

X

Fear is the reaction to danger. Given that the affect of fear is able to commandeer a special position for itself in the psychic economy, it is surely plausible to suppose that this has to do with the nature of danger itself. But dangers are common to all mankind, they are the same for each and every individual. What we need – yet do not have – is some key factor that will explain how those particular individuals are selected who are able to subordinate the affect of fear to their normal psychic processes despite its special status; or, alternatively, a factor that determines which individuals are doomed to fail in this task. To the best of my knowledge, two attempts have so far been made to uncover such a factor (understandably enough, *my* attempt in this direction can expect a sympathetic reception, since it promises to relieve an agonizing need). The two attempts are complementary to each other, in that they approach the problem from opposite directions. The first was undertaken more than ten years ago by Alfred Adler. Reduced to its bare essentials, his argument is that those who fail to master the task that danger poses them, do so because the inferiority of their organs is such as to cause them insurmountable difficulties. If only we could put our faith in the adage *simplex sigillum veri*,⁵⁹ then we should have to hail Adler's solution as the answer to all our prayers. On the contrary, however, the critiques that have appeared over the last decade have irrefutably demonstrated the total inadequacy of this account – which, moreover, blithely ignores the entire wealth of material that has been discovered thanks to psychoanalysis.

The second attempt was undertaken by Otto Rank in 1923 in his book *Das Trauma der Geburt* [*The Trauma of Birth*]. It would be

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unfair to compare Rank's attempt to Adler's in any respect other than the one highlighted here, for it remains entirely within the realm of psychoanalysis, builds on its ideas, and deserves recognition as a legitimate bid to solve its problems. Taking the 'individual' danger relation as a given, Rank shifts attention away from the individual and the frailty of his organs, and focuses instead on the variable intensity of the danger. The birth process is the first danger situation; the economic upheaval that it causes becomes the paradigmatic fear reaction. We earlier traced the line of development that links this first danger situation and fear-determinant to all the subsequent ones, and we saw that they all share a common factor, in that they all in one sense or another signify separation from the mother, at first only in biological terms, then in terms of object-loss – *direct* object-loss to start with, and *indirect* later on. The discovery of this crucial linkage is an undisputed merit of Rank's hypothesis. Now the trauma of birth affects different individuals with differing degrees of intensity, and as the intensity of the trauma varies, so too does the intensity of the fear reaction; according to Rank, it is the degree of fear thus generated at the very beginning that determines whether an individual will ever be able to assert control over it – that is, whether he will become neurotic or normal.

It is not our concern here to offer a detailed critique of Rank's ideas, but merely to consider whether they can help us find a solution to our specific problem. Rank's proposition – that people become neurotics because the intensity of their birth trauma is such that they never succeed in fully abreacting it – is highly questionable from a theoretical point of view. It isn't at all clear what is meant by 'abreacting the trauma'. If we take it literally, then we arrive at the untenable proposition that the neurotic will get closer and closer to being healthy the more frequently and more intensively he reproduces the affect of fear. Indeed, it was precisely because it thus contradicted reality that I had by that time already abandoned the abreaction theory, which played such a major role in the practice of catharsis.⁶⁰ Rank's emphasis on the variable intensity of the birth trauma takes no account of the perfectly sound aetiological credentials of hereditary constitution; and yet it is an organic factor that

behaves in a quite random way by comparison with the constitution, and is itself dependent on numerous other factors that can only be termed random, such as the timely advent of help during the birth process. Rank's theory leaves both constitutional and phylogenetic factors completely out of account. But any attempt to accommodate the importance of the constitution – for instance by modifying the argument to the effect that what matters is rather the extent to which the individual reacts to the variable intensity of the birth trauma – simply robs the theory of its entire impact, and relegates the new factor introduced by Rank to a secondary role. The key factor that determines whether an individual ultimately develops neurosis thus lies in some other realm after all – and one that remains, as before, quite unknown to us.

The fact that the birth process is common both to humans and to the other mammals, whereas a special propensity for neurosis is a human privilege not vouchsafed to animals, is hardly likely to dispose anyone very favourably to Rank's theory. The chief objection to it, however, is that it is all up in the air, instead of being based on sound empirical evidence. There is no reliable body of research to show whether there is any clear correlation between a difficult and protracted birth, and the development of neurosis, or indeed whether it is exclusively children born in such circumstances that exhibit the characteristic signs of early infantile anxiety²¹ longer or more intensely than the norm. The point might be made that induced births, and births that are easy for the mother, *may* possibly mean severe trauma for the child; but this does not detract from the proposition that births involving asphyxia are *certain* to show the purported consequences. Rank's aetiology arguably does have a particular advantage in that it gives pre-eminence to a factor that can be tested against the empirical evidence: until it has indeed been tested in this way, it is impossible to form a judgement as to the real value of his hypothesis.

