

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

Vol. XLI

1960

Parts 2-3

SEPARATION ANXIETY¹

By

JOHN BOWLBY, LONDON

OBSERVATIONS OF YOUNG CHILDREN
Since 1948 the Tavistock Child Development Research Unit has been concerned with recording the manifest responses which commonly occur when children between the ages of about 12 months and 4 years are removed from the mother figures² to whom they are attached and remain with strangers. Preliminary papers and a scientific film have been published (67, 64, 65, 13, 14) and a comprehensive report by James Robertson and the writer is in preparation. In it we shall draw not only on Robertson's own observations and those of other workers reported in the scientific literature, notably those of Burlingham and Freud (17, 18), and Heinicke (42), but also on reports given us by mothers and nurses with first-hand experience of the problem. Since there is a high consensus in these reports we regard it as firmly established empirically that all children of this age, except those who have already suffered considerable deprivation of maternal care or are seriously ill, react to the experience with shock and anxiety. Our confidence in the validity of these observations is something we wish to emphasize since it is not uncommon for those whose theories lead to expectations of a different kind to cast doubt on them. In our view it is the theories which are mistaken, not the observations, and it is with the theoretical issues raised by these data that this paper is concerned.

It is evident, however, that the nature and dynamics of the responses to the rupture of a social bond cannot be understood until there is some understanding of the nature and dynamics

of the bond itself. It was because of this that in a recently published paper (16) I discussed how best the nature of the young child's tie to his mother could be conceptualized. In it I advanced the view that instead of the tie being motivated by a secondary drive or one wholly based on orality, which are the most commonly held views today, it may be mediated by a number of instinctual response systems which are partially independent of one another and which wax and wane in activity at different periods of the infant's and young child's life. I suggested that much psychoanalytic theory, by concentrating attention too narrowly either on the meeting of 'physiological' needs (e.g. for food and warmth) or on orality, may have led to the picture as a whole being seen out of perspective; and that other responses, particularly clinging and following which seem to reach their zenith in the second and third years, require far more attention than they have yet been given.

The reasons leading me to advance these views are clinical: traditional theory has seemed to me to account neither for the intense attachment of child to mother-figure which is so conspicuous in the later months of the first year and throughout the second and third years of life, nor for the dramatic responses to separation from her which are the rule in these years. A formulation, based on a theoretical framework stemming from modern instinct theory, has seemed to me more promising. It is the line of thought begun in the previous paper that I shall pursue further in this one.

First let us consider the data.

¹ An abbreviated version of this paper was read before the British Psycho-Analytical Society on 5 November, 1958.

² Although in this paper I shall usually refer to mothers,

it is to be understood that in every case I am concerned with the person who mothers the child and to whom he becomes attached, rather than to the natural mother.

Our observations³ concern healthy children of 15 to 30 months admitted to a hospital, perhaps for investigation or elective surgery, or to some other residential institution and there cared for in traditional ways. By traditional ways we mean that the child is handled by a succession of strange nurses, mainly students, who will variously bathe, feed, and change him. The nurses will be on shift duty, and often within a few weeks most will have moved to other departments. No matter how kind each may be in her fragment of care, there will be no nurse whom he can come to know or with whom he can enter into a stable relationship. He may see his mother for a short time each day, but it may be less often. In this context a child of 15 to 30 months who has had a normal relationship to his mother and has not previously been parted from her will commonly show a predictable sequence of behaviour. This sequence can usefully be broken into three phases according to what attitude to his mother is dominant. We describe these phases as those of protest, despair, and detachment.⁴ Though in presenting them it is convenient to differentiate them sharply, it is to be understood that in reality each merges into the next, so that the child may be for days or weeks in a state of transition from, or alternation between, one phase and another.

The initial phase, that of *Protest*, may last from a few hours to a week or more. During it the young child appears acutely distressed at having lost his mother and seeks to recapture her by the full exercise of his limited resources. He will often cry loudly, shake his cot, throw himself about, and look eagerly towards any sight or sound which might prove to be his missing mother. All his behaviour suggests strong expectation that she will return. Meantime he is apt to reject all alternative figures who offer to do things for him, though some children will cling desperately to a nurse.

During the phase of *Despair*, which succeeds protest, his preoccupation with his missing mother is still evident, though his behaviour suggests increasing hopelessness. The active physical movements diminish or come to an end, and he may cry monotonously or intermittently. He is withdrawn and inactive, makes no demands on the environment, and appears to be in a state of deep mourning. This is a quiet stage, and sometimes, clearly erroneously, is

presumed to indicate a diminution of distress.

Because the child shows more interest in his surroundings, the phase of *Detachment* which sooner or later succeeds protest and despair is often welcomed as a sign of recovery. He no longer rejects the nurses, accepts their care and the food and toys they bring, and may even smile and be sociable. This seems satisfactory. When his mother visits, however, it can be seen that all is not well, for there is a striking absence of the behaviour characteristic of the strong attachment normal at this age. So far from greeting his mother he may seem hardly to know her; so far from clinging to her he may remain remote and apathetic; instead of tears there is a listless turning away. He seems to have lost all interest in her.

Should his stay in hospital or residential nursery be prolonged and should he, as is usual, have the experience of becoming transiently attached to a series of nurses each of whom leaves and so repeats for him the experience of the original loss of his mother, he will in time act as if neither mothering nor contact with humans had much significance for him. After a series of upsets at losing several mother-figures to whom in turn he has given some trust and affection, he will gradually commit himself less and less to succeeding figures and in time will stop altogether taking the risk of attaching himself to anyone. Instead he will become increasingly self-centred and, instead of directing his desires and feelings towards people, become preoccupied with material things such as sweets, toys, and food. A child living in an institution or hospital who has reached this state will no longer be upset when nurses change or leave. He will cease to show feelings when his parents come and go on visiting day; and it may cause them pain when they realize that, although he has an avid interest in the presents they bring, he has little interest in them as special people. He will appear cheerful and adapted to his unusual situation and apparently easy and unafraid of anyone. But this sociability is superficial: he appears no longer to care for anyone.

We have had some difficulty in finding the best term to denote this phase. In previous papers and in the early drafts of this one the term 'denial' was used. It gave rise to many difficulties, however, and is now abandoned in favour of the more purely descriptive term 'de-

³ This account is adapted from those given in (67) and (65).

⁴ In the previous paper and the early drafts of this one

the term 'denial' was used to denote the third phase. The problem of terminology is discussed more fully after the phase of detachment has been described.

tachment'. An alternative is 'withdrawal', but this has two disadvantages for my purpose. In the first place there is a danger that it might convey the picture of an inactive child withdrawn from the world, a picture that is the opposite of what often obtains. In the second, in psycho-analytic writing it is commonly associated with libido theory and the idea of instinct as a quantity of energy which can be withdrawn, a model I am not using. Not only does the term 'detachment' have neither of these disadvantages, but it is a natural counterpart of 'attachment'. The nature of the defence process, or processes, that give rise to it is of course a matter for detailed study. In an earlier publication (14) I have discussed briefly its relation to repression and I hope at a later date to give this further attention.

Returning now to the empirical data, I wish to emphasize that the behaviour seen in the phases of Protest and Despair is not, as is sometimes alleged, confined to children whose relations to their mothers are already impaired. Though we have no large series of well-observed cases to quote, we are satisfied that there is clear evidence that it occurs in children whose previous relationships would be judged to have been anything between excellent and fairly unfavourable. It appears to be only in children whose relationships are already severely impaired, and who may therefore already be in a phase of Detachment, that such behaviour is absent.

In examining the theoretical problems raised by these observations it is convenient to consider them with reference to these three phases of behaviour. The phase of Protest raises the problem especially of separation anxiety; Despair that of grief and mourning; Detachment that of defence. Each of them is central to psycho-analytic theory and will therefore need detailed discussion—the first in this paper, the second and third in succeeding ones. The thesis to be advanced is that the three types of response—separation anxiety, grief and mourning, and defence—are phases of a single process and that when treated as such each illumines the other two.

