

IV

Let us look first of all at infantile hysterical animal phobia — a good example of which is the horse phobia of Little Hans,¹⁷ a case that is surely typical in all essential respects. Even the briefest of glances at it is sufficient to make us realize that the circumstances in a real-life case of neurotic illness are far more complex than we might expect or imagine when we operate merely on the basis of theoretical abstractions. It takes quite a lot of work to determine which is the repressed impulse, what constitutes its surrogate, and where the motive force behind the repression is to be found.

Little Hans declines to go out into the street because he is afraid of horses. That is our raw material. What, then, constitutes the symptom here: the process of fear-generation,¹⁸ the choice of fear-object, the surrendering of the freedom to move, or some combination of these? Where is the gratification he refuses to allow himself? Why is he driven to this refusal?

It would be easy to reply that there is nothing very puzzling about this case. The child's unaccountable fear of horses is the symptom; the inability to go out into the street is a manifestation of inhibition, a restriction that the ego imposes on itself in order not to arouse the fear symptom. The correctness of this latter point is immediately clear to us, so we shall simply ignore the inhibition element as we proceed with our discussion. As for the supposed symptom, however, our first brief acquaintance with the case does not even enable us to recognize the real manner in which it expresses itself. As we discover once we probe more deeply, it is a matter not of a generalized fear of horses on Little Hans's part, but of a specific fearful expectation — namely that a horse will bite him. This underlying notion is keen

to stay out of the realm of consciousness, however, and seeks a surrogate in the form of a generalized phobia reflecting the fear and its object, but nothing else. Is it perhaps this underlying notion, then, that constitutes the real nub of the symptom?

We will not get a single step further unless we look at the entire psychic situation of the child as revealed to us in the course of our psychoanalytical work with him. He is possessed of a jealous and hostile Oedipus attitude to his father, whom he none the less dearly loves — at any rate so long as his mother, as the cause of the rift, remains out of the picture. What we have, then, is a conflict caused by ambivalence: well-founded love and equally justified hate, both directed at the same person. His phobia must be an attempt to resolve this conflict. Ambivalence conflicts of this kind are very common — and we are familiar with another typical outcome that they can have, whereby one of the two competing impulses, generally the affectionate one, becomes enormously intensified, while the other disappears. It is only the inordinate extent and compulsive nature of the love that tells us that this is not the sole psychic attitude involved and that it is always ready to leap into action to keep its rival thoroughly suppressed, and which also allows us to postulate the operation of a process that we might describe as repression through *reaction-formation* (within the ego). Cases such as that of Little Hans show no sign of any such reaction-formation; there are clearly various different ways of coping with ambivalence conflicts.

There is one thing, however, that we established beyond doubt: the drive-impulse that was being subjected to repression was a hostile impulse directed against the father. Proof of this came in the course of analysis, when we were trying to track down the origins of the idea of the biting horse. Hans had seen a horse fall down, and he had also seen a playmate with whom he was playing horses fall over and hurt himself. Analysis gave us good grounds for postulating a wish-impulse in Hans to the effect that he wanted his father to fall over and injure himself like the horse and his playmate. Links with a particular episode that he had witnessed, involving the departure of someone from his street, lead us to think that his wish to be rid of his father had also found more forthright expression. Such a wish,

however, amounts to an *intention* to get rid of him himself; it amounts to the murderous impulse of the Oedipus complex.

We have not so far discovered any direct connection between the repressed drive-impulse and its putative surrogate in the shape of the horse phobia. Let us therefore now simplify the psychic situation presented by Little Hans, by taking away the elements of infancy and ambivalence; let us imagine him for instance as a young servant who is in love with the mistress of the house and enjoys certain favours bestowed by her. The element we *don't* take away is that he hates the — far stronger — master of the house, and would like to be rid of him. Given this scenario, it is the most natural thing in the world for him to dread his master's vengeance, and to be seized by an abiding state of fear with regard to him — altogether similar to Little Hans's phobia with regard to horses. This means that we cannot describe the fear element in this phobia as a 'symptom'. If Little Hans, being in love with his mother, were to exhibit plain, straightforward fear of his father, we would have no right to impute a neurosis, a phobia, to him; we would be looking at a thoroughly comprehensible emotional reaction. It is a quite different feature that alone turns this reaction into a neurosis: the substitution of the horse for the father. It is accordingly this displacement that produces what might properly be called a symptom. Displacement thus constitutes that alternative mechanism referred to earlier, which allows ambivalence conflicts to be dealt with *without* the help of reaction-formation. It is made possible, or at any rate easier, by the fact that at this tender age the traces of totemistic thinking innate in all of us are still easily rekindled. The divide between man and beast is still not acknowledged at this age, and certainly not as over-emphasized as it is later on. The full-grown man, admired yet feared, is still seen in the same perspective as the large animal, whom the child envies in so many respects, but against whom he has also been warned because it can turn dangerous. The ambivalence conflict is thus not resolved in relation to the actual person concerned, but is so to speak circumvented, in that the subject foists a *different* person on one of his impulses by way of a surrogate.

