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Our aim was to study symptom-formation and the ego's secondary battle against the symptom, but in choosing phobias we clearly didn't strike lucky. The fear that is such a predominant feature in this particular condition now seems to me to be an unnecessary complication that obscures the issue. There are plenty of neuroses that exhibit no signs of fear. True conversion hysteria²⁶ is one such: we encounter not the slightest tinge of fear in even its gravest symptoms. This fact alone ought to warn us not to post too close a connection between fear and symptom-formation. In all other respects phobias are so closely akin to conversion hysterias that I have thought it right to regard the former as a sub-group of the latter, under the heading 'fear-hysteria'. But no one has yet been able to say what circumstances determine whether a particular case takes the form of a conversion hysteria or a phobia; in other words, no one has fathomed the circumstances that lead to the development of fear in cases of hysteria.

The most common symptoms of conversion hysteria – motor paralyses, contractures, involuntary actions or energy-discharges,²⁷ pains, hallucinations – are either permanently established or intermittent cathectic processes, and this circumstance confronts us with yet more difficulties in our attempts to find an explanation. We don't really know a great deal about these symptoms. Through psychoanalysis we can discover which particular disrupted excitation process they are substituting for. It mostly transpires that they themselves are part and parcel of this process, rather as if its entire energy were focused on this one element. Thus, for instance, the patient's pain turns out to have been present in the situation in

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which the repression first occurred; his hallucinations started out as actual perceptions; his motor paralysis arose as a means of defence against an action that was supposed to be carried out at that same juncture, but was inhibited; his contracture is usually the displacement of a muscle innervation that was meant to happen then, but in some other part of the body; his spasms are the outward mark of an explosion of affect that has escaped the control normally exercised by his ego. There is a quite remarkable variation in the sensations of unpleasure that accompany the appearance of these symptoms. In the case of permanent symptoms that are displaced onto motor activity, such as paralyses and contractures, there are generally no such sensations at all: the ego behaves in their regard as though entirely uninvolved. In the case of intermittent symptoms and those relating to the sensory sphere, marked sensations of unpleasure are usually experienced, which in respect of pain symptoms can intensify to an extreme degree. It is very difficult in the midst of this multiplicity to establish which particular factor makes for such disparities, and yet allows us to see how they all hang together. We also find little trace in conversion hysteria of the ego's battle against the symptom once it has actually formed. Only when the sensitivity to pain of a particular part of the body has tuned into a symptom is it enabled to play a dual role. When this part of the body is touched *externally*, the pain symptom manifests itself just as surely as it does when the pathogenic situation it represents is associatively activated *internally*, whereupon the ego takes precautionary measures to prevent the symptom from being aroused through external perception. We are clearly incapable of fathoming the origins of the peculiar obscurity that attaches to symptom-formation – but this gives us a good reason to abandon this unfruitful terrain without delay.

We turn now to obsessional neurosis, in the expectation that we shall learn rather more here about symptom-formation. The symptoms of obsessional neurosis are generally of two kinds, which tend in opposite directions. They consist on the one hand in prohibitions, precautions, penances – i.e. they are negative in nature; on the other hand, and in sharp contrast, they consist in surrogate gratifications,

very often in symbolic guise. Of these two groups, it is the negative, defensive, punitive one that arises first; as the illness proceeds, however, the gratifications proliferate markedly, mocking all efforts to fight them off. It is a particular triumph of symptom-formation when it manages to merge the prohibition element into the gratification element, so that the injunction or prohibition originally active as a defence mechanism ends up itself taking on the character of a gratification – a process in which highly artificial associative pathways are frequently called upon. This achievement displays the productivity to synthesis that we have already noted in the ego. In extreme cases the patient gets to the point where the great majority of his symptoms not only have their original significance, but also a directly contrary one – clear evidence of how powerful the ambivalence is that plays such a major role in obsessional neurosis (though we do not yet know why). In very extreme cases the symptom shows two distinct phases: an action having been carried out in accordance with some particular precept, a second immediately follows that cancels or reverses the first, without as yet daring to effect its complete opposite.