Often in the literature they have been considered piecemeal. The reason for this appears to be the inverted order in which their psychopathological significance was discovered: for it was the last phase which was recognized first, and the first last. Thus the significance of defence, particularly repression, was realized fully by Freud in the earliest days of his psycho-

analytic work and provides the basis of his classical theorizing: his first paper on the subject is dated 1894 ('The Defence Neuro-Psychoses', *C.P.* 1). His grasp of the roles of grief and separation anxiety on the other hand, although not wholly absent in his earlier work, was none the less fragmentary. Thus, although early alive to the place of mourning in hysteria and melancholia (see note of 1897 to *Fliess*, *S.E.* 14, p. 240), twenty years were to elapse before, in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), he gave it systematic attention. Similarly in the case of separation anxiety: although in the *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) he gave it a paragraph (*SE.* 7, p. 224), and in the *Introductory Lectures* (1917) three pages (pp. 339–341), it is not until 1926 that in his important late work, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (*S.E.* 20), he gives it the central place in what was to be his final theory of anxiety. 'Missing someone who is loved and longed for,' he affirms, 'is the key to an understanding of anxiety', and it is on this datum that the whole argument of his book rests.

The reason for this inverse recognition of the three phases is clear: always in the history of medicine it is the end result of a pathological sequence which is first to be noted. Only gradually are the earlier phases identified, and it may be many years before the exact sequence of the whole process is understood. Indeed it was understanding the sequence which baffled Freud longest. Does defence precede anxiety, or anxiety defence? If the response to separation is pain and mourning, how can it also be anxiety? (*S.E.* 20, pp. 108–109 and 130–131). It can now be seen that during the thirty years of his main psycho-analytic explorations Freud traversed the sequence backwards, from end result to initial stage. Not until his seventieth year did he clearly perceive the source and course of the processes to which he had devoted half a lifetime of study. The effects on psycho-analytical theorizing have inevitably been confusing.

By 1926 a substantial corpus of psycho-analytic theory was already being taught. As regards anxiety, castration anxiety and superego anxiety were cornerstones of thought and practice in Vienna and elsewhere, whilst Melanie Klein's hypothesis relating anxiety to aggression had recently been formulated and, linked to the concept of the death instinct, was soon to become a key concept in a significant new system. The full weight of Freud's ideas on separation anxiety and its relation to mourning came too

late to influence the development of either of these two schools of thought.

Moreover, apart from the prophetic early reference by Hug-Hellmuth (47) and a brief word by Bernfeld (9), some years were to pass before the clinical papers drawing attention to the pathogenic significance of separation experiences were published. Some of the earliest, by Levy (57), Bowlby (10, 11), and Bender (7), presented empirical evidence suggesting an aetiological relationship between certain forms of psychopathic personality and severely disrupted mother-child relationships. At about the same time, Fairbairn (23, 24) was basing his revised psycho-pathology on separation anxiety, having been preceded by some years by Suttie (73) and to be followed a few years later by Odier (61); whilst Therese Benedek (8) was describing responses to separation, reunion and bereavement which were to be observed in adults during the war. Meanwhile the first-hand observations of Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud (17, 18) of how young children respond to separation were being recorded, and Spitz (69a) was about to shock those who had eyes to see with his account of extremely deprived babies. Despite all this work by qualified analysts, however, and a number of important papers by Goldfarb (33) and others, separation anxiety has never gained a central place in psycho-analytic theorizing. Indeed Kris (56a), writing as a participant in the Viennese scene, remarked recently how, when in 1926 Freud advanced his views regarding separation anxiety, 'there was no awareness amongst analysts . . . to what typical concrete situations this would apply. Nobody realized that the fear of losing the object and the object's love were formulae to be implemented by material which now seems to us self-evident beyond any discussion.' He acknowledged that only in the past decade had he himself recognized its significance, and could have added that even today there are schools of analytic thought which deny its importance. The continuing neglect of separation anxiety is well illustrated by a recent and authoritative survey of 'the concept of anxiety in relation to the development of psycho-analysis' (78) in which it is not once mentioned.

In the event, it is clear, some of the ideas Freud advanced in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* fell on stony ground. This was a pity, since in that book, written at the end of his professional life, he was struggling to free himself of the perspective of his travels—defence, mourn-

ing, separation anxiety—and instead to view the sequence from his new vantage point: the priority of separation anxiety. In his concluding pages he sketches out a new route: anxiety is a reaction to the danger of losing the object, the pain of mourning to the retreat from the lost object, defence a mode of dealing with anxiety and pain. This is the route we shall be following.

PRINCIPAL THEORIES

No concept is more central to psycho-analytical theory than the concept of anxiety. Yet it is one about which there is little consensus of opinion, which accounts in no small measure for the divisions between different schools of thought. Put briefly, all analysts are agreed that anxiety cannot be explained simply by reference to external threat: in some way processes usually thought of as internal and instinctive seem to play a crucial role. But how these inner forces are to be conceptualized and how they give rise to anxiety, that has always been the puzzle.

As a result of this state of affairs we find, when we come to consider how analysts conceive separation anxiety, some widely differing formulations; for each formulation is strongly influenced by the particular outlook regarding the nature and origin of anxiety which the analyst happens to have. Moreover, the place given to separation anxiety within the wider theory of anxiety varies greatly. For some, like Hermann and Fairbairn, separation anxiety is the most important primary anxiety; for others, like Freud in both his earlier and later work, it is only the shortest of steps removed from being so; for others again, like Melanie Klein and her associates, separation anxiety is deemed to be secondary to and of less consequence than other and more primitive anxieties. This being the present state of thought, inevitably the discussion has to touch on all aspects of the theory of anxiety. Yet it will be my plan to restrict the wider discussion as far as possible in order to concentrate on the task in hand, namely to understand separation anxiety and its relation to mourning.

A review of the literature shows that there have been six main approaches to the problem of separation anxiety; three of them are the counterparts, though not always the necessary counterparts, of theories regarding the nature of the child's attachment to his mother. In the

order in which they have received attention by psycho-analysts, they are:—

(i) The first, advanced by Freud in *Three Essays* (1905), is a special case of the general theory of anxiety which he held until 1926. As a result of his study of anxiety neurosis (1894) Freud had advanced the view that morbid anxiety is due to the transformation into anxiety of sexual excitation of somatic origin which cannot be discharged. The anxiety observed when an infant is separated from the person he loves, Freud holds, is an example of this, since in these circumstances the child's libido remains unsatisfied and undergoes transformation. This theory may be called the theory of *Transformed Libido*. It resembles in many ways the sixth main approach, which is the one adopted here.

(ii) The anxiety shown on separation of young children from mother is a reproduction of the trauma of birth, so that birth anxiety is the prototype of all the separation anxiety subsequently experienced. Following Rank (63) we can term it the *Birth-Trauma* theory. It is the counterpart of the theory of return-to-womb craving to account for the child's tie.

(iii) In the absence of the mother the infant and young child is subject to the risk of a traumatic psychic experience, and he therefore develops a safety device which leads to anxiety behaviour being exhibited when she leaves him. Such behaviour has a function: it may be expected to ensure that he is not parted from her for too long. I shall term this the *Signal* theory, employing a term introduced by Freud (*Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, 1926). It is held in three variants according to how the traumatic situation to be avoided is conceived. They are: (a) that the traumatic situation is an economic disturbance which is caused when there develops an accumulation of excessive amounts of stimulation arising from unsatisfied bodily needs; (b) that it is the imminence of a total and permanent extinction of the capacity for sexual enjoyment, namely aphanisis (50). (When first advanced by Jones as an explanation of anxiety, the theory of aphanisis was not related to the anxiety of separation; two years later, however, he sought to adapt it so as to fit in with Freud's latest ideas). Finally (c), there is the variant proposed by Spitz (70) that the traumatic situation to be avoided is one of narcissistic trauma. It should be noted that in the history of Freud's thought the Signal theory stems from,

and is in certain respects the counterpart of, the theory which explains the child's tie to his mother in terms of secondary drive.

(iv) Separation anxiety results from the small child, owing to his ambivalence to his mother, believing when she disappears that he has eaten her up or otherwise destroyed her, and that in consequence he has lost her for good. Following Melanie Klein (55) we can call it the theory of *Depressive Anxiety*.

(v) Following the projection of his aggression, the young child perceives his mother as persecutory: as a result he interprets her departure as due to her being angry with him or wishing to punish him. For these reasons whenever she leaves him he believes she may either never return or do so only in a hostile mood, and he therefore experiences anxiety. Again following Melanie Klein, this can be termed the theory of *Persecutory Anxiety*.

(vi) Initially the anxiety is a primary response not reducible to other terms and due simply to the rupture of the attachment to his mother. I propose to call it the theory of *Primary Anxiety*. It is the counterpart to theories which account for the child's tie to his mother in terms of component instinctual responses. It has been advanced by James (49), Suttie (73) and Hermann (44), but has never been given much attention in analytic circles.

