child's life. The first of these, chronologically, is separation from a person who is important to the child as a source of gratification. This is often referred to in the psychoanalytic literature as "loss of the object," or as "loss of the loved object," although at the age when this is *first* perceived as a danger the child is still much too young for us to attribute to it such a complex emotion as love. The next typical danger situation for the child is the loss of love of a person of its environment on whom it must depend for gratification. In other words, even though

the person is present, the child may fear the loss of its love. This is referred to as the "loss of the object's love." The next, typical danger situation is different for the two sexes. In the case of the little boy the danger is the loss of his penis, which is referred to as castration in the psychoanalytic literature. In the case of the little girl the danger is some analogous genital injury. The last danger situation is that of guilt, or disapproval and punishment by the superego.

The first of these dangers we assume to be characteristic of the earliest stage of ego development, perhaps up to the age of one and a half years, when there is added to it the second, while the third does not occupy the center of the stage until the age of two and a half to three years, and the last, of course, becomes important only after the age of five or six years, when the superego has been formed. All of these dangers persist at least to some degree throughout life *unconsciously*—in neurotic patients, to an excessive degree—and the relative importance of each danger varies from person to person. It is obviously of the greatest practical importance in clinical work with a patient to know which danger is the chief one that the patient unconsciously fears.

Freud asserted that anxiety is the central problem of mental illness, and his assertion is accepted by most of us today. We may incidentally remind ourselves that this was not always so. Before the publication of *The Problem of Anxiety* the main emphasis in psychoanalytic thinking about the neuroses, both theoretically and clinically, was on the vicissitudes of the libido, in particular on libidinal fixations. At that time, as we have said earlier, anxiety was thought to be libido which had been transformed as a consequence of its inadequate discharge. It was natural therefore that the libido should occupy the center of the stage in discussions of theory and that the clinician's principal concern should be to undo fixations and in general to insure adequate discharge of libido. This is not intended to imply that it is any less important now than

formerly to remove fixations. It is only that we now tend to look at these problems, both clinically and theoretically, from the point of view of both the ego and the id, rather than from the side of the id alone.

With all the emphasis in the current psychoanalytic literature on the importance of anxiety in mental illness it is easy to lose sight of the fact that the role of anxiety in enabling the ego to check or inhibit instinctual wishes or impulses which seem to it to be dangerous is an essential one in normal development. This function of anxiety is by no means pathological in itself. On the contrary, it is a necessary part of mental life and growth. Without it, for example, any sort of education, in the broadest sense of the word, would be impossible. The individual would be at the mercy of each impulse as it arose in his id and would have to attempt to gratify each one in turn or simultaneously, unless the attempt to do so resulted in a traumatic situation in which the individual was overwhelmed with anxiety.

Another point about signal anxiety is this: it is, or should be, very much less in intensity than the anxiety which accompanies a traumatic situation. In other words, this signal which the ego learns to give in the course of its development is less intensely unpleasurable than the anxiety which might develop if the signal were not given and a traumatic situation developed. Signal anxiety is an attenuated anxiety.

Let us now recapitulate this second part of the new theory of anxiety:

- (1) In the course of development the ego acquires the capacity to produce anxiety when a danger situation arises (threat of a traumatic situation) and later, in anticipation of danger.
- (2) Through the operation of the pleasure principle this signal anxiety enables the ego to check or inhibit id impulses in a situation of danger.
- (3) There is a characteristic set or sequence of danger

situations in early and later childhood which persist as such to a greater or less degree throughout life *unconsciously*.

(4) Signal anxiety is an attenuated form of anxiety, it plays a great role in normal development, and it is the form of anxiety which is characteristic of the psychoneuroses.

We have now completed our answer to the first of the two questions which we raised on page 74. This was the question of accounting for the fact that, although the ego begins as a part of the id which is the servant of the rest, it eventually becomes to some extent the master of the id as time goes on. We wish now to apply ourselves to answering the second question which we raised on page 75, namely, just how the ego manages to keep the id impulses in check when it succeeds in doing so.