In all these respects the picture makes perfect sense to us — but

in another respect the analysis of Little Hans's phobia brought downright disappointment: the deformation that the process of symptom-formation consists in is effected *not* on the representamen (i.e. the perceived notion) of the drive-impulse that is being repressed, but on a quite different one corresponding merely to a *reaction* to the disagreeable element itself. Our expectations would have been more readily satisfied if, in place of his *fear* of horses, Little Hans had developed an inclination to ill-treat or beat them, or if he had clearly displayed his desire to see them fall down, injure themselves, and perhaps even die with much jerking of limbs ('making a racket with their legs?'). Something of this kind did indeed become apparent in the course of the analysis, but it was by no means a prominent element in his neurosis. And strangely enough, if the really *had* developed this sort of hostility as his main symptom, but directed it at horses instead of his father, then we would certainly not have deemed him to be suffering from a neurosis. There is something wrong, then — either with our interpretation of repression, or with our definition of a symptom. One thing strikes us at once, of course: if Little Hans really *had* exhibited such behaviour towards horses, it would have meant that the repression process had not altered the *character* of the objectionable, aggressive drive-impulse, but had merely changed its object.

There are quite certainly cases of repression where this, and no more than this, is achieved — but in the genesis of Little Hans's phobia more unquestionably *did* happen, just how much may be gathered from another piece of analysis altogether.

We have already seen that according to Little Hans the gist of his phobia lay in the notion he harboured of being bitten by a horse. Now it so happens that we later investigated the genesis of another case of animal phobia: wolves were the fear-object here — but they, too, played the role of father-surrogates.²⁹ As a direct consequence of a dream (which we were able to elucidate in analysis), this particular boy developed a fear of being eaten by a wolf, like one of the seven little Billy-goats in the fairy-tale. The well-established fact that Little Hans's father had played horses with him was surely the decisive factor in his choice of fear-object; and in the same way, it

turned out to be at the very least highly probable that in the childhood games of my Russian patient (whom I did not come to analyse until he was already in his twenties), his father had pretended to be a wolf and had playfully threatened to eat him up. Since then I have encountered a third case, involving a young American man, and although in this case an animal phobia did *not* materialize, it is precisely its non-appearance that helps us to understand the other cases. His sexuality had been kindled by a fantastical children's story that had been read to him, about an Arabian chieftain who goes clashing after a character made of edible matter (the 'gingerbread-man') in order to eat him. He identified himself with this edible manikin, the chieftain was easily recognizable as a father-surrogate, and this fantasy became the initial basis for his autoerotic activities.

The notion of being gobbled up by one's father is a typical piece of ancient child lore, however; and we are all familiar with the relevant analogies in mythology (Cronus) and in the animal world. But while this knowledge might ease our path a little, the notion remains so deeply alien to us that we can concede its presence in a child only with incredulity. We also don't know whether it really means what it appears to mean, and we don't understand how it can come to be the stuff of a phobia. Our psychoanalytical experience, however, *does* provide us with the requisite information. It teaches us that the notion of being eaten by one's father is a regressively debased manifestation of a passive affectionate impulse that consists in a craving to be the object — in the genital-erotic sense of the term — of the father's love. Once we follow the history of the case all the way through, we are left in no doubt as to the correctness of this interpretation. Needless to say, the genital-impulse no longer betrays any sign of its affectionate intent when it is manifested in the language of the transitional phase — already successfully concluded — from oral to sadistic organization of the libido. Incidentally, is it a question here merely of the *representamen* being replaced by a regressive *manifestation*, or is there an actual regressive debasement of the genitally oriented impulse in the id? It does not seem at all easy to determine this. The case history of the Russian 'Wolf-man' argues very strongly for the latter, more grave possibility, for his

behaviour following the all-important dream was bad, cruel, sadistic, and he very soon developed a thorough-going obsessional neurosis. At any rate, we do come to realize that repression is not the only means available to the ego for warding off disagreeable drive-impulses. If it succeeds in making the drive regressive, then it has in effect confuted it even more thoroughly than would have been possible through repression, though of course in some cases it first forces a regression, then follows this up with a repression.