The hypothesis I shall be adopting is the sixth, since it stems directly from my hypothesis that the child is bound to his mother by a number of instinctual response systems, each of which is primary and which together have high survival value. Soon after birth, it is held, conditions of isolation tend to activate crying and a little later tend to activate both clinging and following also; until he is in close proximity to his familiar mother-figure these instinctual response systems do not cease motivating him. Pending this outcome, it is suggested, his subjective experience is that of primary anxiety; when he is close to her it is one of comfort.

Such anxiety is not to be conceived merely as a 'signal' to warn against something worse (though it might subsequently come to have this function). Instead, it is thought of as an elemental experience and one which, if it reaches a certain degree of intensity, is linked directly with the onset of defence mechanisms. It is because of this, and because I wish to distinguish it sharply from states of anxiety dependent on foresight, that I have termed it *Primary Anxiety*.⁵

⁵ As explained in my previous paper (16), 'the terms primary and secondary refer to whether the response is built-in and inherited or acquired through the process of learning.'

Although I believe states of primary anxiety due to separation to be among the most frequent and pathogenic of such states, it is postulated that primary anxiety will arise in other circumstances also—perhaps whenever any instinctual response system is activated but not terminated. Primary anxiety due to separation seems likely, therefore, to be but one example of a common condition. It has, however, several special features. Not least of these is its specially close linkage in infants and young children to the experiences of fright and fear. When frightened, infants and young children look to their mother for security and if they fail to find her are doubly upset: both comfort and security are missing.

It is interesting, though by no means easy, to compare the theory of primary anxiety with Freud's two theories. The similarity to his original one of Transformed Libido is close. Although on occasion Freud spoke as though libido could only be transformed into anxiety after it had first been repressed, this does not appear to be basic to his formulation. Indeed, in his discussion of the conditions which lead anxiety to become pathological the process inculpated is repression ('Little Hans', *S.E.* 10, p. 26); in the absence of repression, we may therefore infer, there would still be anxiety, but it would be within normal limits. If this is a correct reading, then the main difference appears to be that, whereas in the theory advanced here primary anxiety is an immediate consequence of the persistent activation without termination of certain instinctual response systems, in Freud's theory anxiety is conceived as being the result of a 'transformation' which the libido undergoes.

The theory of primary anxiety appears to differ more from Freud's second theory, that of Signal Anxiety, than from his first. The principal difference here is that Freud postulates that a fairly complex process of motor learning must have occurred. The other difference, though it is not logically necessary for his position, is that he postulates also some awareness in the infant of causal relationships. The theory advanced here on the other hand makes no such assumptions and, instead, sees the anxiety as primitive and dependent only on simple orientational learning. Nevertheless, it must be remembered, Freud also postulated the existence of a primitive biologically based anxiety which is evoked by separation, and it is therefore useful to compare the two views. In Freud's theory this primitive

anxiety is conceived as resulting from the instincts serving the infant's *bodily needs*, e.g. for food, becoming active and not being satisfied: in the theory here advanced it is conceived as resulting from the *instinctual response systems underlying attachment behaviour* (notably crying, following, and clinging) becoming activated and remaining so. Thus in both cases the primitive anxiety is conceived as resulting from instinctual systems which, whilst gratified by the mother's actions or presence, remain ungratified in her absence; or, in terms of the conceptual framework used here, from instinctual responses which, whilst terminated by the mother's actions or presence, remain unterminated in her absence. The essential difference therefore lies in the nature of the instinctual systems postulated as being involved.

At first sight the theory of primary anxiety may also seem to have something in common with the Birth Trauma theory. For instance, some might argue that, if anxiety is experienced at birth, it is no more than one example of primary anxiety arising from separation. However, this seems to me improbable since, like Freud (*S.E.* 20, pp. 130–131), I am not satisfied that true separation anxiety is present in the earliest months.⁶ The birth trauma theory is not regarded as having explanatory value.

Whilst the theory of primary anxiety postulates that separation anxiety is itself an unlearned and biologically based anxiety, it is far from blind to the existence and pathogenic importance of anxieties which are dependent on learning and anticipation. In the human it seems useful to distinguish at least two main forms of anticipatory behaviour—that based on primitive forms of learning, such as conditioning, and that based on memory organized by means of symbols. As soon as infants can be conditioned, which is very early, they can acquire a simple form of anticipatory behaviour and, in so far as the events to which they are conditioned are disagreeable, such for example as pain, hunger, or lack of human contact, they may be supposed to experience anxiety. This I shall term *Conditioned Anxiety*. Cognitively, it is still rather a primitive form of anxiety and in many ways more closely resembles primary anxiety than the form next to be described. Later, when the infant develops his capacity for using symbols and can thereby construct a world of objects existing in time and space and interacting causally, he is able to

⁶ This is discussed on p. 102 of this paper.

develop some measure of true foresight. Should the foreseen events be of a kind he has learned are disagreeable, he will once again experience anxiety. This I shall term *Expectant Anxiety*. Once this level of psychic organization is reached many kinds of danger, real and imaginary, may be foreseen and responded to. For example, whatever may occur at more primitive levels, at this level both persecutory and depressive anxieties play a crucial role; for anything which leads the child to believe he either has destroyed or alienated his mother, or may do so, cannot fail to exacerbate his expectant anxiety of temporary or permanent separation.

It is to be noted that originally the theories of persecutory and depressive anxiety were advanced by Melanie Klein independently of the problem of separation anxiety; and that, moreover, persecutory and depressive anxieties are conceived by her as existing, initially at least, in very primitive form either from birth or from the earliest weeks. Their manifestations at a higher level of psychic organization, she holds, are to be understood as stemming from these primitive roots. I remain sceptical of this view. It is therefore necessary to emphasize that such formulations are not indispensable to the concepts of persecutory and depressive anxiety: there is no need for their role at a higher level of psychic organization to be conceived as stemming from more primitive roots. That they play an immensely important role in the more developed psychic organizations, not least in exacerbating separation anxiety and raising it to pathological levels, there can be no doubt. In this paper, therefore, persecutory and depressive anxieties will be treated as of major consequence in the elaboration of separation anxiety at a higher level of psychic organization, whilst leaving as an open question their existence and role at a more primitive level.⁷

PRIMARY ANXIETY, FRIGHT, AND ANXIETY DEPENDENT ON LEARNING

It is my belief that the theory of instinctual responses deriving from ethology and advanced in my previous paper permits a new approach. The heart of this theory is that the organism is provided with a repertoire of behaviour patterns, which are bred into it like the features of its anatomy and physiology, and which have be-

come characteristic of its species *because of their survival value to the species*. Such, it was suggested, are many of the responses characteristic of the family life of Man, namely those mediating relationships between the sexes and between parents and young. This provides an instinct theory having much in common with Freud's theory of part-instincts and his notion of the 'blind' strivings of the id.

Before applying this theory to separation anxiety as the particular problem under examination, however, it is necessary to review the whole problem of anxiety and fear reactions afresh. In doing so four conditions will be delineated each of which, it is believed, although in essence very different from the others, contributes in a special way to our problem. These are primary anxiety, fright, conditioned anxiety, and expectant anxiety.

In grasping the theory to be advanced it is vital to distinguish sharply between the concept of self-preservation and that of species survival: probably all biologists would regard the first, when conceived as an 'instinct of self-preservation', as one of the most influential of misleading theories, the second as one of the most pregnant concepts in the history of biology. The notion of an instinct of self-preservation posits a force or set of forces which is designed to ensure that *a particular individual* is preserved. The notion of species survival, which stems from evolution theory, points on the other hand to the fact that any biological character which is advantageous to *the species* tends to be perpetuated (through processes of natural selection and heredity), whilst any that are not so advantageous tend, over the course of generations, to be dropped out. It is true that often what is advantageous for the species is also advantageous for the individual; but there is no guarantee of identity of interest, and where they conflict it can be that it is the interests of the individual which go to the wall. That anatomical and physiological characteristics are subject to this rule has long been recognized. The conspicuous plumage of many birds, which is indispensable to their success in mating, may be most disadvantageous to their safety. The interests of individual survival are sacrificed; the interests of species propagation are paramount. That psychological characteristics are subject to the same law has, thanks

⁷ For this abridged version a critical examination of psycho-analytical theories relating to separation anxiety has been omitted. It is being published as a separate paper in the *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* and will

also be included in the full version of this paper to be published in a forthcoming volume of the International Library of Psycho-Analysis.

largely to the superficial plausibility of the self-preservation theory, been slow to be appreciated. Yet it is clear that all psychological characteristics which have been developed because of their species survival value *must* be so subject, and these must include any characteristics to which the term instinctual is applied. For these reasons, in discussing the theory of anxiety and fright reactions, no references will be made to the concept of self-preservation. Instead we shall be thinking in terms of species-specific behaviour patterns, or instinctual response systems as I prefer to call them,⁸ which are present because of their survival value to the species and which operate, at least initially, in the blind and automatic way regarded by Freud as characteristic of the id.