We understand from our discussion of anxiety that when the ego opposes the emergence of an id impulse it does so because it judges that the emergence of that impulse will create a danger situation. The ego then produces anxiety as a signal of danger, wins the help of the pleasure principle in this way, and is able to offer successful opposition to the emergence of the dangerous impulses. In psychoanalytical terminology we speak of such opposition as the *defense* or as the defensive operation of the ego. Our question may then be framed as follows, "What are the defenses which the ego has to offer against the id?"

The answer to this question is a very simple, although a very general one. The ego can use anything which lies to its hand that will serve the purpose. Any ego attitude, any perception, a change in attention, furtherance of another id impulse which is safer than the dangerous one and will compete with it, a vigorous attempt to neutralize the energy of the dangerous drive, the formation of identifications, or the promotion of fantasy can be used alone or in any combination in a defensive way. In a word the ego can and does use all of

the processes of normal ego formation and ego function for defensive purposes at one time or another.

In addition to these defensive operations of the ego, however, in which the ego makes use of processes which are already familiar to us from previous discussion, there are certain processes of the ego which have to do primarily with the ego's defenses against the id. To these Anna Freud (1936) gave the name of "defense mechanisms" and our chief concern in our further discussion of the ego's defenses will be with them.

Any list which we might give of the defense mechanisms would be necessarily incomplete and open to criticism, since there are still differences of opinion among analysts about what should and what should not be called a defense mechanism as opposed to the other means which are available to the ego for the mastering of the impulses of the id. What we shall do therefore is to try to define and discuss those defense mechanisms which are generally recognized as such and which are generally admitted to be of considerable importance in mental functioning.

The mechanism which was earliest recognized and which has been most extensively discussed in the psychoanalytic literature is the one which we call *repression* (Freud, 1915b). Repression consists in an activity of the ego which bars from consciousness the unwanted id impulse or any of its derivatives, whether memories, emotions, desires, or wish-fulfilling fantasies. All are as though they did not exist as far as the individual's *conscious* life is concerned. A repressed memory is a forgotten one from the subjective point of view of the individual in whom repression has taken place. Indeed, we may remark parenthetically that we don't know for sure whether there is any type of forgetting other than repression.

The act of repression sets up within the mind a permanent, or at least a long-lasting opposition between ego and id at the locus of the repression. We believe that on the one hand the

repressed material continues to be charged with a certain cathexis of drive energy which constantly presses for satisfaction, while on the other side the ego maintains the repression by means of a constant expenditure of a portion of the psychic energy at its disposal. This energy is called a counter-cathexis, since it has the function of opposing the cathexis of drive energy with which the repressed material is charged.

The equilibrium between cathexis and counter-cathexis is never a statically fixed one. It is the result of a balance between opposing forces and it may shift at any time. As long as the counter-cathexis expended by the ego remains stronger than the cathexis of the repressed material, the latter remains repressed. If the counter-cathexis becomes weak, however, the repressed material will tend to emerge into consciousness and action. That is, the repression will begin to fail, as we say, and the same will be the case if the intensity of the drive cathexis is increased without there being a corresponding increase in counter-cathexis.

Perhaps it is worth while to illustrate these possibilities. The counter-cathexis put forth by the ego can be diminished in several ways. It seems to happen for example in many toxic and febrile conditions, of which a very familiar one is alcohol intoxication. A person may exhibit in his overt behavior or speech libidinal and aggressive tendencies while drunk that he himself knows nothing of when he is sober, and the same may be true of other toxic states. A comparable reduction in counter-cathexis seems to occur frequently during sleep, as we shall see in Chapter VII, with the result that repressed wishes and memories may appear consciously in a dream in a way that would be quite impossible in the dreamer's waking state.