This very brief overview of obsessional symptoms gives rise to two distinct impressions. The first is that a constant battle is being waged here against whatever has been repressed – a battle in which the forces of repression are driven ever further back; the second is that the ego and super-ego are involved in the symptom-formation process to a particularly marked degree.

Obsessional neurosis may be the most interesting and most rewarding object of scrutiny within the purview of psychoanalysis – but as a problem it none the less remains unresolved. If we aim to delve deeper into its essence, then we have to acknowledge that we cannot yet manage without continued recourse to shaky assumptions and unproven conjectures. Obsessional neurosis presumably arises out of exactly the same circumstance as hysteria does, namely the imperative need to fight off the libidinal demands of the Oedipus complex. Moreover, the nethermost layer of every obsessional neurosis appears to consist of hysterical symptoms that were formed at a very early stage. Its subsequent development, however, is decisively altered by a constitutional factor. The genital organization of the

libido turns out to be weak and insufficiently resistant. Thus when the ego commences its defensive battle, the first success it achieves is that the genital organization (of the phallic phase) is wholly or partially forced back to the earlier sadistic-anal phase. This regression remains a determining influence on everything that ensues.

Another possibility also merits consideration. Perhaps the real factor causing the regression is not constitutional but temporal. On this hypothesis the regression is made possible not because the genital organization of the libido is too puny in its development, but because the ego's defensive response begins too early, while the sadistic phase is still in full flourish. I would not venture to come to a definite decision on this point either – but it is not a supposition that is supported by psychoanalytical observation. On the contrary, the latter tends to show that by the time the shift towards obsessional neurosis occurs, the phallic stage has already been attained. Furthermore, this neurosis sets in at a later age than hysteria does (that is, in the second period of childhood, following the onset of the latency period). Indeed in one case that I was able to study, in which the disorder developed at a particularly late stage, it became very clear that it was a specific impairment of the patient's previously unscattered genital life that created the conditions conducing to regression and the emergence of his obsessional neurosis.²⁸

The metapsychological explanation of regression appears to me to lie in a 'de-mergence' of drives, in the elimination of those erotic components that supervened at the beginning of the genital phase and thereby compounded the destructive cathexes of the sadistic phase.²⁹

In forcing a regression to occur, the ego scores its first success in its campaign of defence against the demands of the libido. It is expedient here for us to draw a distinction between 'defence', as a more generalized activity, and 'regression', which is just one amongst the various mechanisms that the defence process makes use of. It is perhaps even clearer to us in cases of obsessional neurosis than in normal and hysterical cases that the *driving force* behind the defence process is the castration complex, its *target* the busy pretensions of the Oedipus complex. We are dealing here with the beginning of

the latency period, which is characterized by the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, the creation or consolidation of the super-ego, and the erection of ethical and aesthetic barriers in the ego. In obsessional neurosis, these processes carry on well beyond the norm: in addition to the destruction of the Oedipus complex there is also regressive debasement of the libido; the super-ego becomes particularly harsh and unbending; and the ego in its obedience to the super-ego produces strong reaction-formations in the shape of conscientiousness, compassion and cleanliness. The temptation to carry on with early infantile masturbation is renounced and reviled with implacable severity, albeit not always with success — masturbation that now draws on regressive (sadistic-anal) imaginings, but none the less represents that portion of phallic organization that remains unbeaten and unbowed. There is an inherent contradiction in the fact that for the very purpose of safeguarding masculinity (castration fear), every least hint of masculine activity is forestalled; but this contradiction, too, is already part and parcel of the normal routine for getting rid of the Oedipus complex, and is remarkable in obsessional neurosis only for its excessiveness. The axiom that excess always bears within it the seeds of its own dissolution is borne out not least by obsessional neurosis, in that the suppressed masturbation forces its way in the guise of obsessional acts ever closer to gratification.