In the previous paper I described some of the characteristics of what I termed instinctual response systems which are to be culled from the recent work of ethologists: 'The basic model for instinctive behaviour is thus a unit comprising a species-specific behaviour pattern (or instinctual response) governed by two complex mechanisms, one controlling its activation and the other its termination. Although sometimes to be observed active in isolation, in real life it is usual for a number of these responses to be linked together so that adaptive behavioural sequences result.' I proceeded to consider 'how as humans we experience the activation in ourselves of an instinctual response system'. When the system is active and free to reach termination, it seems, we experience an urge to action accompanied, as Lorenz (59) has suggested,⁹ by an emotional state peculiar to each response. There is an emotional experience peculiar to smiling and laughing, another peculiar to weeping, yet another to sexual foreplay, another again to temper. When, however, the response is not free to reach termination, our experience may be very different; we experience tension, unease, anxiety. It is this line of thought I wish to pursue.

The hypothesis advanced is that, whenever an instinctual response system is activated and is unable for any reason to reach termination, a form of anxiety results. The blockage may be of many different kinds. In some cases the en-

vironment may fail to provide the terminating conditions, as for example when there is sexual arousal in the absence of an appropriate partner. In other cases two or more instinctual responses may be active but incompatible, for example, attack and escape. In other cases again, the blockage may be associated with fear or guilt, or some deeper inhibition. No doubt the particular form of blockage will influence outcome; here, however, I wish to emphasize only the common feature. No matter what the nature of the blockage, it is postulated, if an instinctual response system is activated and unable to reach termination, changes occur both in behaviour (namely in psychological and physiological functioning) and also in the subjective experience of the individual himself. When it rises above a moderate level it gives rise to the subjective experience of anxiety. To distinguish it from other forms of anxiety I am terming it primary anxiety.

Whether in fact every kind of instinctual response system which is active and unable to reach termination is accompanied by primary anxiety needs further exploration. So too do the behavioural accompaniments of anxiety. Both the physiological and the psychological components seem likely to be in large part unlearned and thus in some respects to resemble instinctual responses. The psychological components are of course of great consequence for psychoanalysts; since, however, they are intimately related to defence mechanisms, it will be best to postpone a discussion of them until a later paper.

Let us now consider *fright*. Fright, it is suggested, is the subjective experience accompanying at least two related instinctual response systems—those leading on the one hand to escape behaviour, and on the other to alert immobility or 'freezing'. It is to be noted that as so defined it *does not presuppose any conscious awareness of danger*. Instead, it is conceived as being the accompaniment of certain instinctual response systems whenever they are activated. Like all instinctual response systems, those governing escape and 'freezing' are conceived as systems built into the organism and perpetuated by heredity because of their survival value. It is possible that there are more than two kinds of instinctual response systems associated with

⁸ In an earlier paper (15) I have used the term 'instinctual response' to refer both to the behaviour and to the hypothetical internal structure which, when activated, is presumed to lead to the behaviour. To avoid this confusion I am now using the term 'instinctual response system' for the hypothetical internal structure, and limiting the term 'instinctual response' to the active

behavioural response, including both the motor behaviour pattern and its physiological and psychological concomitants.

⁹ A similar view, though coupled with a materially different theory of instinct, was advanced by McDougall (60).

fright, but, since they do not form the subject of this paper, this possibility will not be explored.¹⁰

Unlike some response systems, such as those relating to sexual behaviour which are sometimes activated by purely internal changes, the systems governing escape and 'freezing' seem almost invariably to require some external condition for their activation. Amongst those to which they appear to be naturally sensitive are loud noises, sudden visual changes (e.g. fast-moving objects), extremes of temperature, physical pain, and mere strangeness.¹¹ At this elemental level of instinctual behaviour, the individual does not structure his universe into objects interacting causally to produce situations, some of which are expected to prove dangerous and others harmless. On the contrary, so long as he is operating on this level his responses are rapid and automatic. They may or may not be well adapted to the real situation. The individual flees or remains immobile not because he has any clear awareness of danger but because his flight or 'freezing' responses have been activated. It is because the response is automatic and blind that I regard the term 'fright' as better than 'fear' to denote its subjective accompaniment. (The word 'fear', it is suggested in the Appendix, may most conveniently be limited to denote the subjective state accompanying escape and 'freezing' whenever the cognitive component of these responses is at a higher level, namely whenever there is a clear conception of what object it is which has activated them.)

Thus far in our analysis primary anxiety and fright, though having in common the character of being automatic and blind, are conceived as very different states. Whereas primary anxiety is the subjective accompaniment of many, perhaps all, instinctual response systems when impeded, fright is the accompaniment of a couple or so of related response systems when activated. In the infancy of many species, however, special conditions operate which lead to a close connectedness between the two which I believe to be of vital importance for understanding separation

anxiety. This becomes clear as soon as we examine the *situations which terminate escape responses*,¹² a matter usually given scant attention.

When the escape response of an animal is activated at only low intensity, mere removal from the activating conditions suffices to terminate it. This is no longer so when it is activated at high intensity. On such occasions in the natural environment animals escape not only *from* situations but *to* situations. A frightened rabbit bolts to its burrow, a fox to its earth, a band of baboons to their selected tree. Not until they have reached their preferred *haven of safety* do they rest. Burrow, earth, and tree are terminating situations, in each case be it noted often limited (on the principle of monotropy)¹³ to a *particular* burrow, a *particular* earth and a *particular* tree (or group of trees). In humans the subjective accompaniment of reaching the haven of safety is a sense of security.

Young animals also escape *to* a situation. In their case, however, the situation is often not a place but *another animal*—usually the mother. This is true of individuals of many genera, from fish to primates. The human toddler escapes from a situation which has frightened him to his mother; other primate infants do the same (76, 40). Probably for all, *the haven of safety which terminates escape responses and brings a sense of security is proximity to mother*.¹⁴

Thus we find that escape responses share with crying, clinging, and following the same terminating situation. The frightened baby, it might be said, is both 'pushed' toward his mother by his escape responses and 'pulled' toward her by his clinging and following responses. This is a striking conclusion. Primary anxiety, due to the non-termination of response systems mediating attachment behaviour, and fright, due to the activation of escape responses, are more intimately related than our initial sharp differentiation of them seemed to make likely. The question arises, even, whether the two groups of response system—namely those mediating escape

¹⁰ The possibility that a single emotion, fright, may accompany more than one instinctual response system suggests that Lorenz's hypothesis that each response is accompanied by an emotional state peculiar to itself may need modification.

¹¹ See the discussion by Thorpe (74, p. 390). Several workers (e.g. Hinde, 45) have shown that, paradoxically, strangeness evokes both escape and curiosity, and that there is a complex balance between the two competing response systems.

¹² Such situations have been termed 'consummatory situations' by Bastock, Morris and Moynihan (6) and

by Hinde (46). In my view, however, partly because of the usefulness of the verb 'to terminate', a preferable term is 'terminating situation'.

¹³ See (16), p. 370.

¹⁴ The term 'haven of safety' has been introduced by Harlow and Zimmermann (40). In describing their very interesting experiments with rhesus monkeys they write: 'One function of the real mother, human or sub-human, and presumably of a mother surrogate, is to provide a haven of safety for the infant in times of fear or danger.' See also Harlow (39).

and those mediating attachment behaviour—are really different. May we, instead, be dealing with the activating and terminating ends of a single group of systems? The possibility needs examination.

Reflection suggests that neither view may be adequate. In the first place, as we have seen, escape is closely linked with the very different response system of 'freezing'. Furthermore the terminating conditions of escape are often different from those of the response systems mediating attachment; thus the mere presence of the individual in a special location, or proximity to a mate, may each prove a haven of safety. Not only is 'freezing' very different from the behaviour patterns of crying, clinging, and following, but to be present in a location, if not to be in the proximity of a mate, is very different from the conditions which terminate attachment behaviour. Thus it seems useful for some purposes to distinguish two sets of instinctual response systems. Nevertheless, the discussion serves to show how intricately linked, through the existence of common activating and terminating conditions, these different systems tend to be and how misleading it would be were we to make a sharp division of them into two separate groups. Indeed, the adoption of a theory of instinctual behaviour such as that advocated here enables us to get away from any notion that each 'instinct' is entirely distinct from every other. Instead, it provides a flexible conceptual tool which promises to do justice to the complexities of the data.