Contrariwise, we have good reason to believe that at puberty, for example, there is an increase in the energy available to the id, so that at that time of life repressions which have been fairly solid for several years may break down either

partly or completely. In addition, we assume that lack of gratification tends to increase the strength of the id impulses. Just as the starving man will eat food that would ordinarily disgust him, so the individual who has been severely deprived sexually, for example, will be more liable to have his repressions fail than if he had not been so long or so severely deprived. Another factor which probably weakens repressions by increasing the strength of the id impulses is that of seduction or temptation.

We must also point out that if a repression is weakened and is about to fail, or even if it does fail to some degree, this does not mean that the struggle is necessarily ended between the ego and the id about those particular impulses and that the impulses will thereafter have fairly direct and free access to consciousness as well as the ego's help in achieving gratification. This outcome is of course a possible one. In the transition from childhood to adulthood, for example, it is necessary, in our society at least, for many sexual repressions to be abrogated wholly or in part if the adult sexual adjustment is to be a normal one. However, another outcome is also frequent. As soon as the id impulse starts to break through to consciousness and to satisfaction, the ego reacts to the breakthrough as a new danger and once more produces the signal of anxiety, in this way mobilizing fresh strength for a renewed defense against the unwanted and dangerous impulse. If the ego's attempt is successful, an adequate defense is re-established, whether it be by repression or in some other way, which in turn requires a further expenditure of counter-cathexic energy by the ego for its maintenance.

With reference to the possibility of shifts in the equilibrium between the ego and the id which exists in repression, we should add that it is possible (Freud, 1926) that there may be such a thing as the *completely* successful repression of a wish, let us say, which results in the actual *disappearance* of the wish and the abolition of its energetic cathexis, or at least in the com-

plete diversion of its cathexis to other mental contents. In practice we know of no example of such an ideally complete repression. In fact, in our clinical work we deal chiefly with cases in which repression has been conspicuously *unsuccessful*, with the result that psychoneurotic symptoms have developed (see Chapter VIII). At any rate the only cases of which we have positive knowledge are those in which the repressed material continues to be cathected with drive energy which must consequently be opposed by a counter-cathexis.

There are two more points which should be made clear about the mechanism of repression. The first of these is that the entire process goes on unconsciously. It is not only the repressed material that is unconscious. The activities of the ego which constitute repression are quite as unconscious. One is no more aware of "repressing" something than one is of forgetting something. The only thing one can be aware of is the end result. However, there is a conscious activity which is somewhat analogous to repression. This activity is usually referred to as *suppression* in the psychoanalytic literature. It is the familiar decision to forget about something and to think no more about it. It is more than likely that there are intermediates between suppression and repression and it may even be that there is no truly sharp line of demarcation between the two. However, when we use the word "repression," we mean that the barring from consciousness and the erection of a durable counter-cathexis have taken place unconsciously.

The second of our final points is that when something is repressed it is not enough to say that it is forcibly barred from entering consciousness. It is equally important to realize that the repressed has become functionally separated from the ego as a whole and has become instead a part of the id.

Such a statement requires some explanation. Until now in our discussion of repression we have spoken of an opposition or conflict between the ego on the one hand and an impulse of the id on the other. It would certainly make no great sense

to say that repression makes an id impulse a part of the id. What we must realize in this connection is that the memories, fantasies, and emotions which are intimately associated with the id impulse in question comprise many elements which were parts of the ego *before* repression took place. After all, before the repression the ego functions were at the service of this particular id impulse as they were at the service of other ones, so that id impulse and ego operations formed a harmonious whole rather than two conflicting parts. When repression took place it was the *whole* that was repressed, with the result that something was really subtracted from the organization of the ego and added to the id. It is easy to understand, if one bears this fact in mind, that an undue degree of repression is harmful to the integrity of the ego. We can realize now that each repression actually diminishes the extent of the ego and therefore renders it less effective than it has been. We may add, as an additional method by which repression reduces the effectiveness or "strength" of the ego, that each repression requires of the ego a further expenditure of its limited store of energy in order to maintain the necessary counter-cathexis.