The reaction-formations that take place in the ego of obsessional neurotics, which we have identified as exaggerated versions of normal character-formation, may reasonably be described as a *new* defence mechanism by comparison with regression and repression. They appear to be absent or very much weaker in hysteria. Looking back, then, we can make a conjecture as to what constitutes the distinguishing feature of the defence process in hysteria: it appears to confine itself to repression, in that the ego turns away from the disagreeable drive-impulse, leaves it to run its course, in the unconscious, and takes no further part in its destiny. Thus, this cannot be wholly and invariably correct, for of course, in a number of cases where a hysterical symptom simultaneously represents the fulfilment of a call for punishment pronounced by the super-ego;

but it may serve to describe a general characteristic of the ego's behaviour in cases of hysteria.

One can either simply accept it as a fact that the super-ego takes on such a harsh form in obsessional neurosis, or else one can suppose that the fundamental trait of this disorder is libidinal regression, and then attempt to posit a connection between this and the severity exhibited by the super-ego. It is certainly the case that the super-ego, which itself derives from the id, cannot just ignore the regression and the de-mergence of drives that have occurred there. It would scarcely be surprising if the super-ego for its part did not become harsher, colder, more pitiless than it is when there is normal development.

During the latency period, fighting off the temptation to masturbate appears to be treated as the paramount task. This battle produces a whole range of symptoms that recur in typical form even in very different individuals, and are by and large ritualistic in character. It is very much to be regretted that they have not yet been catalogued and systematically analysed: as the earliest by-products of neurosis they would be likely to shed more light than anything else on the mechanism of symptom-formation involved here. Even at this early stage they exhibit signs of the traits that will come to the fore in such a dire way once the illness becomes severe: the tendency to repeat and dwell on things becomes apparent; and ordinary, everyday activities — going to bed, washing and dressing, going from A to B — reflect their influence in the form of habits that are later to become practically automatic. Why this happens is by no means fully understood as yet; but the sublimation of anal-erotic components clearly plays a role in it.

Puberty marks a decisive watershed in the development of obsessional neurosis. The process of genital organization broken off earlier in childhood now reasserts itself with tremendous force. We know, however, that the pattern of sexual development in early childhood also determines the direction that things take in this new beginning represented by the pubertal period. Thus on the one hand the aggressive impulses of infancy awaken afresh, and on the other hand a pretty substantial proportion of the *new* libidinal impulses — in

severe causes all of them — are obliged to follow the paths already marked out by the regression process, and to emerge as aggressive and destructive tendencies. Because of this camouflaging of the person's erotic urges, and because of the powerful reaction-formations that occur in the ego, the battle against sexuality is now waged under the banner of ethics. The ego recoils against from the cruel and violent demands transmitted to its consciousness from the id, without realizing that in so doing it is actually fighting off erotic desires, including some to which under normal circumstances it would have raised no objection. The hyper-severe super-ego insists even more emphatically on the suppression of this sexuality because of the fact that it has assumed such repellent forms. The conflict thus proves to be doubly exacerbated in obsessional neurosis: the forces doing the fighting off become even more intolerant, while the forces needing to be fought off become even more intolerable. Both developments are the result of a single factor: the regression of the libido.

One might consider a number of our suppositions to be contradicted by the very fact that the disagreeable notion informing the obsession ever enters consciousness in the first place. There can be no doubt, however, that before doing so it has first gone through the process of repression. In most cases the ego is completely oblivious of the real purport of the aggressive drive-impulse, and a good deal of psychoanalytical work is required in order to make the patient aware of it. As a rule, the only thing that manages to make its way into consciousness is a deformed surrogate that is either blurred and dreamlike in its lack of definition, or so absurdly disguised as to be unrecognizable. Even if the repression has not gnawed away at the actual content of the aggressive drive-impulse, it will certainly have got rid of the attendant element of affect. The ego accordingly perceives the aggression not as an active impulse, but — as patients tend to say — as a mere 'thought', something that ought to have no effect whatever on the emotions. What is most extraordinary is that this is not in fact the case. For the affect that is kept out of the picture as regards the subject's perception of the notion behind his obsession *does* make its appearance after all — but in a different