At the same time, I cannot share the view that Rank's theory contradicts the long-established tenet of psychoanalysis as to the aetiological importance of the sexual drives, for it bears solely on the individual's relationship to the danger situation, and leaves us to

come to our own conclusions on the uplifting proposition that anyone incapable of dealing satisfactorily with the dangers that occur at the beginning of their life is also bound to fail in the situations of sexual danger that arise later on, and thus fall prey to neurosis.

I do not believe, then, that Rank's attempt provides us with the answer to our question as to *why* neurosis arises, and while it clearly does contribute to a solution, I think it is still too early to say just how significant that contribution may be. If research reveals that a difficult birth does *not* have a significant effect on the individual's susceptibility to neuroses, then Rank's contribution will have to be considered slight. It is very much to be feared that our need for a tangible and coherent 'ultimate cause' of nervous disorders will never be satisfied. The ideal answer – and one that doctors probably aspire to even today – would be to identify a bacillus that could be isolated and pure-cultured, and on inoculation would produce the same specific disorder in each and every individual. A somewhat less fantastical answer would be to identify particular chemical substances, the administering of which would induce or dispel specific neuroses. But solutions of this sort are not very likely.

What psychoanalysis enables us to say is less simple and less satisfying. I have nothing new to add here: I can only repeat what has long been known. If the ego succeeds in warding off a dangerous drive-impulse, by means of the repression process for instance, then it certainly inhibits and impairs the relevant part of the id – but at the same time it also grants it a certain element of independence, and forgoes a certain portion of its own sovereignty. This is an inevitable consequence of the very nature of repression, which in essence is an attempt at flight. The repressed element is now at large beyond the pale: excluded from the grand organization of the ego, and subject only to the laws that prevail in the realm of the unconscious. If the danger situation now alters in such a way that there is nothing motivating the ego to take defensive action against a new drive-impulse similar to the repressed one, then the consequences of the ego's restriction become apparent. The course of the new drive-impulse proves subject to automatism – or, as I should prefer to say, to the compulsion to repeat – and thus follows the

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same path as the earlier, repressed one, as if the danger situation that had already been successfully overcome were still in existence. The fixating factor in repression is thus the unconscious id's compulsion to repeat, which is normally neutralized only by free-moving ego function. Now the ego may occasionally succeed in breaking down the barriers of repression that it has itself erected, thus enabling it to reassert its influence on the drive-impulse and control the course of the *new* one in accordance with the changed danger situation. But the fact of the matter is that it generally fails in this respect and is unable to reverse its repressions. The quantitative ratios involved may be the decisive factor in determining the outcome of this conflict. Our impression is that in quite a number of cases there is only one possible outcome: the regressive attraction exerted by the repressed impulse and the force of the repression itself are so great that the new impulse has no choice but to obey the compulsion to repeat. In other cases we see the effect of a different interplay of forces: the *attraction* of the repressed original impulse is reinforced by the *repulsion* generated by the objective difficulties that hinder the new impulse from following any other course.

That this is indeed the way in which the subject comes to be fixated on the repression, and to hold to a danger situation that no longer exists, is clearly borne out by the sheer fact of psychoanalytic therapy, which, though modest enough in itself, is enormously significant in theoretical terms. When in the course of psychoanalysis we give the ego the requisite help that enables it to lift its repressions, it recovers its power over the repressed id, and can get the drive-impulses to pursue their course as if the old danger situations no longer existed. Our achievements in this regard are fully in accord with the limited scope of our powers in medicine generally. In our therapeutic practice, after all, we must be content as a rule to achieve the same benign outcome that would have materialized anyway given the right circumstances – but to do so more rapidly, more reliably, and with less fuss.

Our deliberations thus far have shown us that it is the *quantitative* ratios of the various factors involved – ratios that cannot be directly

demonstrated but only indirectly inferred – which determine whether old danger situations are perpetuated, whether repressions effected by the ego are maintained, whether childhood neuroses are continued in later life. Among the factors that are involved in the causation of neuroses – having created the conditions in which the various psychic forces do battle with each other – three in particular seem to us to stand out: a biological one, a phylogenetic one, and a purely psychological one.

The biological factor is the very lengthy period during which the young of the human species remain in a state of helplessness and dependence. The *intra-uterine* existence of human beings appears somewhat abbreviated by comparison with that of most animals, and they come into the world less able to cope. As a result, the objective external world exerts a more powerful influence on them, and the ego is encouraged to differentiate from the id at a very early stage; furthermore, the dangers posed by the external world become more significant, and the importance of the object – the only thing that can protect them from these dangers and make up for the loss of their *intra-uterine* existence – is vastly increased. This biological factor thus produces the first danger situations in each child's life, and generates the need to be loved – a need that stays with him throughout his life.