The situation in the case of the Wolf-man, and the rather more straightforward one in the case of Little Hans, are such as to trigger all sorts of further reflections, but two unexpected insights are afforded to us straightaway. There can be no doubt whatever that the drive-impulse that is repressed in these phobias is hostile to the father. One can reasonably say that it is repressed by being transformed into its opposite: the subject's aggression towards the father is replaced by the aggression — or vengeance — of the father towards the subject. Since in any case aggression of this kind has its roots in the sadistic phase of the libido, it needs very little debasement for it to descend to the oral stage, which in Hans's case is merely hinted at by his fear of being bitten, but is graphically clear in the Wolf-man's fear of being devoured. In addition, however, analysis establishes beyond all doubt that *another* drive-impulse fell prey to repression at the same time — an opposite one consisting in a passive affectionate impulse in favour of the father, which had already attained the genital (phallic) level of libido organization. This latter impulse even appears to be the more significant one as regards the ultimate outcome of the repression process: it undergoes more extensive regression, and it plays the key role in determining the content of the phobia. Thus whereas we began by tracking down the repression of just *one* drive, we find ourselves having to acknowledge that *two* such processes run in tandem with each other; the two drive-impulses involved — sadistic aggression towards the father, and passive affection for him — constitute a duo of opposites. And that's not all! If we interpret Little Hans's story correctly, we see that the formation of the phobia also served to nullify his affectionate object-cathexis in respect of his mother, even though

the phobia itself betrays no sign of this. What is involved in Hans's case (things are much less clear in the case of my Russian patient) is a regression process that affects almost *all* the components of his Oedipus complex – his hostile and affectionate impulses in respect of his father; and his affectionate impulses in respect of his mother.

These are unwelcome complications for us, given that we set out to study only *simple* cases of symptom-formation caused by regression, and to this end deliberately addressed ourselves to the earliest and seemingly most transparent neuroses of childhood. Instead of finding just one regression, we encountered a whole mass of them, and for good measure we also found ourselves dealing with regression. Perhaps we have added to the confusion by wanting to treat the two available analyses of animal phobias – those of Little Hans and of the Wolf-man – as if they were altogether identical. In fact, however, we are struck by various differences between them. Only in Little Hans's case can one say with certainty that he manages through his phobia to deal with the two chief impulses of the Oedipus complex: the aggressive one *vis-à-vis* his father, and the over-affectionate one *vis-à-vis* his mother. The affectionate impulse in respect of his father is undoubtedly also present (it plays its own particular role in the regression of its opposite); but there is no evidence that it is strong enough to provoke a regression itself, or that it is subsequently neutralized. Hans just seems to have been a normal boy with a so-called 'positive' Oedipus complex. It is quite possible that the factors that appear to be missing in his case *were* in fact fully operative, but we can produce no evidence of this; there are simply too many gaps in the material uncovered by even the most searching parts of our analysis; the documentation is just not full enough. In the case of our Russian patient the deficiency lay elsewhere: his relationship to women was damaged as a result of his having been seduced at an early age; his passive, feminine side was very pronounced; and while the analysis of his 'wolf-dream' revealed little sign of deliberate aggression towards his father, it yielded wholly unambiguous proof that the regression bore on his passive attitude of affection towards him. The other factors may have been involved here, too, but there is no evidence of them.