location. The super-ego behaves as if no repression had taken place, as if it were familiar with both the precise purport and the whole affective nature of the aggressive impulse, and treats the ego on the basis of these assumptions. On the one hand the ego knows itself to be guiltless, but on the other hand it necessarily experiences guilt-feelings and a sense of blame that it simply cannot explain. The puzzle that this confronts us with is not as big as it first seems, however. The behaviour of the super-ego is altogether understandable; as for the contradiction within the ego, it simply proves to us that it has shut itself off from the id by means of the repression, while remaining entirely open to any influences emanating from the super-ego.³⁰ The further question as to why the ego does not similarly abstract itself from the torment of the super-ego's criticism becomes otiose once we realize that this does indeed happen in a great number of cases. Furthermore, there are obsessional neuroses that exhibit no guilty conscience at all: the ego has avoided all cognizance of it, so we believe, by summing up a whole new set of symptoms, penances and self-punishing restrictions. At the same time, however, these symptoms represent the gratification of masochistic drive-impulses, which the regression process has likewise served to reinforce.

Obsessional neurosis displays such enormous diversity in its manifestations that no amount of effort has ever succeeded in producing a coherent synthesis of all its variations. Our one aim is to identify connections and correlations typical of the disorder, yet we are worried all the time lest we overlook other recurrent features that are no whit less important.

I have already described the general tendency characteristic of symptom-formation in obsessional neurosis. It amounts to giving ever more scope for surrogate gratification, hence ever less scope for refusal.³¹ Thanks to the ego's proclivity to synthesis, the same symptoms that originally signified restrictions subsequently also acquire the significance of gratifications, and it is clear that this latter role gradually becomes the more influential of the two. An extremely restricted ego that is entirely dependent on symptoms for its gratification: that is the eventual result of this process, which gets ever

closer to marking the total failure of what began as a defensive battle. This shift in the balance of forces in favour of gratification can lead ultimately to the dreaded phenomenon of a complete paralysis of will in the ego, which, when facing any kind of decision, experiences almost as strong an impetus from the one side as from the other. The unduly fierce conflict between the id and the super-ego that dominates the disorder from the outset can proliferate to such an extent that *all* activities of the ego – itself quite incapable of mediating between the two – are irresistibly drawn into it.

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In the course of these battles one can observe two symptom-forming activities on the part of the ego that merit particular attention, since they are clearly surrogates for repression and therefore ideally placed to throw light on its purpose and technique. Perhaps we may also regard the appearance of these auxiliary and surrogate techniques as proof that the substantive repression process encounters difficulties when put into operation. The fact that repression manifests such a variety of forms will perhaps seem more readily comprehensible to us when we consider that in obsessional neurosis the ego is so much more a locus of symptom-formation than it is in hysteria; that it clings tenaciously to its relationship to reality and to consciousness, and devotes its entire intellectual capacities to that end; that indeed the whole process of thought appears hyper-catheted and eroticized.

The two techniques referred to are *obliteration of past events*,³² and *isolation*. The first of these is applied across a very large area, and reaches far back into the past. It is negative magic, so to speak, rather than targeting merely the *consequences* of an event (of something experienced or witnessed), it seeks by means of motor symbolism³³ to make the event itself 'vanish into thin air'. By using this latter expression we want to point up the role that this technique plays not only in neurosis, but also in magic, folk-lore and religious ritual. In obsessional neurosis one encounters the obliteration phenomenon first of all in the two-phase symptoms mentioned earlier, where the second action in effect cancels the first, as though it had never happened, whereas in reality *both* have happened. Obliteration also constitutes the second of the two root objectives