The second, phylogenetic, factor is merely a supposition on our part – but one forced upon us by a very curious aspect of libidinal development. We find that the sexual life of man does not develop along a steady path from birth to maturity, as does that of most animals closely related to him, but abruptly breaks off after an initial flourish lasting until the fifth year of life, then starts again at puberty, picking up where it left off in its infantile beginnings. We rather think that at some point during the shaping of mankind's destiny some momentous event must have occurred that left its mark in the form of this break in human sexual development.⁶³ The pathogenic significance of this factor is clearly demonstrated by the fact that most of the demands asserted by the drives in infantile sexuality are treated by the ego as dangers and duly warded off, with the result that the later sexual impulses of puberty, which ought to be

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ego-accordant,⁶⁴ are at risk of succumbing to the attraction of the paradigmatic impulses of infancy, and following them into repression. Here we find ourselves face to face with the most direct cause of neurosis. It is striking that the human being's early contact with the demands of sexuality affects the ego in much the same way as does his over-early contact with the external world.

The third, psychological, factor is to be found in a certain imperfection of our psychic apparatus that has to do precisely with its differentiation into an ego and an id, and is thus ultimately also due to the influence of the external world. By dint of paying due attention to the dangers posed by objective reality, the ego is compelled to take defensive action against certain drive-impulses in the id, and to treat them as dangers. But the ego cannot protect itself against the dangers posed by its own inner drives as effectively as it can against a threat posed by external reality. Being itself intimately bound up with the id, it can fight off the danger posed by a drive only by restricting its own organization and accepting symptom-formation as the price it has to pay for obstructing the drive. If the rejected drive subsequently renews its assault, then the ego finds itself beset by all those difficulties that constitute the affliction familiar to us as 'neurosis'.

And that, I rather think, is about as far as we have managed to get for the time being in our quest to understand the nature and causation of neurosis.

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Addenda

In the course of this discussion various topics have been raised which then had to be all too quickly abandoned. These topics are now brought together here so that they can receive the full measure of attention that they deserve.

A Modification of Previously Expressed Views

a) Resistance and counter-cathexis

It is an important element of the theory of repression that it does not consist in an isolated, one-off process, but requires the continuous application of effort. If this effort were to cease, then the repressed drive, which is constantly replenished by its original well-springs, would make a further advance along the same path from which it had previously been ousted: the repression would either fail, or have to be repeated over and over again. It is thus the continuous nature of the drive that makes it necessary for the ego to devote itself unceasingly to its defence campaign in order to ensure its success. It is this sustained activity aimed at safeguarding the repression that we encounter in our therapeutic ministrations as *resistance*. Resistance presupposes the phenomenon that I have termed *counter-cathexis*.⁶⁵ Such a phenomenon is palpably present in obsessional neurosis, where it takes the form of an ego-alteration, that is, a *reaction-formation* within the ego, due to an intensification of whatever stance is antithetical to the thrust of the drive that is being repressed (e.g. compassion, conscientiousness, cleanliness). These

reaction-formations in obsessional neurosis are all simply an exaggerated form of normal character traits that develop during the latency period. It is far more difficult to produce evidence of counter-cathexis in the case of hysteria, where in theoretical terms we would expect it to be just as indispensable. Here, too, there is unmistakable evidence of a certain degree of ego-alteration as a result of reaction-formation; indeed this is so marked in some circumstances that it forces itself on our attention as the principal symptom of the condition. It is in this way that the ambivalence conflict in hysteria is resolved, for instance: feelings of hatred towards a loved person are suppressed by dint of exaggerated affection and anxious concern for them. However, it needs to be emphasized that, in contradistinction to obsessional neurosis, such reaction-formations do not exhibit the generalized nature typical of character traits, but are confined to quite specific interactions. For instance, if a hysterical woman displays excessive affection towards her own children, while in truth hating them, this does not mean that she will *in general* be any more loving than other women, or indeed any more affectionate towards other children. In hysteria, reaction-formation sticks doggedly to a particular object, and does not turn into a general tendency on the part of the ego – whereas it is precisely such a generalizing process, a freeing-up of object relationships, an increase in the scope for displacement with regard to object-choice, that characterizes obsessional neurosis.

There is another form of counter-cathexis that does seem rather more appropriate to the particular nature of hysteria. The repressed drive-impulse can be activated (re-cathected) from two different directions: firstly from within, due to an intensification of the drive brought about by its own internal sources of excitation, and secondly from without, due to perception of an object that the drive finds desirable. Hysterical counter-cathexis, however, is largely directed *outwards*, and against any perception that might pose a danger: it takes the form of a special vigilance which, by means of restrictions of the ego, avoids situations in which such a perception might occur, or, if it occurs anyway, succeeds in preventing the subject from paying any attention to it. Certain French writers (notably Laforgue)

have recently highlighted this feature of hysteria by giving it the special name 'scotomization'.⁵⁶ This particular technique of counter-cathexis is even more marked in the phobias, where the subject's whole focus of interest is to remove himself ever further from any situation that might involve the perception he so dreads. Although it is not an absolute one, the complete contrast in the direction of the counter-cathexis in hysteria and phobias on the one hand, and in obsessional neurosis on the other, appears to be significant. It invites us to suppose that there is a rather more intimate connection between repression and external counter-cathexis, as also between regression and internal counter-cathexis (ego-alteration due to reaction-formation). The task of warding off a dangerous perception is incidentally common to all neuroses. In obsessional neurosis, sundry 'dos' and 'don'ts' are intended to serve this same purpose.