The second defense mechanism which we shall discuss is one which is called *reaction formation*. This is a mechanism whereby one of a pair of ambivalent attitudes, e.g., hate, is rendered unconscious and kept unconscious by an overemphasis of the other, which in this example would be love. Thus hate *appears* to be replaced by love, cruelty by gentleness, stubbornness by compliance, pleasure in dirt by neatness and cleanliness, and so on, yet the missing attitude persists unconsciously.

Incidentally, although we are most used to thinking of reaction formations like those mentioned above, which operate in the direction of the individual giving up some form of socially unacceptable behavior in favor of behavior which is more acceptable to his parents or teachers, it is also perfectly possible for the reverse to happen, that is for hate to appear as a reaction formation against love, stubbornness for com-

pliance, and so on down the list. What is decisive in determining the precise nature of the reaction formation in each particular case is the answer to the question, "What is it that the ego fears as a danger and to which it therefore reacts with the signal of anxiety?" If the ego for some reason fears the impulse to hate, or, more precisely, if it fears the impulses associated with hating, then the operation of the defense mechanism of reaction formation will check those impulses and keep them in check by emphasizing and strengthening the attitude of love. If it is love that is feared, then the reverse will take place.

For example, a person may develop an attitude of great tenderness and affection toward people or animals in order to check and to keep unconscious very cruel or even sadistic impulses toward them. Conversely it may develop in the course of psychiatric or analytic treatment that the patient's conscious anger with his therapist is primarily motivated by the unconscious need of his ego to defend itself against the emergence of feelings and fantasies of love for the therapist. One consequence of our knowledge of the operation of this defense mechanism is that whenever we observe an attitude of this sort which is unrealistic or excessive, we wonder whether it may not be so overemphasized as a defense against its opposite. Thus we should expect that a devoted pacifist or antivivisectionist, for instance, has unconscious fantasies of cruelty and hatred which appear to his ego to be particularly dangerous.

We believe that reaction formation takes place unconsciously, as we said previously is the case with repression, and as is the case indeed with most if not all of the ego's defense mechanisms. However, here again there is some advantage in recognizing the analogues to reaction formation that do exist in our conscious mental lives. What happens unconsciously in reaction formation is at least similar to what goes on consciously in the mind of the sycophant, the hypocrite, or even,

under certain circumstances, of the good host. Each of these says to himself, "I will pretend that I like this person, although my true or deeper feelings toward him are different, or even directly opposite." What we must beware of is mistaking the similarity for identity. When such a process occurs consciously it signifies a merely temporary adjustment. True reaction formation, on the other hand, permanently alters both the ego and the id of the individual in whom it occurs in much the same way as repression does.

Before we pass on to the next of the defense mechanisms, we wish to make a final observation which will serve to illustrate the complexity and the interrelationship of the activities of the ego in general, as well as the difficulties that lie in the path of any attempt to simplify the discussion of the defense mechanisms of the ego by being somewhat schematic.

Let us consider the case of a child of two years of age whose mother gives birth to a sibling. We know that one inevitable result of such an experience on the part of the two-year-old is that he wants to get rid of the baby who in his eyes is depriving him of the love and attentions which he wants to get from his mother. Such a hostile wish against the baby is expressed by the child in either word or deed to a recognizable degree and may even result in some serious danger to the baby. However, the child soon discovers that his hostility toward his sibling is most unwelcome to his mother, and the usual outcome is that he defends himself against the emergence of these hostile impulses because of fear of loss of his mother's love. It may be that the defense which his ego employs is that of repression. In that case we believe that his hostile impulses and their derivatives are excluded from the ego, become joined to the id, and are barred from consciousness by a permanent counter-cathexis.

In addition to the disappearance from the child's consciousness of hostile impulses toward its sibling, it is not uncommon to observe some degree of love for the sibling, which may

vary considerably in intensity, but which we can confidently ascribe to the defensive activities of the ego also, in particular, to a reaction formation. It seems that the ego has employed two mechanisms to defend itself against the hostile id impulses which frighten it, the two being of course repression and reaction formation.