underlying ritual behaviour in obsessional neurosis, the first being prevention, that is the adoption of precautionary measures to ensure that a particular event does not happen, or does not recur. The difference between the two is easy to see: the precautionary measures are rational; the 'cancellations' by means of obliteration are irrational and magical in nature. One must naturally suppose that this second root objective is the older one, dating from when the world around was seen in animistic terms. In normal behaviour the tendency to obliteration appears in modified form in the determination to treat an event as if it had never happened – but one then takes no further action on the matter, bothering neither about the event nor its consequences, whereas the neurotic seeks to cancel the past itself, to repress it through motor processes. This same proclivity may also account for the compulsion to repeat so common in obsessional neurosis, the actual enactment of which then becomes the rallying point for a variety of conflicting purposes. Anything that did not happen in the way the person wanted it to happen is obliterated by being subjected to repetition in a *different* way – which prompts all the various motive forces to appear on the scene and join in for the duration of the repetitions. As the neurosis proceeds, a marked tendency to obliterate a specific traumatic experience often reveals itself to be a major motive force causing symptoms to form. Thus we unexpectedly gain insight into a new defensive technique involving motor processes – or, as we may say with rather more precision here, a new *regressive* technique.

The other technique being described here for the first time is that of *isolation*, a process peculiarly appropriate to obsessional neurosis. It, too, relates to the motor sphere. What happens is that directly after a disagreeable event, and likewise after any activity on the part of the subject himself that is significant within the context of the neurosis, a pause is interpolated during which nothing else may happen; no sensory perceptions are made and no actions are carried out. Although puzzling at first, this response soon reveals its connection to repression. In hysteria, as we know, it is possible to have a traumatic experience 'swallowed up' by amnesia. In obsessional neurosis this has often not been fully accomplished; the experience

is not forgotten – but it is shorn of its affect, and its associative connections are suppressed or interrupted, with the result that it exists in isolation, so to speak, and furthermore is not reproduced in any thought processes. Now the outcome of isolating the experience in this way is the same as that attained by repression involving amnesia. This latter technique is thus reproduced in the isolation processes of obsessional neurosis, but at the same time it is also intensified at the motor level in order to produce the requisite magic effect. The elements that are thus kept apart from each other are precisely those that belong associatively together; motor isolation is intended to guarantee that the links remain broken whenever thinking is going on. This neurotic procedure is offered a useful pretext by the normal phenomenon of concentration, which ensures that the process of taking in any particular impression or carrying out any particular task that seems significant to us remains undisturbed by the intrusion of alien thought processes or activities. But even in normal behaviour, the device of concentration is used for protection not only from whatever is irrelevant and extraneous, but also and especially from whatever is unsuitable and antipathetic. What is felt to be most intrusive of all is any combination of things that originally belonged together but were subsequently wrenched apart as development progressed – for instance, if the ambivalence of the father-complex finds expression in the context of our relationship to God, or if our excretory organs make themselves felt in the midst of erotic arousal. The isolating process thus constitutes a major task that the ego routinely accomplishes in controlling the sequence of thoughts; and as we know, in our psychoanalytical practice we have to train the ego to relinquish this particular function for the time being, thoroughly justified though it is in itself.

We have all had experience of the fact that obsessional neurotics find it particularly difficult to adhere to the basic rule of psychoanalysis. Their ego is more vigilant, and more stringent in its use of isolation, probably as a result of the high degree of antagonistic tension between their super-ego and their id. While they are engaged in thinking, their ego has too many things to fight off – the intrusion of unconscious fantasies, the emergence of the various ambivalent