We established on an earlier occasion that the resistance that we have to overcome in psychoanalysis is produced by the ego, which doggedly persists in its counter-cathexes.⁵⁷ The ego finds it hard to turn its attention to perceptions and notions which it has hitherto made it a rule to avoid, or to acknowledge as its own certain impulses blatantly antithetical to those it is wont to think its own. It is just such a view of this resistance that forms the basis of our attempts to overcome it in analysis. Where, on account of its affinity with the repressed drive-impulse, the resistance is unconscious – as is frequently the case – we make it conscious; once it has become conscious, we put up logical arguments against it; we promise the ego rewards and advantages if it abandons its resistance. There is thus no call to doubt or modify the notion of 'resistance' by the ego. None the less, the question arises whether it is sufficient on its own to account for the actual facts of the matter as presented to us in psychoanalysis. We find that the ego still has difficulty in undoing the repressions, even after it has resolved to relinquish its resistances, and we have used the term 'working through' to describe the phase of strenuous endeavour that follows this laudable resolve. We now need to recognize the dynamic factor that makes this working-through process both necessary and understandable. It must surely be the case that, even when the resistance of the ego has been

removed, there is still something else to be overcome – namely the powerful compulsion to repeat, the attraction of the unconscious paradigms acting upon the suppressed drive process; and there could be no objection to our terming this factor the *resistance of the unconscious*.

We must not let ourselves get upset about such emendations: they are distinctly desirable if they bring us new knowledge, and by no means shameful if, rather than discrediting our old knowledge, they serve to refine it, perhaps by narrowing down a generalization that is somewhat broad, or broadening an interpretation that is rather too narrow. However, we cannot assume that by making this particular emendation we have attained to a comprehensive overview of all the different types of resistance confronting us in psychoanalysis. On the contrary, we find on closer examination that we have altogether five kinds of resistance to contend with, arising from three distinct directions, that is, from the ego, the id and the super-ego. The ego turns out to be the source of three of them, each having a different dynamic. The first of these three resistances on the part of the ego is the one we have just dealt with, namely *repression* resistance, and there is very little that we can add here. Although similar in nature, *transference* resistance none the less belongs in a separate category: it manifests itself differently and much more distinctly in analysis, since it contrives to establish a relationship with the analytic situation or with the person of the analyst, and thereby to rekindle a repression that was meant to be merely re-collected. A further form of ego resistance, but one of a very different nature, is that predicted on *illness-gain*, which essentially involves assimilating the symptom into the ego. It corresponds to a fervent unwillingness to refrain from any gratification or other relief. As for the fourth type of resistance, namely that of the *id*, we have just seen that how it is this that makes the 'working-through' process necessary. If there is a fifth kind of resistance, that of the *super-ego* – the last to be recognized – and the most obscure, though not always the least powerful – appears to stem from the subject's sense of guilt or need for punishments, it puts obstacles in the way of any form of success – including, of course, in the subject's own recovery through psychoanalysis.⁶⁸

b) Fear arising from transformation of libido

The interpretation of fear put forward in this essay diverges to some extent from the one that I previously thought correct. I used to regard fear as a general reaction on the part of the ego in circumstances of unpleasure; I always sought to account for its appearance in economic terms, and on the basis of my investigations into the 'actual' neuroses I assumed that any libido (sexual excitation) rejected or not utilized by the ego finds direct release in the form of fear. There is no overlooking the fact that these various findings do not accord well with each other, or at the very least do not follow logically from one another. Furthermore, they foster the impression of a particularly intimate link between fear and libido, something that once again does not accord with the general nature of fear as a reaction denoting unpleasure.

The objection to this previous interpretation stemmed from my argument making the ego the sole locus of fear, and was thus one of the results of my attempt in *The Ego and the Id* at a taxonomy of the psychic apparatus. The earlier interpretation tended to regard the libido of the repressed drive-impulse as the source of the fear; according to the later one, however, this fear was the ego's responsibility. 'Ego-fear' or 'drive-(id)-fear' – that is the question. Given the fact that the ego operates with desexualized energy, the new version also posits a much less intimate connection between fear and libido. I hope I have at least succeeded in making the contradiction clear, and in precisely delineating the area of uncertainty.