So far we have been dealing only with those subjective experiences which accompany behaviour that is still at a primitive level. As conceived here, both primary anxiety and fright are the subjective components of instinctual response systems which are activated by certain conditions (part internal and part external, part unlearned and part learned by processes of conditioning) and which operate automatically. Not until the individual can structure his universe in terms of objects existing in time and space and causally related to one another can he develop the notion of a situation which is *potentially* dangerous. This leads us to differentiate a new class of behaviour with its own characteristic subjective accompaniment: these I shall term respectively *avoidance behaviour* and *expectant anxiety*.

As soon as the individual, whether human infant or a member of an infra-human species,

has reached a stage of development in which some degree of foresight is possible, he is able to predict situations as dangerous and to take measures to avoid them. In this he is exercising a far more complex function that is required for instinctual responses and one which Freud habitually attributed to the ego.

At least three sorts of danger situation are distinguishable, though for reasons already given there is some overlap between them. They are:

- (a) Situations in which the individual believes he is likely to be assailed by external stimuli which he finds (either 'naturally' or through learning or both) to be disagreeable and/or noxious and which, if realized, would activate his instinctual response systems of escape and freezing.
- (b) Situations in which the individual believes he is likely to lose that external condition which terminates his escape responses, namely his haven of safety.
- (c) Situations in which the individual believes certain of his instinctual responses will be activated without conditions for terminating them being likely to be present. Some such situations are already covered under (a) or (b); an example of one which is not is the prospect of sexual arousal in the absence of conditions for satisfaction.

The anticipation of any of these kinds of situation, and particularly the first two which appear to be the main ones, at once motivates him to take action intended to avoid their developing. Such 'action' may be of many kinds and will vary both in regard to the decisiveness with which a plan is made and in regard to whether or not it is actually executed. Irrespective of the mode of action resulting and irrespective, too, of which kind of danger situation is anticipated, the subjective states accompanying anticipation and avoidance appear to be the same: they are those of expectant anxiety.

The division of danger situations into two main classes, namely (a) and (b) above, is consistent with the empirical findings presented in a recent paper by Dixon, de Monchaux and Sandler (20): a statistical analysis of patients' fears showed that they tend to cluster into 'fear of hurt' and 'fear of separation'.¹⁵ As these authors point out, moreover, it is consistent with Freud's distinction between anxieties relating to

¹⁵ The secondary drive theory, which they invoke to account for the child's tie to his mother and for separation anxiety, is not necessary to an interpretation of their data.

SEPARATION ANXIETY

castration and those associated with loss of object. It will be clear, however, that the two classes I have defined are more inclusive than Freud's: in the scheme presented here castration anxiety and separation anxiety each represent a particular albeit important example of a broader class. The third class defined above, (c), was the first to be discussed by Freud and is present in his theorizing from 1894 onwards (*C.P.* 1, p. 76).

It may perhaps be asked why the term 'anxiety' has been chosen to denote, in combination with a qualifying word, two such different emotional states as are referred to by 'primary anxiety' and 'expectant anxiety'. There are two reasons. First, as Freud pointed out (*S.E.* 20, p. 165), anxiety carries with it a note of uncertainty. This is true both of primary anxiety, where it is uncertain whether or not the individual will reach a terminating situation, and of expectant anxiety, where the subject is uncertain whether or not he can prevent the danger situation materializing. The second reason is that I believe both classes play a large part in the genesis of neurotic anxiety. A note on questions of terminology, with particular reference to Freud's usage, will be found in the Appendix.

This is a convenient moment to attempt a summary. We have now differentiated three classes of situation and three classes of behaviour, together with the corresponding subjective accompaniments to which they commonly give rise. The word 'commonly' is of importance, since situations can evoke behaviour (and its corresponding subjective experience) only when the organism is in an appropriate state. In the following tabulation the organism is assumed to be in such a state:

In real life more than one situation may be present at once and behaviour of more than one kind and level result. Thus at the sound of an air-raid warning each member of a family may experience expectant anxiety in regard to the possibility of harm coming both to themselves and their loved objects and may take precautions accordingly; whilst the whistle of a bomb may excite both escape and clinging responses simultaneously. Although in them the function of foresight, dependent on an appreciation of causal relationships, may be well developed, the example serves to emphasize that the primitive non-foresightful instinctual responses none the less persist. During the course of development, it seems, we move from a condition in which we possess only the more primitive response systems to a condition in which we are equipped not only with these but also with the capacity for foresightful action. During maturity the extent to which primitive instinctual responses, action based on foresight, or both in combination are likely to mediate our behaviour on a particular occasion is a complex matter. It is one to which I hope to give further attention in a later paper on defences.

Before proceeding to a systematic discussion of separation anxiety, I wish to emphasize afresh that, although we have become caught up in sketching part of a revised theory of anxiety, this is not the purpose of the paper. Our problem is that of trying to understand separation anxiety. Adequately to formulate a comprehensive theory of anxiety would require a broader approach: in particular it would need to give close attention to anxiety arising from the threat of psychic disorganization.

<i>Situations</i>	<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>Subjective accompaniment</i>
1. Which activate an instinctual response system without providing for its termination	Persistent activation of response	Primary anxiety
2. Which activate instinctual response systems mediating escape or 'freezing'	Escape or 'freezing'	Fright
3. Which, if no action is taken, it is anticipated will so develop that (a) instinctual response systems mediating escape or 'freezing' will be activated (b) the haven of safety will be lost (c) an instinctual response system will be activated in conditions unlikely to provide for its termination	Avoidance	Expectant anxiety

INGREDIENTS OF SEPARATION ANXIETY

From the foregoing it will be clear that, according to the hypothesis advanced, separation anxiety is initially a form of primary anxiety, with or without the addition of fright, and that, as the infant develops, anxiety based on learning comes to be added. The reasoning behind this hypothesis has already been presented. My confidence in it springs from my belief that it provides a better explanation of observations of infants and young children than do other hypotheses and is enhanced by the fact that it seems also to fit comparable observations of the young of other species. These will be reviewed.

In very many species of bird and mammal the young show signs of anxiety when removed from their parents. The 'lost piping' of young ducklings who have become attached to and have temporarily lost a mother figure is a familiar example. The behaviour of infant chimpanzees in such situations is well recorded. Since it resembles closely, though in slightly exaggerated form, what we see in humans and seems almost certainly to be homologous, it is instructive to examine it. I shall draw on three accounts. Two (53, 41) give detailed information about two infant chimpanzees who were 'adopted' and brought up in a human home; the third, that by Yerkes (76), who had prolonged experience of young chimpanzees living in captivity with their own parents, presents generalizations based on many cases. All three agree on the intensity of protest exhibited and, by implication, the anxiety experienced when a baby chimpanzee loses its mother-figure.

Mrs. Hayes recounts how Vicki, a female whom she adopted at 3 days, would, when aged 4 months, cling to her foster-mother 'from the moment she left her crib until she was tucked in at night. . . . She sat on my lap while I ate or studied. She straddled my hip as I cooked. If she were on the floor, and I started to get away, she screamed and clung to my leg until I picked her up. . . . If some rare lack of vigilance on her part let a room's length separate us, she came charging across the abyss, screaming at the height of her considerable ability.'

The Kelloggs, who did not adopt their female chimp, Gua, until she was 7 months old and who kept her for 9 months, report identical behaviour. They describe 'an intense and tenacious impulse to remain within sight and call of some friend, guardian, or protector. Throughout the entire nine months . . . whether indoors or out, she almost never roamed very far from

someone she knew. To shut her up in a room by herself, or to walk away faster than she could run, and to leave her behind, proved, as well as we could judge, to be the most awful punishment that could possibly be inflicted. She could not be alone apparently without suffering.'

It is of course possible to assume that such behaviour always contains an element of foresight—foresight that physiological needs will not be met. Its strength and immediacy, together with what we know about the primacy of clinging, make this, however, seem unlikely. Furthermore, as was stressed in the previous paper, such a theory is unnecessary.

Except for being less mobile, human infants during the second half of their first year seem to respond similarly to the lower primates. By this age they have become much more demanding of their mother's company. Often when she leaves the room they are upset and do their utmost to see that contact with her is resumed, either by crying or following her as best they can. Such protest behaviour, I am postulating, is accompanied initially only by primary anxiety.