In fact our clinical experience tells us that defense mechanisms are rarely employed singly, or even in pairs. On the contrary, many are used together, though in any given case one or two are usually the most important or primary mechanisms.

Even this does not exhaust the complications inherent in our simple example, however. We can understand very well that in repressing his hostility the child reacted as though his mother had said to him, "I won't love you if you hate baby." His response was, "I don't hate baby, therefore I needn't be afraid you won't love me." The phrase, "I don't hate baby," is a verbalization of what repression accomplished. To avoid the possibility of misunderstanding we may remark parenthetically that we do not mean to imply that such a conversation actually took place between mother and child, but only that the effect was as if there had been such a conversation. Even though the words themselves were never uttered, the thoughts expressed by the words correspond to things that did really happen. But the words which we have used so far have to do only with the repression and, as we have seen, reaction formation was also a part of the child's defense. By his reaction formation the child said in effect, "I don't hate baby, I love him." Where did the "I love him" come from? To be sure, we feel empathically that it has an inner defensive value, that it is much harder to admit feelings of hate toward one whom we profess to love than toward one whom we regard indifferently. To be sure also, many mothers say not only, "You mustn't hate baby," but also say very explicitly, "You must love baby," so that for their children to "love baby" is logically a reassurance against the fear of losing mother's love.

But analytic experience teaches us in addition that when a two-year-old "loves baby" he does so in a very special and meaningful way. He acts as though he himself were the mother and imitates her in his actions and attitude toward baby. In other words, he unconsciously identifies with mother.

We are therefore led to the unexpected conclusion that the process of identification may be a part of reaction formation or perhaps a necessary prelude to it and we wonder whether defense mechanisms may not be of two types, those which are elementary or not further reducible and those which are reducible to what we might call the elementary mechanisms. This is a question which still awaits a definitive answer. In her classic work on *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, Anna Freud (1936) referred to a suggestion by some authors that repression is the basic mechanism of defense and that all other mechanisms either reinforce a repression or are called into operation after the failure of repression. Anna Freud herself proposed by implication the value of studying and presumably classifying the defense mechanisms on a genetic or developmental basis, that is, by beginning with the most primitive defensive mechanisms, or even, perhaps, with precursors of defense mechanisms proper and working up step by step to the final, relatively highly developed, defense mechanisms. It is interesting that this suggestion, which seems like such a stimulating one, has not so far been followed up, at least as far as one can judge from the literature.

However, to return for the present to the suggestion that repression is *the* defense mechanism and that all others are at best auxiliary to repression, we must confess our inability to make a final decision in the matter. The difficulty arises from our inability to characterize or describe repression except in terms of its result. The result is of course that something is "forgotten," that is, barred from access to consciousness. It is true of every other defense mechanism as well that something is barred from consciousness. Whether it is also true of

these other defense mechanisms that the details of the process of barring from consciousness and the details of the end result as well are sufficiently similar to the corresponding details of the mechanism which we are agreed to call by the special name of repression, we cannot say with assurance as yet.

Let us continue with our catalogue of the defense mechanisms. The word *isolation* has been used in the psychoanalytic literature to designate two defense mechanisms which are not at all similar, although they are both characteristic of patients with a particular type of neurotic symptom which we ordinarily call obsessional. The most common meaning of the word is a mechanism which Freud originally called isolation of affect, but which might better be called repression of affect or repression of emotion. In such cases a fantasy connected with a wish or a crucial memory from the past may have ready access to consciousness, but the emotion, usually a painful one, which should be connected with it does not become conscious. Moreover, such patients usually manage to keep from feeling too much emotion of any sort. To be sure this process of repression of emotion begins as a barring from consciousness of painful or frightening emotions, that is, it operates clearly in the interests of the pleasure principle and in many cases it goes no farther than this. However, in some unfortunate individuals it goes so far that in the end the individual has hardly any awareness of emotions of any kind and seems like a caricature of that equanimity which ancient philosophers put forward as an ideal.