If despite these various differences – amounting almost to a direct antithesis – the two cases ultimately produce very nearly the same outcome in their respective phobias, then the explanation for this phenomenon must be sought elsewhere. We find it, in fact, in the second of the two insights afforded by our brief comparative survey. For we believe we know what constitutes the motor driving the regression in both cases, and we see its role confirmed by the way in which the two children's development proceeded. It is the same in both cases: fear of imminent castration. It is fear of castration that makes Little Hans give up his aggression towards his father; and the full meaning underlying his fear of being bitten by a horse is easy to see: he is afraid that a horse will bite off his genitals, will castrate him. But it is likewise fear of castration that makes our young Russian relinquish his wish to be loved by his father as a sexual object; the realization having dawned on him that the prerequisite of such a relationship would be the sacrifice of his genitals, i.e. of that which makes him different from a woman. *Both* forms of the Oedipus complex – the normal, active one and the inverted one – come to grief because of the castration complex. It is true that the young Russian's fear of being devoured by a wolf contains nothing specifically suggesting castration (oral regression has carried it too far from the phallic phase for that to be possible); but more than enough proof is provided by the analysis of his dream. Moreover, it constitutes a resounding triumph on the part of the regression that the phobia no longer contains even the nearest hint of castration.

This, then, is our unexpected insight: in both cases, fear of castration is the motor driving the regression. The particular *motors* attaching to the individuals' fear²¹ – the notion of being bitten by a horse, or devoured by a wolf – are deformational surrogates for the notion of being castrated by the father. This latter notion is what actually undergoes regression. In the case of the young Russian it was the expression of a wish that could not possibly hold its own against the rebellion of his masculinity; in Hans's case it was the expression of a reaction that converted his aggression into its antithesis. However, the *effect* of fear that constitutes the very essence of the phobia derives not from the regression process, not from the

libidinal cathexes of the repressed impulses, but from the agent of repression itself; the fear in animal phobia is unconverted fear of castration, in other words objective fear,²² fear of a danger that is actual and imminent, or at any rate perceived as such. As we can see here, it is fear that causes repression — and not, as I used to believe, repression that causes fear.

It gives me no pleasure to think back on it, but it would be futile for me to deny that I have often argued the hypothesis that repression causes the drive-representations to be deformed, displaced etc., while causing the libido of the drive-impulse to be converted into fear. However, our investigation of the two phobias, which ought to have provided a perfect opportunity for proving this hypothesis, has clearly *not* confirmed it; rather, it appears to directly contradict it. The fear in animal phobias is the ego's fear of castration; the fear in agoraphobia — which has been less thoroughly studied — appears to be fear of temptation, which indeed must be connected in its origins with fear of castration. So far as we know at the present time, most phobias stem from a fear of this kind on the part of the ego — fear of the demands made by the libido. It is invariably the case that the ego's attitude of fear comes first, and triggers the repression; it is *never* the case that the fear arises out of the repressed libido. If in my earlier writings I had contented myself with saying that following the repression a quantum of fear appears in place of the expected manifestation of libido, then I should have no reason to take anything back today. That is an accurate description of what happens, and a match such as I postulated probably does indeed exist between the strength of the impulse that is to be repressed, and the intensity of the resulting fear. But I confess that I believed I was giving more than a mere description: I thought I had identified a metapsychological process consisting in a direct conversion of libido into fear. This is plainly not a view that I can hold to today; and even when I did propound it, I was quite unable to say how such a conversion might occur.

So where did I get the idea of this conversion in the first place? From my study of the 'actual' neuroses,²³ undertaken long before we learned to differentiate between processes in the ego and pro-

cesses in the id. I found that attacks of fear and a generalized state of apprehensiveness are precipitated by certain sexual practices such as coitus interruptus, frustrated arousal and enforced abstinence — in other words, whenever sexual excitement is inhibited, checked or deflected before it has achieved gratification. Since sexual excitement is the manifestation of libidinal drive-impulses, it did not seem rash to suppose that disruptions of this kind have the effect of converting the libido into fear. And this observation is still valid today. Then again, it cannot be denied that the libido of the id-processes suffers disruption instigated by the repression; accordingly it may still be right to suppose that when repression takes place, fear is produced by the libido-cathexis of the drive-impulses. But how are we to reconcile *this* conclusion with our other conclusion that the fear present in phobias is an ego-fear,²⁴ that it arises in the ego, that it does not *emerge* from the repression but *causes* the repression? This appears to be a contradiction, and one that is not easy to resolve. It is no simple task to reduce these two sources of fear to a single one. One might attempt to do so by hypothesizing that in situations such as coitus interruptus, arousal without gratification or enforced abstinence, the ego senses danger, and responds to this danger with fear; but this supposition gets us nowhere. On the other hand, it seems that our analysis of the phobias in question cannot be faulted. *Non liquet*²⁵ is the only possible verdict!