Rank's insistence that the affect of fear is indeed – as I myself initially maintained – a consequence of the birth process, and a repetition of the situation then experienced, obliged me to take a fresh look at the fear problem. I was unable to get anywhere with Rank's own interpretation, according to which birth is a trauma, the state of fear is the reaction to that trauma, giving the requisite release, and each new affect of fear is an attempt to 'abreact' the trauma ever more completely. It became necessary to go back a stage and look at the *danger situation* underlying the fear reaction. The introduction of this factor enabled us to view things in a new

perspective. We now saw birth as the paradigm for all the danger situations that subsequently arise in the new circumstances created by changes in the subject's form of existence and by the progressive development of his psyche; but we also saw its own significance as being restricted to this paradigmatic role with regard to danger. The fear experienced at birth now became in this perspective the paradigm of a state of affect that necessarily shared the destiny of other affects. On the one hand the affect of fear, having been purposive in the original danger situation, automatically reproduces itself as a *counter*-purposive form of reaction in situations analogous to those in which it first arose; on the other hand, the *ego* reproduces it, having managed to gain power over it, and uses it as a warning of the impending danger and as a means of joining the pleasure/unpleasure mechanism into action. The biological importance of the affect of fear received its due, in that fear was recognized as being the universal reaction to a danger situation; the role of the *ego* as the locus of fear was confirmed, in that it was acknowledged as being a function of the *ego* to produce the affect of fear in accordance with its own particular needs. The fear that manifests itself in all the later phases of life was thus seen as originating in two distinct ways: one – invariably justifiable in economic terms – that occurs involuntarily and automatically whenever a danger situation arises that is analogous to that of birth; another that is specifically produced by the *ego* as a preventative measure whenever there is simply the threat of such a situation arising. In this latter case, the *ego* was seen as subjecting itself to fear as if to a vaccine, so to speak, thus accepting a mild dose of illness in order to avoid a full-blown attack. It is as if the *ego* deliberately summons up a vivid picture of the danger situation – with the unmistakable purpose of restricting this painful experience to a mere hint or signal. We have already shown in considerable detail how in the process the various danger situations develop separately, one after another, yet remain genetically linked. We shall perhaps manage to penetrate a little further in our understanding of fear once we tackle the problem of the relationship between neurotic fear and objective fear.

Our earlier hypothesis of a direct transformation of libido into

fear is now of less interest to us – but if we take stock of it all the same, then we need to distinguish between several different sets of circumstances. It is certainly not applicable where fear serves as a signal to alert the *ego*, and it is thus also not applicable to any of those danger situations that prompt the *ego* to initiate a repression. As is most plainly evident in the conversion hysterics, the libidinal cathexis of the repressed drive-impulse finds uses other than being transformed into fear, or released as fear. In our further discussion of danger situations, however, we shall come upon a particular form of fear-generation that probably needs to be viewed rather differently.

c) Repression and defence

In the context of these discussions on the problem of fear I have reverted to a concept – or to put it more modestly, a term – that I used exclusively at the start of my work thirty years ago, and then subsequently abandoned. I mean the term 'defence process'.⁶⁹ In due course I replaced it with the term 'repression', but the relationship between the two remained imprecise. I now think that it is distinctly advantageous to hark back to the old concept of 'defence', provided it is clearly established that it is intended to serve as the general designation for *all* the techniques used by the *ego* in its various conflicts, any of which may lead to neurosis, while 'repression' remains the name of one particular such mechanism that we have first become more familiar with because of the direction our investigations happen to have taken.

Even a purely terminological innovation requires to be justified; it needs to reflect a new perspective or a new insight. And indeed, the resumption of the concept of 'defence', and the narrowing of the concept of 'repression', gives due recognition to a fact that has long been known but has acquired extra significance thanks to various more recent discoveries. We first learned about repression and symptom-formation in the context of hysteria. We saw that the perceptions attaching to excitatory experiences and the notions attaching to pathogenic trains of thought are forgotten and thus

excluded from reproduction within the subject's memory, and we therefore concluded that keeping certain things from consciousness is one of the chief characteristics of hysterical repression. We later studied obsessional neurosis and found that in this particular disorder the pathogenic events are *not* forgotten. They remain conscious, but are isolated in some way not yet comprehensible to us, so that much the same outcome is achieved as in the case of hysterical amnesia. None the less, the difference is large enough to justify our view that the process whereby demands on the part of drives are rebuffed in obsessional neurosis cannot be the same as that in hysteria. Further investigations have taught us that in obsessional neurosis the vigorous resistance of the ego causes the drive-impulses to regress to an earlier libidinal phase, and while this does not render a repression superfluous, it is clearly similar to repression in its effect. In addition, we have seen that counter-cathexis – a process we can also assume to be operative in hysteria – plays a particularly important role in protecting the ego in obsessional neurosis by means of reactive ego-iteration; we have become aware of an 'isolation' process – albeit without yet being able to explain how it works – that finds direct expression at the symptomatic level; and we have also become aware of the 'obliteration' of past events, a procedure we can only call magical, which unquestionably has a defensive function, but bears no further resemblance to the process of 'repression'. These findings are reason enough to reintroduce the old concept of *défence* – which can readily embrace all these processes with their common purpose of protecting the ego against challenges on the part of drives – and to subsume repression under it as a special sub-category. The importance of using nomenclature of this sort becomes even greater if we take into account the possibility that in digging ever deeper in our researches we may well find that there is an intimate connection between particular forms of defence and specific disorders, for instance between repression and hysteria. Furthermore, we expect that there is a real possibility of our discovering another, equally significant pattern of dependence: it may well be that *prior* to the sharp differentiation of the ego and the id and the formation of the super-ego, the psychic apparatus

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uses different methods of defence from those it uses *after* attaining these stages of organization.