The other meaning of isolation is a much rarer mechanism which Freud discussed in the section of *The Problem of Anxiety* (1926) which had to do with the psychopathology of obsessions. It is an unconscious process by which a particular thought is literally isolated from the thoughts that preceded it and those that follow by a brief period of mental blankness. By thus depriving the isolated thought of any associational connections in the mind, the ego endeavors to minimize the

possibility of its re-entry into consciousness. The thought is treated as "untouchable."

As we have said, both types of isolation are characteristically found in association with obsessional symptoms. Another defense mechanism which is characteristically related to such symptoms is the mechanism of *undoing*. This is an action which has the purpose of disproving or undoing the harm which the individual in question unconsciously imagines may be caused by his wishes, whether these be sexual or hostile ones. For example, a child whose hostile wishes toward a younger sibling would cause him great anxiety if they should become conscious, may experience instead a strong, conscious desire to rescue sick or injured animals and nurse them back to health. In this case the child, by his efforts to heal, is unconsciously undoing the harm to his sibling which his hostile wishes might cause in fantasy.

Many instances of ritualistic behavior both in children and in adults contain elements which are explainable on this basis, that is they are consciously or unconsciously intended to undo the effect of some id impulse which the ego considers to be dangerous. Sometimes the meaning of the ritual is obvious. It may even be nearly if not quite conscious to the patient himself. More usually the meaning of the undoing mechanism is not easy to discover because it has been distorted and disguised, as in the example quoted above, before it has been allowed to become conscious. One thing we can say is that the whole idea of undoing is a magical one and presumably has its origin in those early years of childhood when magical ideas dominate so much of our mental life.

Another important defense mechanism is that of *denial*. Anna Freud (1936) used this word to refer to the denial of an unpleasant or unwanted piece of external reality either by means of a wish-fulfilling fantasy or by behavior. For instance, a little boy who was afraid of his father might say that he was himself the strongest man in the world and had just won the

world's heavyweight championship and might go around the house wearing a belt indicative of the championship. In this example what the little boy denies are his own small size and his weakness relative to his father. These facts of reality are rejected and replaced by a fantasy and behavior which gratify the boy's wishes for physical superiority over his father.

The term "denial" seems also to have been used by other authors to refer to a similar attitude toward the data of inner experience, that is, toward inner reality. In the above example, for instance, the statement might be made that the little boy denied his own fear. Such use of the word "denial" seems undesirable, since using it in this sense makes it very similar to the concept of suppression which we defined somewhat earlier, or perhaps makes it essentially a step on the road to repression. The original meaning of "denial" refers rather to the blocking of certain sense impressions from the outside world. If they are not actually denied access to consciousness, they at least have as little attention paid to them as possible and the painful consequences of their presence are partly nullified.

Another confusion that sometimes arises in connection with the use of the word "denial" in discussions of the problems of defense is due to the fact that it is the very nature of defense that *something* is denied, just as it is most often the nature of defense that something is barred from consciousness. The id says "Yes," and the ego says "No," in every defensive operation. To infer from this, however, as some authors seem to have done, that the specific mechanism which Anna Freud described as denial by fantasy is involved in the operation of every defense mechanism hardly seems justified.

We might add that the defense mechanism of denial is either closely related to certain aspects of play and daydreams or that it plays a significant role in these two activities throughout life. The whole concept of recreational activities as means of escape from the cares and frustrations of our daily lives

obviously comes close to the operation of denial as a defense mechanism.

The next mechanism we wish to discuss is that which is called *projection*. This is a defense mechanism which results in the individual attributing a wish or impulse of his own to some other person, or for that matter, to some nonpersonal object of the outside world. A grossly pathological example of this would be a mentally ill patient who projected his violent impulses and as a result incorrectly believed himself in danger of physical harm from the F.B.I., the Communists, or the man next door, as the case might be. Such a patient would ordinarily be classified clinically as suffering from a paranoid psychosis.