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Let us return to the topic of infantile animal phobias – after all, we understand these cases better than any others. Here, then, the ego has to take action against a libidinal object-cathexis on the part of the id (whether involving the positive or the negative form of the Oedipus complex), because it is convinced that giving in to it would incur the risk of castration. We have already dealt with this in some detail, but would like to take this opportunity to resolve a doubt that still remains from that earlier discussion. In the case of Little Hans (that is, of a positive Oedipus complex), are we to suppose that it is the affectionate impulse in favour of his mother, or the aggressive impulse directed against his father, that provokes the ego into mounting its defence? From a practical point of view this might seem immaterial, particularly since the two impulses are conditional upon each other; but the question is interesting in theoretical terms, since only the affectionate feeling for the mother can be regarded as a purely erotic one. The aggressive feeling towards the father is essentially dependent on the destruction drive, and we have always supposed that in neurosis the ego defends itself against the demands of the libido, not of the other drives. And we do indeed find that once the phobia had formed, Little Hans's affectionate attachment to his mother to all intents and purposes disappeared, having been comprehensively dealt with by the repression process, whereas his aggressive impulse showed full-scale symptom-formation (formation of a surrogate). The situation is rather more straightforward in the case of the Wolf-man: the repressed impulse really is an erotic one – his feminine attitude to his father – and it is here, too, that symptom-formation takes place.

Inhibition, symptom, and fear

It is almost enough to make us feel ashamed that for all our protracted labours we still encounter difficulties in trying to understand the most fundamental phenomena; but we are determined to simplify nothing and conceal nothing. If we are incapable of seeing things clearly, we do at least wish to see with absolute clarity what is unclear. What is impeding us here is plainly some kind of flaw in the way we have developed our theory of drives. Initially, we tracked the forms of libido organization through their various stages from the oral via the sadistic-anal to the genital and, in so doing, represented the components of the sexual drive as being all on the same footing as each other. Later, however, sadism appeared to us to represent a different drive altogether, and one antithetical to Eros. This new conception envisaging *two* groups of drives seems on the face of it to demolish the earlier theory of *successive phases* of libido organization. But we have no need to invent some new explanation to help us out of this difficulty, for the solution presented itself to us long ago, to the effect that we practically never find ourselves dealing with pure, unalloyed drive-impulses, but invariably with combinations of both kinds of drives in varying proportions. Thus a sadistic object-cathexis also has a perfect right to be treated as a libidinal one, the aggressive impulse directed against the father has just as much right to become an object of repression as the affectionate impulse in favour of the mother – and there is accordingly no need for us to revise our view of the various forms of libido organization. All the same, let us note for later consideration the possibility that repression is a process that has a particular affinity with the genital phase of libido organization, and that the ego resorts to different methods of defence when it has to fight off the libido in its other organizational phases. Let us also add that a case like Little Hans's does not allow us to resolve the issue one way or the other: here, an aggressive impulse is indeed dealt with by means of repression, but at a point when genital organization has already been attained.

We do not want to lose sight this time of the fear nexus. We mentioned earlier that as soon as the ego becomes aware that there is a danger of castration it gives out a fear signal, and then – in some way that we do not understand beyond the fact that it involves the

agency of the pleasure/unpleasure principle – inhibits the cathexis process within the id that is threatening it. At the same time, the relevant phobia takes shape. The fear of castration acquires a different object and a deformational form of expression: it becomes fear of being bitten by a horse (eaten by a wolf), instead of being castrated by the father. The forming of a surrogate has two obvious advantages. First, it avoids an ambivalence conflict (the father being at one and the same time an object of love). Second, it allows the ego to stop any further fear being generated; for the fear pertaining to phobias is *facultative*,³⁴ appearing only when its object is directly perceived. That is quite right, too, for only then is the danger situation actually present; if the father is absent, there is no need to fear castration at his hands. The father cannot be got rid of, however: he can reappear whenever he chooses. But if he is substituted by an animal, then one need only avoid the sight – i.e. the presence – of the animal in order to remain free of danger and fear. Little Hans therefore imposes a restriction on his ego; he produces the inhibition stopping him from going out of doors, in order not to encounter any horses. Things are even easier for our young Russian: he loses precious little by not looking at a particular picture-book any more. If his naughty sister didn't keep showing him the picture of the wolf standing on its hind legs that appears in this book, he would be able to feel completely safe from his fears.