B Fear: Supplementary Remarks

The affect of fear exhibits certain characteristics the investigation of which promises to bring us further enlightenment. For one thing, fear is unmistakably associated with *expectation*; it is fear of something. For another, it is in the very nature of fear to be *non-specific* and to *have no object*. In proper linguistic usage it even changes its name if it acquires an object, the word 'fear' being replaced by the word 'dread'.⁷⁰ Furthermore, fear is not only associated with danger but also with neurosis, a topic we have long been struggling to elucidate. The question arises: why men it *all* fear reactions neurotic, and why do we regard so many of them as normal? It is high time we undertook a thorough appreciation of the difference between objective fear and neurotic fear.

Let us take as our starting point the problem we have just been dealing with. The progress we made consisted in the fact that we went back a stage and concentrated on the danger situation rather than the fear reaction. If we make the same shift with respect to the problem of objective fear, its solution becomes quite straightforward. Objective danger is a danger that we know, and objective fear is fear of such a danger, that is, one that is known. Neurotic fear is fear of a danger that we do *not* know. Thus we first have to work out what that neurotic danger consists in, and psychoanalysis has shown us that it is a danger posed by the drives. In bringing to consciousness this danger that was previously quite unknown to the ego, we blur the distinction between objective fear and neurotic fear and are thus able to treat the latter as if it were the former.

In the face of objective danger we display two reactions: an affective one, namely a surge of fear, and a practical one, for the purposes of self-protection. It seems likely that the same thing happens in the face of dangers posed by our drives. We are familiar with situations of purposive interplay between the two reactions,

whereby one gives the signal that serves to trigger the other; but we are also familiar with the *counter*-purposive situation of fear-induced paralysis, whereby one reaction proliferates at the expense of the other.

There are certain cases that display a mixture of objective fear and neurotic fear. The danger is known and real, but the fear shown towards it is disproportionate, it is more than we think it ought to be. This excess over and above what is objectively appropriate clearly reveals the neurotic element. But such cases tell us nothing fundamentally new. Psychoanalysis reveals the fact that, linked to the known objective danger, there is an unrecognized danger emanating from the drives.

We can make further progress if we do more than step back just one stage from fear to danger and go on to ask what constitutes the *real core* of the danger situation, its most significant element. Clearly it is the process whereby we assess our own strength in relation to the magnitude of the danger, and acknowledge our helplessness in the face of it – physical helplessness in the case of objective danger, psychic helplessness in the case of danger emanating from our drives. In making this judgement we are guided by the actual experiences we have been through in the past; whether the judgement is right or wrong is immaterial to the outcome. Let us use the term 'traumatic' to designate this situation in which we experience a sense of helplessness; we then have good grounds for drawing a distinction between the *traumatic situation* and the *danger situation*.

Now it marks an important advance in our powers of self-preservation when this sort of traumatic situation of helplessness is not just passively awaited, but actively foreseen and expected. The situation that offers the requisite conditions for such expectation may be termed the 'danger situation', for it is here that the fear signal is given out. What this signal says is that I am expecting a situation of helplessness to arise, or else that I am reminded by the current situation of one of my previous traumatic experiences. I therefore *anticipate* the trauma, and so long as there is still time to ward it off I seek to behave as if it were already present. Fear is therefore on the one hand the *expectation* of future trauma, and on

the other a *repellition* of past trauma in a mild form. The two characteristics of fear that attracted our attention thus have different origins. Its association with expectation appertains to the danger situation, whereas its non-specificity and lack of an object appertain to the traumatic situation of helplessness, itself anticipated in the danger situation.

Having set forth this sequence 'fear – danger – helplessness (trauma)', we can now summarize the position as follows. A danger situation is a situation of helplessness that we simultaneously recognize, remember and expect; fear is the original reaction to helplessness in the trauma that is then subsequently reproduced in the danger situation as a signal calling for help; the ego, having experienced the trauma passively, now actively repeats a reproduction of it in diluted form, in the hope of being able to keep control of the way it evolves. We know that children behave in precisely this way with respect to all the experiences they find distressing, in that they reproduce them in their play; by thus moving from a passive to an active role they seek to assert control in psychic terms over the experiences that life brings them.⁷¹ If this is what 'abracting' the trauma is supposed to mean, then we can't really raise any further objections to it.⁷² The really crucial matter, however, is the initial displacement of the fear reaction from the *presence* of the situation of helplessness in which it originated, to the *expectation* of such a situation, that is, the danger situation. Thereafter ensue the various further displacements from the danger to the *determinant* of the danger, that is, loss of the object, and the modified forms of such loss mentioned earlier.⁷³

The undesirable consequence of 'spoiling' a young child is that the danger of object-loss – the object being the means of protection against any and every situation of helplessness – becomes unduly magnified in comparison to all the other dangers. The individual is thereby encouraged to *remin* in the state of childhood, which is characterized by motor and psychic helplessness.