It is important to note, however, that although projection plays such an important role in paranoid psychoses, it operates in the minds of people who are not mentally sick also. Analytic experience has shown that many people attribute to others wishes and impulses of their own which are unacceptable to them and which they unconsciously try to get rid of, as it were, by the mechanism of projection. It is *as though*, such persons said unconsciously, "It's not *I* who have such a bad or dangerous wish, it's *he*." The analysis of these individuals has shown us that the crimes and vices which we attribute to our enemies in times of war, the prejudices which we bear against strangers, against foreigners, or against those whose skins differ in color from our own, and many of our superstitious and religious beliefs are often wholly or in part the result of an unconscious projection of wishes and impulses of our own.

We can understand from these examples that if projection is used as a defense mechanism to a very great extent in adult life, the user's perception of external reality will be seriously distorted, or, to put it in other words, his ego's capacity for reality testing will be considerably impaired. Only an ego which will readily abandon its capacity to test reality cor-

rectly will permit itself the extensive use of this defense. Incidentally, these remarks apply equally to the use of denial as a defense mechanism in adult life.

Projection, therefore, is a defense mechanism which normally plays its greatest role in early life. The very small child quite naturally attributes to others, whether persons, animals, or even inanimate objects, the feelings and reactions which he himself experiences, even when he is not engaged in a defensive struggle against his own feelings or wishes, and the tendency to repudiate unwanted impulses or behavior by attributing them to others is clearly apparent in the early years of life. It often happens that the child, when scolded for or accused of some misdeed, says that it was not he but some other child, often an imaginary one, who really did it. As adults we are inclined to view such an excuse as a conscious deception on the part of the child, but child psychologists assure us that the very young child really accepts his projection as the truth and expects his parents or nurse to do so too.

A final word about the possible origin of the mechanism of projection may be in order. It has been suggested (Stärcke, 1920; van Ophuijsen, 1920; Arlow, 1949) that the model for the psychological mechanism of separating some of one's thoughts or wishes from one's own mental life and projecting them into the outer world is the physical experience of defecation, which is familiar to the child from earliest infancy. We know from psychoanalytically guided observations that the small child considers its feces to be a part of its own body and it appears that when projection is used as a defense mechanism the user unconsciously tries to rid himself of his unwanted mental contents as though they were intestinal contents.

Another defense mechanism is that which is called the turning of an instinctual impulse against oneself, or, more briefly, *turning against the self*. We may indicate what this means by an illustration from childhood behavior, since childhood

is a time when this mechanism, like projection and denial, is readily observable in overt behavior. The child who feels rage, for example, against another, but dares not express it against its original object, may instead beat, strike, or injure himself. This mechanism, like projection, despite its seeming strangeness, plays more of a role in normal mental life than is ordinarily recognized. It is frequently accompanied by an unconscious identification with the object of the impulse against the emergence of which the individual is defending himself. In the example above, for instance, it is *as though* the child, in hitting himself, were saying, "I'm him, and *this* is how I'll hit him!"

The reader will recall that we have already discussed the process of identification at some length in Chapter III, where we viewed it as a most important factor in ego development. Identification is frequently used for purposes of defense, but there is at present no general agreement whether it should be classified as a defense mechanism as such, or whether it is more correct to look at it as a general tendency of the ego which is frequently utilized in a defensive way. In this connection we may repeat what we said at the beginning of our discussion of the defense mechanisms of the ego, namely that the ego can and does use as a defense *anything* available to it that will help to lessen or avoid the danger arising from the demands of an unwanted instinctual drive.

When identification is used by the ego in a defensive way it is often unconsciously modeled after the physical action of eating or swallowing. This means that the person using the mechanism of identification unconsciously imagines that he is eating or being eaten by the person with whom he becomes identified. Such a fantasy is the reverse of that associated with the mechanism of projection, where the reader will remember that the unconscious model appears to be the act of defecation.