Later, in both humans and chimpanzees, conditioned and expectant anxiety develop as a result of learning. Their development in chimpanzees is of course well attested. Comparing Gua with their son, who was 2½ months older than she, the Kelloggs report: 'Both subjects displayed what might be called anxious behaviour (i.e. fretting and crying), if obvious preparations were being made by the grown-ups to leave the house. This led (in Gua) to an early understanding of the mechanism of door closing and a keen and continual observation of the doors in her vicinity. If she happened to be on one side of a doorway, and her friends on the other, the slightest movement of the door toward closing, whether produced by human hands or by the wind, would bring Gua rushing through the narrowing aperture, crying as she came.' From this account, it seems clear, by a process of learning Gua was able to anticipate and so to avoid the danger of separation.

Similarly with human infants: it is signs that mother is going to leave them that come to evoke conditioned and expectant anxiety most commonly. At what period during the infant's first year the capacity for foresight develops is difficult to say. Experiment, however, should be easy. If Piaget's views are confirmed we should expect it to be present from about 9 months.

Not only do attachment behaviour and anxiety responses appear similar in humans and

other species, but the same is true of fright responses in the absence of the mother. In such circumstances the young of many species freeze. Robertson noted this in young children soon after starting observations in 1948. Before a child had got to know him and whilst therefore he was still a frightening stranger, a young child in hospital would occasionally respond to his approach by suddenly becoming immobile, as if trying not to be there, though watching him intently the while. In the course of observations made in connexion with his film study (64), Robertson was able to record this response on two occasions when a strange male colleague approached Laura (he himself by this time having become a familiar and reassuring figure). On each occasion Laura reacted by lying down with eyes closed and failed to respond as she usually did to Robertson's friendly words: indeed only a flicker of the eyelids showed she was not asleep. When told that the man had gone, however, she at once sat up.

Comparable behaviour in infant rhesus monkeys has recently been reported by Harlow and Zimmermann (40). In the course of their experiments with model mothers they introduced eight baby monkeys for three-minute periods 'into the strange environment of a room measuring 6 feet by 6 feet by 6 feet and containing multiple stimuli known to elicit curiosity-manipulatory responses in baby monkeys. The subjects were placed in this situation twice a week for eight weeks, with no mother surrogate present during alternate sessions and the cloth mother present during the others. . . . After one or two adaptation sessions, the infants always rushed to the mother surrogate when she was present and clutched her, a response so strong that it can be adequately depicted only by motion pictures. After a few additional sessions, the infants began to use the mother surrogate as a source of security, a base of operations. They would explore and manipulate a stimulus and then return to the mother before adventuring again into the strange new world. The behaviour of these infants was quite different when the mother was absent from the room. Frequently they would freeze in a crouched position.' Experimental work has also been done with goats and with similar results.¹⁶

If now we return to our account of chimpan-

zees it is especially to be noticed that, as in the case of Vicki, Gua became strongly attached to a *particular* figure. In her case it was the male foster-parent, who in fact did most for her: 'Her attachment became so strong that she had been in the human environment for fully a month before she would let go of the trouser leg of her protector for any length of time, even though he might sit quietly at a table for as long as an hour. Almost without respite she clung to him in one way or another. If through a temporary lapse in her vigil he should succeed in taking a step or two away from her, it would surely precipitate a frantic scramble after the retreating trousers, to which she would thereafter hang on determinedly.' Furthermore, it was only when her 'protector' was making preparations to leave the room that fretting and crying were exhibited.

These reports draw our attention afresh to the pronounced tendency for instinctual responses to become focused on a particular individual and not merely on a class of individuals. This was emphasized in the previous paper, where I proposed the term *monotropy* to describe it, and again earlier in this paper when we were discussing how the escape responses of animals tend also to become directed towards a particular object—in this case either a person or a place. Plainly, in the cases of both Vicki and Gua, the crying, clinging, following, and escape responses were fairly narrowly *monotropic*. Any mother-figure would not do: it always had to be someone who was known and trusted and, with decided preference, one particular person who was best known and most trusted. As every mother knows, human infants are no different: after a certain age mothering from any kind person will not do.

It seems almost certain in fact that every child who has not been institutionalized develops during his first year a clear preference for one person, namely the person who cares for him and whom I am calling 'mother', and this remains the case even though, in addition, he is likely to include a few others to whom he will turn as second best if mother is absent. It is because of this marked tendency to *monotropy* that we are capable of deep feelings; for to have a deep attachment to a person (or place or thing) is to have taken them as the terminating object of our instinctual responses. It is probably when these

¹⁶ In his experiments with goat kids Liddell (58) has demonstrated the very different responses to frightening stimuli of identical twins according to whether or not they were with their mother: the twin with his

mother roamed about naturally and seemed relaxed, whereas the one without his mother froze almost immobile in a corner of the room.

responses include those mediating attachment and escape that there exists what Erikson (22) and others have described as 'basic trust'.

Unless this high degree of selectivity of the object terminating the response systems mediating attachment and escape behaviour is understood, reactions to separation from loved objects will remain a closed book. This is where, on occasion, formulations stemming from the theory of secondary drive break down. So long as the caretaker ministers efficiently to the child's physiological needs, it is sometimes reasoned, the child has nothing to grumble about: and so he ought not to grumble. This outlook would be ridiculous were it not so tragic—both for the child and for the well-intentioned caretaker.

As presented here, separation anxiety is the inescapable corollary of attachment behaviour—the other side of the coin. As soon as the instinctual response systems mediating such behaviour have matured and, by a process of learning of a simple kind, become oriented towards any object whatsoever, the child will become prone to experience primary anxiety at separation from it. Plainly this formulation implies that there is a period early in the infant's life during which he is not prone to separation anxiety as a specific form of anxiety. This needs discussion.

In my previous paper I discussed the perceptual and cognitive aspects of the child's tie to his mother and pointed to the evidence that prior to about 6 months the infant's differentiation, as measured by his responsiveness, between familiar mother-figure and stranger is present but only evident on careful observation. After about 6 months, however, differential responses are very striking. In particular I referred to the recent work of Schaffer, who observed the responses of twenty-five healthy infants aged under 12 months to admission to hospital for elective surgery. Of those over 28 weeks of age all but one fretted piteously, exhibiting all the struggling, restlessness, and crying with which we are familiar in rather older children. On the other hand, of those aged 28 weeks and under all but two are reported to have accepted the new environment without protest or fretting; only an

unwonted silence indicated their awareness of change. Similarly, infants in the two age-groups exhibited very different responses both to visitors during the period of separation and also to their mothers on return home. Those over 28 weeks behaved negatively to strangers, but to their visiting mothers were demanding and clinging: those under 28 weeks, on the other hand, seemed hardly to differentiate between stranger and mother (though it was noticed that they became more vocal during their mother's visit).¹⁷ On return home those over 28 weeks clung tenaciously to their mother and cried and were distressed if left alone by her: those under this age showed no such behaviour but instead appeared bewildered, scanning their surroundings with a blank expression (68, 69).

These observations, if confirmed, strongly suggest that separation anxiety on losing mother is not exhibited before about 28 weeks. As Schaffer points out, this is strikingly in keeping with a prediction made by Anthony (2) on the basis of Piaget's findings.¹⁸

To conclude, as I am inclined to, that human infants younger than about 28 weeks do not experience differentiated separation anxiety on losing mother is not to suppose that they experience no anxiety whatever before this age. Though during these weeks the selection of a loved object may still be only embryonic, the instinctual responses comprising attachment behaviour are not. We know that crying and sucking (and in less degree clinging also) are fully active in this period and, in so far as a terminating situation is not quickly established for them, we may presume that primary anxiety is experienced. Moreover, sucking becomes monotropic fairly early, in as much as the infant quickly comes to prefer a particular object to suck—breast, bottle, or dummy. When he loses it he is upset. How significant for later personality development these primitive forms of separation anxiety are seems to me an unsolved problem. Though of great theoretical and practical interest, it is however one which is not of central concern to this paper and will therefore not be pursued further.

Let us now turn to the course of events which follows this early and controversial period.

¹⁷ Of Schaffer's twenty-five subjects, sixteen were aged over 28 weeks and nine 28 weeks and under. Of the two younger infants who deviated from the usual behaviour, one was already 29 weeks of age, and so on the margin of the older age group, and the other was thought to be missing his dummy.

¹⁸ Anthony writes: 'It would also follow that before the seventh month the infant cannot be separated from an object-mother firmly and substantially localized in space, as an organized reality. His separation feeling must therefore lack the quality of separations at a later stage.'