We have not so far had occasion to view objective fear any differently from the way we view neurotic fear. We know what the distinction between them is: an objective danger is one posed by an

external object, a neurotic danger arises from demands made by the individual's own drives. In so far as these demands on the part of the drive are objectively real, neurotic fear, too, can be regarded as having an objective basis. We have seen that if fear and neurosis appear to be particularly intimately connected, this is simply because the ego uses the fear reaction to defend itself against dangers posed by the drives just as it does against external, objective dangers — but due to a certain imperfectness of our psychic apparatus the particular thrust of this defensive activity leads ultimately to neurosis. We have also come to the conclusion that the demands of the drives often pose an (internal) danger only because their gratification would give rise to an external danger; in other words because the *internal* danger represents an *external* one.

Equally, on the other hand, the external (objective) danger has to have been internalized in some way if it is to be of any significance to the ego; it has to have been recognized as bearing a relationship to a previously experienced situation of helplessness.⁷⁴ Human beings seem to have been endowed with little or no instinctive awareness of dangers that threaten from without. Young children constantly do things that endanger their life, and for that very reason cannot do without their protective object. In our relationship to a traumatic situation, where we find ourselves helpless, there is a convergence of external danger and internal danger — of objective danger, and the demands of a drive. No matter if in one case the ego experiences a pain that never ceases, while in another it experiences a build-up of need that can find no gratification: in both cases the economic situation is the same, and the subject's motor helplessness manifests itself in psychic helplessness.

The puzzling phobias of early childhood deserve further mention here. We found that some of them — fear of strangers, of darkness, of being alone — can be understood as reactions to the danger of object-loss. In other cases — fear of small animals, storms etc. — an answer to the conundrum might lie in the argument that they are the attenuated remnants of a congenital alertness to objective dangers, an alertness that is so strongly developed in other animals. The only part of this archaic inheritance that remains purposive for

human beings is that relating to object-loss. Where these particular childhood phobias become fixated, increase in intensity and endure into later life, psychoanalysis clearly demonstrates that their content has let itself be coloured by the demands of the subject's drives, and thus stands for internal dangers as well as external ones.

C Fear, Pain, and Sorrow

So little is currently known about the psychology of emotional processes that the remnants offered in all diffidence here deserve to be judged in a spirit of extreme tolerance. The problem, as we see it, arises out of our assertion that fear comes to be a reaction to the danger of object-loss. Now we already know of one such reaction to object-loss, namely sorrow. The question is: when does the one reaction set in, and when the other? We have already dealt with sorrow at some length in a previous context,⁷⁵ but one feature of it defied all understanding: its particularly painful nature. At the same time, it seems altogether understandable to us that separation from one's object should be painful. The problem thus becomes even more complicated: when does separation from an object produce fear, when does it produce sorrow, and when — if at all — does it produce only pain?

Let us admit straight away that there is no prospect of our providing answers to these questions. The best we can do is to draw some distinctions and offer some suggestions.

As our starting point, let us again take the one situation that we think we understand, namely that of the baby who finds himself confronted by a stranger instead of his mother, and thereupon displays the fear that we have thus far interpreted solely by reference to the danger of object-loss. But this fear is probably rather more complicated and merits closer examination. While there can be no doubting the baby's fear, his facial expression and his reaction of crying suggest that he is also feeling pain. It seems that various things that he will later differentiate from each other are at this stage all merged into one. He cannot yet tell the difference between

temporary absence and permanent loss; if he fails just once to catch sight of his mother, he behaves as if he were never going to see her again, and only when repeated experiences to the contrary have brought him solace does he learn that such disappearances on the part of his mother are generally followed by her reappearance. His mother fosters this crucial insight by playing the familiar game of hiding her face from him, then, to his great delight, uncovering it again. This enables him to feel pangs of longing, as it were, that are not attended by despair.

Because he misunderstands it, the situation whereby he is distressed at his mother's absence is not a danger situation but a traumatic one. Or to put it more precisely, it is a traumatic one if at that particular moment he happens to be feeling a need that his mother is meant to gratify, if no such need is present, then it becomes a danger situation. The first fear-determinant that the ego itself introduces is accordingly loss of perception of the object, which it equates with loss of the object itself. There is no question of loss of love at this stage. Later on, experience teaches the child that his object can be present, but angry with him, and loss of the object's love then becomes the new and far more constant danger and fear-determinant.

The traumatic situation of distress at the mother's absence differs in one crucial respect from the traumatic situation of birth: at that point there was no object, and hence no possibility of distress at its absence; the only reaction that could arise was fear. In the meantime, however, repeated instances of gratification have made the mother the child's object, and whenever he experiences need this object undergoes intense cathexis that can be described as 'longing'. It is to this new development that we can relate the reaction of pain. Thus pain is properly speaking the reaction to object-loss, while fear is the reaction to the danger attendant on this loss and, by extension, to the danger of object-loss itself.