I once characterized phobias as being in the nature of a projection, in that they substitute a danger perceived in the world *without* for a danger posed by drives *within*; this has the advantage that one can protect oneself from an external danger by fleeing from it, or avoiding all sight of it, whereas flight is quite useless if the danger emanates from within.³⁵ My assertion was not wrong, but it certainly didn't get to the heart of the matter. After all, the pressure exerted by a drive is not a danger in itself, but only because it brings with it a real external danger, namely that of castration. When it comes down to it, therefore, what actually happens in a phobia is simply that one external danger is replaced by another. The notion that in phobias the ego has only to take avoiding action, or deploy a symptom of inhibition, in order to keep fear at bay, accords extremely well with

the proposition that this fear is merely a signal of affect, and that the economic situation has not changed in any way.

On this view, then, fear in animal phobias is an affective reaction to danger on the part of the ego, and the danger being signalled here is that of castration. The sole difference between this and the objective fear normally manifested by the ego in danger situations is that the content of the fear remains essentially unconscious, entering consciousness only in the guise of a deformation.

I rather think that this same view will prove to be valid in respect of adults' phobias, too, even though a much greater wealth of material is processed by the neurosis in such cases, and even though various additional factors besides symptom-formation come into the picture. The pattern is basically the same. The agoraphobe imposes a restriction on his ego in order to escape a danger posed by his drives. This danger resides in the temptation to give in to his erotic desires, which would result in him once again conjuring up the fear of castration (or some analogous fear), just as in his childhood. As a straightforward example of this, I would cite the case of a certain young man who became agoraphobic because he was afraid of yielding to the allurements of prostitutes and catching syphilis as a punishment.

I am well aware that many cases show a more complicated structure, and that many other repressed drive-impulses can feed into the phobia, but these latter are only auxiliary in nature, and for the most part impinge on the core of the neurosis at a relatively late stage. The symptomatology of agoraphobia is complicated by the fact that the ego is not entirely satisfied by simply avoiding something: it takes other action as well in order to remove the danger from the situation. This additional action commonly consists in a temporal regression into infancy (in extreme cases right back into the womb, to a period that afforded protection from the danger that now threatens), and this then becomes the sole condition under which the avoidance mechanism remains in abeyance. Thus the agoraphobe can go out into the street provided that – like a small child – he is accompanied by someone he trusts. By the same token he may also be able to go out alone, provided he does not go further than a

certain distance from his home, or does not go into areas that are unfamiliar to him or where people don't know him. In his choice of such provisos he reveals the influence of the infantile factors that dominate his life through his neurosis. One particularly clear example – even in the absence of any such infantile regression – is the phobia involving fear of being alone, the essential purpose of which is to avoid the temptation to indulge in solitary masturbation. Needless to say, infantile regression can only occur in individuals who are no longer children.

As a rule, a phobia only emerges after the individual has first been stricken by fear in a particular set of circumstances, for example when he is in the street, or in a train, or on his own. The fear is thereupon shut out, but reappears whenever the protective stratagem cannot be maintained. The phobia mechanism does splendid service as a means of defence, and tends to exhibit marked stability. In many cases – though not in all – the defensive battle is carried a stage further, being henceforth directed against the symptom.

What we have learnt about fear in the context of phobias also remains relevant to obsessional neurosis. It is not difficult to reduce the overall situation characteristic of obsessional neurosis to that characteristic of phobias. Here, the motor driving all subsequent symptom-formation is plainly the ego's fear *vis-à-vis* the super-ego. The hostility of the super-ego constitutes the danger situation that the ego must fight shy of. There is not the least semblance of projection here: the danger is wholly internalized. But if we ask ourselves what the ego is so fearful of suffering at the hands of the super-ego, then we are compelled to conclude that the punishment threatened by the latter is simply a refined version of the punishment of castration, just as the super-ego is the father in depersonalized form, so too the specific fear of being castrated by him has changed into an indefinite social or consciential fear.³⁶ But this fear remains latent; the ego keeps it at a safe distance by obediently carrying out whatever commands, prescriptions and penances are imposed upon it. If it is prevented from so doing, then the most extreme discomfiture immediately ensues, which we may reasonably regard as the equivalent of fear, and which patients themselves equate with fear.