After the age of 6 months variations in the intensity of attachment behaviour, and *pari passu* in the intensity of separation anxiety, occur both in the short term and in the long. As regards *short-term changes*, every mother discovers that her child varies considerably from day to day and week to week. Some days he is intensely 'mummyish', on others much less so. It may help reconcile her to it to know that infant chimps are no different. Of Gua the Kelloggs write: 'During her fifteenth month, when she seemed to be in an "accelerating" phase of her cycle of affection for the chosen experimenter, she would scream and rush after him whenever he opened the door of the house. If left behind, she would run from one window to another pounding upon them and wailing,' despite the presence of a familiar substitute. 'In the same stage of development she began to cry again to be carried by the individual of her preference and nothing would calm her till she had her way.' Although the Kelloggs seem unable to account for all the variations, some of them were obviously the result of particular conditions. Thus 'after a brief sickness, during which her dependency necessarily increased, Gua behaved again for some weeks almost as she had at the beginning, even though she was then many months older.'

The very close connectedness of the response systems mediating escape and those mediating attachment has already been emphasized. Inevitably anything which frightens the primate infant serves to intensify his attachment behaviour and, in the absence of his mother, to magnify his anxiety. Yerkes, generalizing about infant chimps brought up with their mothers in captivity, describes how 'even at 2 years of age, after it can feed itself and move about independently, the youngster will rush to its mother or to other adults in any emergency.'

Human mothers are familiar with such patterns of behaviour. Just as the child in his second or third year seems to be becoming more independent, he has a phase when he becomes more demanding again. Sickness, fright, or a period of separation often account for it. So too does the mother's own mood. As often as not when a young child becomes fretful and anxious it is because his mother has been upset, either with him or with someone or something else, and has consequently been brusque and irritable with him. She is less patient, her tone of voice changes, her expression is different: these are the things to which young children are keenly

sensitive. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for mothers to use the fear of separation—or withdrawal of love which is substantially the same thing—as a sanction to enforce good behaviour. Sometimes this is done as a deliberate policy, more often almost unconsciously. No matter how expressed, however, it is a powerful sanction and, as Fairbairn and many others have emphasized, inevitably increases the child's proneness to separation anxiety. It is this aspect of the theme that Sullivan picked on almost exclusively, thereby making his views in the weight he gives to parental influence in the genesis of neurotic anxiety the counterpart of Klein's in the weight she attributes to constitutional factors. This debate is referred to again in the next section where we consider why one child rather than another becomes prone to excessive separation anxiety.

Nevertheless, even though experiential factors of one kind or another can frequently be seen to account for short-term variations in intensity of attachment behaviour, on some occasions it is very difficult to trace the reasons. Perhaps in human children it is the same as it was with Gua, whose 'attachment would wax and wane in a slow irregular rhythm' during the nine months she was with the Kelloggs. Systematic records are obviously required.

As regards the *long-term changes*, both in chimps and humans the instinctual response systems mediating attachment and escape behaviour slowly modify. Not only do they become less readily activated and, when activated, active at a lower level of intensity, but they come to be organized around an increasing range of objects. These two kinds of change appear to be taking place during the same period of the life span and consequently are not always easy to differentiate.

The processes underlying the long-term reduction in the frequency and intensity of their activation, with its concomitant reduction in separation anxiety, are unknown. As we have seen, their ready activation in early childhood is easily accounted for by their survival value. Since as the child grows older they become less necessary, it may well be that there is operative a maturational process designed to restrict their activity, as sexual activity is restricted at the menopause. Nevertheless experience and learning certainly play a considerable part also. As time goes on, the better grounds a child has to believe that his parents love him and will return to him, the less apprehensive will he be both before

their departure and whilst they are away; the weaker the grounds, the more anxious on these occasions.

Although I believe such views to be theoretically plausible and, so far as there are relevant data, empirically well based, it must be recognized that they are not those which have been advanced by leading psycho-analysts, many of whom have thought that the growth of independence is impossible without the frustration of earlier needs. Freud held that it is possible to give a child too much affection and that it is this which prolongs the phase of dependence and promotes increased separation anxiety; a critique of this view is postponed to the next section. Melanie Klein shares the same outlook but invokes a different mechanism. In questioning how the child ever detaches himself from his mother, she suggests that 'the very nature of this overstrong attachment . . . tends to drive him away from her because (frustrated greed and hatred being inevitable) it gives rise to the fear of losing this all-important person, and consequently to the fear of dependence upon her' (Klein and Riviere, 57, p. 91). Although a process of this kind is well known as one which underlies a *premature* development of independence,¹⁹ I believe it to be the result of avoidable frustration and to lead to independence of a special and often pathological kind. I know of no reason to suppose it is responsible for its healthy growth.

As regards the second component of the long-term changes, the increasing range of objects toward whom attachment behaviour is directed, probably this is also a result both of maturational change and of learning. Thus the very capacity to include, even at a lower level of preference, a number of different people is something which may well become increased between, say, 18 months and 3 years by maturational processes. Even so, precisely who is included is obviously learned, and the number who become trusted by any particular child, whilst always limited, is evidently in large part the result of experience.

Once again it is instructive to hear of comparable changes in chimpanzees. Reading Yerkes's account, one gains the impression that, in chimps, initially the shift may be entirely one of object and that intensity of response remains unchanged. Generalizing again from his observations of chimps in captivity, he writes of the

developing infant: 'Gradually a striking change in behaviour becomes evident. The initial specific clinging dependence upon the mother gives place rapidly to a generalized dependence on the extending social environment. . . . Need for social stimulation, such as is provided by companions, becomes so strong during late infancy and early childhood that isolation causes varied symptoms of deprivation.' As the chimpanzee child grows older, however, the intensity of the attachment responses themselves seems to diminish: 'Maternal dependence normally is outgrown during infancy, and similarly, extreme social dependence tends to be outgrown during childhood and adolescence.'

Primary anxiety arising from separation either from mother-figure or companions is thus a function of age. The period when the individual is especially vulnerable is whilst the response systems mediating attachment and escape are not only easily activated at high intensity but are narrowly directed towards one, or at most a few, figures. Once there is a diminution in the readiness with which the response systems are activated, or the growing child, chimp or human, becomes able to accept temporary substitutes more readily, vulnerability decreases. So far as my own observations go, I have the impression that in humans these changes do not often take much effect until the child has reached about 2 years 9 months, though the age varies considerably from child to child.

ORIGIN OF SEPARATION ANXIETY OF PATHOLOGICAL DEGREE

Earlier in the paper I have made it clear that, on the hypothesis advanced, primary anxiety will occur whenever any (or at least one of a number of) instinctual response systems is activated and not terminated. The primary anxiety arising when a young child is separated from his mother is thus only a special case of a more general phenomenon. Nevertheless, clinical experience suggests that it is of peculiar pathogenic significance and, if this is so, the problem remains *why* it should be so. The following explanation appears plausible. In the first place, the phase during which the human infant's capacity for locomotion is limited is a long one. As a result, whether or not his attachment responses are terminated turns for some years on the initiative of others, especially his mother: he

¹⁹ See, for instance, Winnicott's conception of the development of the false self (75) and Balint's of con-

ditions which give rise to neurosis and the need for a 'new beginning' (4).

is entirely dependent on their goodwill. In the second, there is the close linkage between the instinctual response systems mediating attachment behaviour and those mediating escape, so that, whenever a young child is separated from his mother and such substitutes as he will accept, there is the risk of his experiencing not only primary anxiety but also fright, and both in conditions where there is no one available to provide comfort and security. This makes the situation doubly alarming to him and accounts for the intensity of distress we observe. Finally, because of their tremendous importance for survival, both these classes of response system appear to have special characteristics: first, they are permanently ready for activation and also readily activated; secondly, when active they are often so at great intensity; and, finally, they are not completely terminated except by the preferred mother-figure. In several of these respects they differ from other response systems, such for example as those mediating sucking behaviour. Thus the latter vary much in their readiness for activation, in many infants being inert after food has been taken and only becoming sensitive at intervals; they are often not exhibited at great intensity, and, as regards termination, are usually more easily provided for than are those mediating attachment and escape—a bottle, a thumb, or a comforter may suffice. By contrast the instinctual response systems mediating attachment and escape behaviour are permanently 'at the ready' for intense activation. Primary anxiety due to separation, sometimes suffused with fright, is thus immanently present from the time these response systems have become active and narrowly directed in the early months to the time when they diminish in intensity and/or the object becomes more easily replaceable (from around the third birthday). Probably at no other time in his life is the individual at risk of such intense primary anxiety and such 'un-terminatable' fright.