Pain, too, is something we know very little about. All we know for certain is that pain occurs – at any rate primarily and as a general rule – when a stimulus attacks somewhere on the periphery, penetrates the apparatus forming the protective barrier, and then pro-

duces just the same effect as if it were a continuous stimulus emanating from the drives – a process altogether proof against the muscle actions that are otherwise effective in removing the relevant part of the body from the stimulus attacking it.⁷⁰ The situation is no different if the pain stems from an internal organ rather than from a point on the surface of the skin; all that has happened is that a part of the inner periphery has taken the place of the outer one. There are clearly occasions when children experience pain quite independently of their experiencing need. But the circumstances that give rise to this kind of pain seem to bear very little resemblance to object-loss. Furthermore, peripheral stimulation – that defining feature of pain – is entirely absent from the situation of longing experienced by a child. And yet it cannot be wholly without rhyme or reason that language has coined the notion of inner, psychic pain, and treats the sensations caused by object-loss as being identical in all respects to physical pain.

Physical pain gives rise to an intense cathexis of the painful part of the body, this cathexis, which we may term narcissistic, grows ever more intense, and has an emptying effect on the ego.⁷¹ It is well known that when we suffer pain in our internal organs, we apprehend three-dimensional and other images or notions of parts of the body that never otherwise figure in our conscious mind at all. Moreover, the fact that the cathexis is concentrated on the *psychic representative* of the painful part of the body explains the remarkable fact that if the psyche's attention is distracted by another interest of some sort, even the most intense physical pain simply does not materialize (it would *not* be correct in this context to say that it remains unconscious). It seems to be precisely in this point that the analogy resides that allows the sensation of pain to be carried over into the psychic realm. The intense, ever-increasing cathexis of the absent (lost) object generated by the child's unassuageable longing creates exactly the same economic conditions as does the pain-generated cathexis of an injured part of the body, and thus makes it possible for the absence of the usual prerequisite of physical pain – an attack somewhere on the periphery – to be disregarded. The transition from physical pain to psychic pain corresponds to the

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change from narcissistic cathexis to object-cathexis. The subject's notion of his object, highly cathected by his needs, plays the same role as a part of the body cathected by an increase in stimulus. The continuous nature of the cathexis process and its insusceptibility to inhibition combine to produce the same state of psychic helplessness. If the resulting sensation of unpleasure shows the specific characteristics of pain (characteristics that do not permit of any more precise definition), instead of manifesting itself in the form of a fear reaction, then it seems reasonable to attribute this to a circumstance that we have made too little use of in our interpretations thus far: the fact that these processes leading to the sensation of unpleasure are enacted at a very elevated level of cathexis and annexion.

A further emotional reaction to object-loss is familiar to us, namely sorrow — but its explanation no longer presents any difficulties: the sorrowing process is triggered by the 'reality-test', which categorically insists that since our object no longer exists, we must separate ourselves from it.⁷ The task of the sorrowing process is to carry out this withdrawal from the object in all those situations where the object was the focus of intense cathexis. The painful nature of this separation fully accords with our explanation, given the intense cathexis — caused by unassuageable longing — that occurs during the reproduction of the various situations in which the subject has to undo the ties that bound him to his object.

(1926)

Notes

On the Introduction of Narcissism

1. [The title given in the *Standard Edition* is *On Narcissism: an Introduction* — but this is a startling mistranslation of Freud's wording (*Zur Einführung des Narzissmus*). Far from introducing us to an apparently well-recognized phenomenon, as the *Standard Edition* mis-title implies, Freud is signalling the introduction of a whole new theory of narcissism (cf. the fifth paragraph of the essay).]
2. [It is at once striking and instructive that the phrase 'with sexual pleasure' (*mit sexuellem Wohlgefallen*) is simply omitted from the *Standard Edition*.]
3. [Freud's term *Unterbringung der Libido* (in other contexts *Libidounterbringung*) is a metaphor that cannot be adequately replicated in English. The relevant verb (*unterbringen*) means 'house', 'accommodate', 'find an appropriate niche for'. The *Standard Edition* has 'allocation', but this suggests something quite different from Freud's original.]
4. Otto Rank (1911) [*Ein Beitrag zum Narzissmus*] ('A Contribution on Narcissism').]
5. Regarding these propositions, cf. the discussion of the 'end of the world' in the analysis of Senator President Schreber (1911); cf. also Abraham (1908) [Freud deals with the Schreber case in 'Psychoanalytic Remarks on an Autobiographically Described Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoïdes)'; an English version of Abraham's treatise may be found in K. Abraham, *Selected Papers* (London 1927; New York 1953), Ch. 11].
6. [Cathexis is an ugly and opaque term — coined by James Strachey — that has nothing of the apparent simplicity of Freud's metaphor *Besetzung*. Unfortunately, however, Freud's word has no direct or uncontested equivalent in English, and Strachey's well-established hellenism is therefore reluctantly retained throughout this present volume (together with the associated verb 'cathect').]
7. [The obfuscatory tendencies of the *Standard Edition* are epitomized by