We thus arrive at the following conclusion: fear consists in a reaction to a particular danger situation; the ego saves itself from this fear by taking action to withdraw from the situation or avoid it altogether. Now one might be tempted to say that symptoms are produced in order to avoid any fear being generated in the first place – but this does not really get us very far. It is more accurate to say that symptoms are produced in order to avoid the *danger situation* signalled by the fear that has already been generated. In the cases considered so far, however, this danger lay in castration or in something that can be traced back to castration.

If fear is the ego's reaction to danger, then it may seem logical to construe traumatic neurosis – which so often ensues where the individual has survived a life-threatening danger – as a direct result of fear of death or fear for life and limb,³⁷ thereby disregarding castration and the dependent status of the ego.³⁸ This indeed is what most of those with clinical experience of the traumatic neuroses of the last war³⁹ have done, and the triumphant cry has gone up that we now have proof positive that a threat to the self-preservation drive can produce a neurosis without any involvement on the part of sexuality, and without paying the slightest heed to the complex processes posited by psychoanalysis. It really is extremely regrettable that there exists not a single reliable analysis of a traumatic neurosis. Our regrets relate not to the denial of the aetiological importance of sexuality, for any such denial has long since been refuted by the introduction of the concept of narcissism, which places libidinal cathexis of the ego in the same category as object-cathexes and stresses the libidinal nature of the self-preservation drive; rather, we regret this analytical deficit because we have thereby lost a priceless opportunity to gain crucial information about the relationship between fear and symptom-formation. In the light of everything we know about the more straightforward neuroses of everyday life, it seems highly unlikely that any neurosis could be brought about solely by the presence of objective danger, without any involvement on the part of the deeper unconscious layers of the psychic apparatus. However, there is nothing within the unconscious capable of giving substance to our notion of the extinction of life. Whereas castration is

rendered imaginable to us by our daily experience of being separated from the contents of our bowels, and by the loss of the maternal breast that we experience when weaned, experiences akin to death have never happened to us, or else – like fainting-fits – have left no identifiable trace. I therefore hold to the supposition that the fear of death has to be understood as an analogue of the fear of castration, and that the situation to which the ego reacts is that of being abandoned by its guardian the super-ego – that is, by the forces that rule our destiny – and hence deprived for ever of the shield safeguarding it from dangers all and sundry.⁴⁰ It also needs to be borne in mind that in experiences leading to traumatic neurosis the barrier that normally provides protection against external stimuli is breached, and excessive quanta of excitation descend upon the psychic apparatus; this means that here we encounter a *second* possibility, namely that fear is not only *signalled* as an affect, but is also *created anew* out of the economic conditions of the situation.

In asserting just now that the ego becomes habituated to the notion of castration by regularly experiencing object-loss, we have arrived at a new concept of fear. Whereas hitherto we have regarded fear as a signal of affect indicating danger, it now appears to us – since it so often involves the danger of castration – to constitute reaction to a loss, a separation. While numerous considerations might instantly seem to gainsay this conclusion, we none the less cannot help being struck by a most remarkable similarity: birth constitutes the first experience of fear; at any rate for human beings, and in objective terms signifies separation from the mother; it might therefore be likened to castration of the mother (based on the equation 'child = penis'). Now it would be highly gratifying if fear were subsequently to be repeated as a symbol of separation every time an actual separation occurred; unfortunately, however, we cannot build an argument on this similarity given the fact that birth is of course not *subjectively* experienced as separation from the mother, the thoroughly narcissistic foetus being altogether unaware of the mother as object. A further objection can also be raised – namely that the affective reactions to separation are well known to

us, and that we experience them as pain and sorrow, not as fear. At the same time, however, we are mindful that in our discussion of sorrow we were at a loss to understand why it should be so painful.⁴¹