The terms *introjection* and *incorporation* are also found in the literature to designate the unconscious fantasy of union

with another by ingestion. Some authors have attempted to distinguish among these several terms, but in general usage they are essentially synonymous with the term *identification*.

We should make mention of one more mechanism which occupies a most important position among the defensive operations of the ego, namely *regression*. Despite its importance as a defense, however, regression, like identification, is probably a mechanism of broader significance than the defense mechanisms proper. We may assume that the tendency to regression is a fundamental characteristic of our instinctual lives and as such we have already mentioned it in Chapter II. The importance of instinctual regression as a defense is that in the face of severe conflicts over wishes of the phallic phase of instinctual development, for example, these wishes may be partly or wholly given up and the individual may return or regress to the aims and desires of the earlier anal and oral phases, thus avoiding the anxiety which would be caused by a persistence of the phallic wishes. In some cases such an instinctual regression, which, incidentally is more often a partial than a complete one, suffices to settle the conflict between ego and id in favor of the former and there results a relatively stable, intrapsychic equilibrium on the basis that prephallic drive wishes have been more or less completely substituted for the phallic ones. In other cases the regression fails to achieve its defensive purpose and instead of a relatively stable equilibrium there results a renewed conflict, this time on a prephallic level. Such cases, in which a considerable degree of instinctual regression has taken place without achieving a resolution of the intrapsychic conflict in favor of the ego, are usually to be found clinically among the more severe cases of mental illness.

A regression of this sort in the instinctual life appears to be accompanied in many cases by some degree of regression in ego functioning or development as well. When such a regression of ego functioning is a prominent feature of an indi-

vidual's mental life that persists into adulthood, it is nearly always to be reckoned as pathological.

This completes the list of the defense mechanisms which we shall discuss: repression, reaction formation, isolation of affect, isolation proper, undoing, denial, projection, turning against the self, identification or introjection, and regression. They are all operative to a greater or less degree in normal psychic development and functioning as well as in various psychopathological states.

Allied to them, yet distinct from them, is the mental mechanism which Freud (1905b) called *sublimation*. As originally conceived, sublimation was the normal counterpart of the defense mechanisms, the latter being thought of as primarily associated with psychic dysfunction at that time. Today we should say rather that the term sublimation expresses a certain aspect of normal ego functioning. We have said repeatedly in Chapter III and in the present chapter that the ego normally functions in such a way as to achieve the maximum degree of drive satisfaction consistent with the limitations imposed by the environment. To illustrate the concept of sublimation let us take as an example the infantile wish to play with feces, which is, of course, a drive derivative. In our culture this wish is usually strongly opposed by the small child's parents or parent substitutes. It often happens then that the child gives up playing with its feces and turns instead to making mud pies. Later, modeling in clay or plastilene may be substituted for playing with mud and in exceptional cases the individual may become an amateur or even a professional sculptor in adult life. Psychoanalytic investigation indicates that each of these substitute activities affords a degree of gratification of the original, infantile impulse to play with feces. However, in each instance the originally desired activity has been modified in the direction of social acceptability and approval. Moreover, the original impulse as such has become unconscious in the mind of the individual en-

gaged in modeling or sculpturing in clay or plastilene. Finally, in most such substitute activities the secondary process plays a greater role than it did in the original, infantile wish or activity. To be sure, this last is less obvious in such an example as we have chosen than it would be in the case of a person who became a specialist in intestinal parasites rather than a sculptor.

What we call a sublimation is such a substitute activity, which at the same time conforms with the demands of the environment and gives a measure of unconscious gratification to an infantile drive derivative which has been repudiated in its original form. In our examples, playing with mud pies, modeling, sculpting, and the study of intestinal parasites are all sublimations of the wish to play with feces. We might equally well say that they are all manifestations, at different age levels, of the normal functioning of the ego, acting to harmonize and satisfy the demands of the id and of the environment as fully and as efficiently as possible.

SUGGESTED READING

FREUD, S. *The Problem of Anxiety*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1936.

FREUD, A. *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1946.