In considering why separation anxiety can so easily reach pathological intensity two further aspects of these systems require emphasis. One is the readiness with which hostility is engendered when they are impeded. The exact conditions

under which hostility is evoked require much more detailed study than they have yet been given, but it has long been common knowledge that separation from the mother, rejection by the mother, and a situation in which the mother is attending to some other individual—father, sibling, or visitor—are all apt to give rise to it.²⁰ It is my belief that it is situations such as these, rather than the frustration of oral desires, that engender the most frequent and intense hostility in infants and young children, hostility, moreover, which is inevitably directed towards the loved object itself. This is of the greatest relevance when we come to consider why in some children expectant anxiety in regard to separation exists at a level above the normal.

The second is that the period when they are most active is also the period when patterns of control and of regulating conflict are being laid down. Our data demonstrate that when primary anxiety arising from separation is allowed to persist, defences of a primitive nature (such as those giving rise to detachment described earlier) come into play. There is reason to suppose that the early and intense activation of such defensive processes may create patterns which in later life are of pathogenic significance. This is a theme I have touched on in an earlier paper in connexion with critical phases of development (15) and which I hope to pursue further.

Whether or not these reasons prove to be the right ones, there can be little doubt that separation anxiety is an exceedingly common component of neurotic anxiety. This was early recognized by Freud. 'One of the clearest indications that a child will later become neurotic,' he observed, 'is to be seen in an insatiable demand for his parents' affection' (*Three Essays*, 1905, *S.E.* 7, p. 223); this, of course, is another way of describing the child who exhibits, in excess, expectant anxiety in regard to separation and loss of love. Few would dispute this view today. There are, however, several hypotheses current in regard to why some children develop in this way and others do not; and it is in fact on this issue that the views advanced here differ most from those of Freud.

Hypotheses which have been advanced by

²⁰ Analytic literature is full of references to hatred arising in such situations. That separation from mother itself provokes it has been used by Freud as a possible explanation of the cotton-reel incident: 'Throwing away the object so that it was "gone"', he suggests, 'might satisfy an impulse of the child's . . . to revenge himself on his mother for going away from him' (*S.E.* 18, p. 16). Dorothy Burlingham and Anna Freud (18), Spitz (71),

Robertson (64, 65) and Heinicke (42) have all reported first-hand observations of intensely hostile behaviour following separation. It is Fairbairn's view that the origin of the infant's aggression towards his libidinal object, and therefore of his ambivalence, lies in the trauma of separation from mother and the consequent libidinal deprivation and frustration. (25).

psycho-analysts not only give very varying weight to constitutional and environmental factors but also inculcate different and in some respects contradictory factors in each class. It is therefore useful to tabulate the five main hypotheses which have been advanced to account for why a particular individual suffers from an excess of separation anxiety. They are:

1. *Constitutional Factors*

- (a) Some 'children have inherently a greater amount of libidinal need in their constitution than others,' and so are more sensitive than others to an absence of gratification (Freud, 1917).
- (b) Some children have inherently a stronger death instinct than others, which manifests itself in unusually strong persecutory and depressive anxiety (Klein, 1932).

2. *Environmental Factors*

- (a) Variations in the birth process and severe traumata occurring during the first weeks of post-natal life may increase the (organic) anxiety response and heighten the anxiety potential, thereby causing a more severe reaction to later (psychological) dangers met with in life (Greenacre, 1941, 1945 [36]).
- (b) Some children are 'spoiled' by excess of early libidinal gratification: they therefore demand more of it and, when not gratified, miss it more (Freud, 1905, 1917, 1926).
- (c) Some children are made excessively sensitive to the possibility of separation or loss of love either through the experience of actual separation (Edleston, 1943, Bowlby, 1951), or through the use of separation or loss of love as a threat (Suttie, 1935, Fairbairn, 1941).

It should be noted that whereas hypotheses 1 (a), 2 (b) and 2 (c) are framed to account for the liability to an excess in particular of separation anxiety, 1 (b) and 2 (a) are intended to account for the liability to an excess of anxiety of any kind.

I do not believe there is any clear evidence in support of the first four of these hypotheses. Since with our present research techniques there is no way of determining differences in constitutional endowment, the first pair unavoidably remain untested (though of course not disproved). As regards the next pair, the evidence

in regard to 2 (a) is far from clear; indeed in her paper Phyllis Greenacre is careful to explain that she regards it as no more than a plausible hypothesis. Evidence in regard to 2 (b) seems at the best equivocal: the subjection of a child to neurotic overprotection or to excessive libidinal demands from his mother sometimes appears like excess of affection but clearly cannot be equated with it. Evidence in regard to the fifth hypothesis, 2 (c), however, is abundant and affirmative. Therefore, without necessarily rejecting the first four, the fifth hypothesis, that an excess of separation anxiety may be due either to an experience of actual separation or to threats of separation, rejection, or loss of love, can be adopted with confidence. Probably a majority of analysts today utilize it in their work in some degree.

It is strange that in his writings Freud practically never invoked it. On the contrary, in addition to postulating hypothesis 1 (a), that some children have a constitutionally greater need of libidinal gratification than others, he committed himself early and consistently to hypothesis 2 (b), that an excess of separation anxiety is due to an excess of parental affection—in other words, the traditional theory of spoiling. Thus in the *Three Essays* (1905), after commending the mother who strokes, rocks, and kisses her child and thereby teaches him to love, he nevertheless warns against excess: 'An excess of parental affection does harm by causing precocious sexual maturity and also because, by spoiling the child, it makes him incapable in later life of temporarily doing without love or of being content with a smaller amount of it' (*S.E.* 7, p. 223). The same theme runs through much of his theorizing about *Little Hans* (1909), though it is in his discussion of this small boy's separation anxiety that he comes nearest the view adopted here: he attributes part of it to the fact that Little Hans had been separated from his mother at the time of his baby sister's birth (*S.E.* 10, pp. 114 and 132). However, both in the *Introductory Lectures* (28, p. 340) and in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (*S.E.* 20, p. 167) he makes no reference to such origins and instead explicitly adopts the theory of spoiling.

Since in my view there is no evidence to support this theory, the question arises why Freud should have favoured it. One reason seems to be that in his early work he was misled by the show of affection and over-protection which is so

frequently present as an over-compensation for a parent's unconscious hostility to a child. This is suggested by the passage in *Three Essays* immediately following that already quoted: '... neuro-pathic parents, who are inclined as a rule to display excessive affection, are precisely those who are most likely by their caresses to arouse the child's disposition to neurotic illness' (*S.E.* 7, p. 223). In fact, when we come to investigate such cases psycho-analytically we find, I believe invariably, that the child's heightened anxiety over separation and loss of love is not a reaction to any real excess of affection from his parents, but to the unconscious hostility and rejection which lies behind it or to the threats of loss of love his parents have used to bind him to them.²¹ Children who have received a great deal of genuine affection seem to be those who in later life show in highest degree a sense of security.

In addition to this, it seems probable that another reason for Freud's misperception of the origins of excessive separation anxiety was the delay in his recognition of the close bond of child to mother and the length of time over which it normally persists at high intensity; only if the child's strong attachment is perceived as normal is its severance or threat of severance recognized as dangerous. It is true that by the time he wrote *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* he was of opinion that a main cause of man's proneness to neurosis lies in 'the long period of time during which the young of the human species is in a condition of helplessness and dependence . . . (which) establishes the earliest situations of danger and creates the need to be loved' (*S.E.* 20, pp. 154-155). Yet, so far as I know, he never drew from this the natural conclusion that disruptions or threats of disruption of the primary bond are likely to prove a major hazard.

It will thus be seen that the views advanced in this paper differ from Freud's not so much on the nature of separation anxiety itself but on the conditions which determine its presence in excessive degree. On this issue indeed the two views are the opposite of one another. It is perhaps because of this and because Freud's hypothesis of spoiling has been built deep into psycho-analytic theory that there has been so much reluctance in many analysts to accept as valid

the evidence which supports the hypothesis here advanced. It is time to return to this.

In my view the best opportunity for uncovering the conditions which lead an individual to become prone to an excessive degree of separation anxiety is either by direct observation of a child undergoing an anxiety-provoking experience or by a clinical examination in an analytically oriented child guidance clinic, in which treatment is given to both child and parent and a detailed history can be obtained both of main events in the child's life and of parental attitudes towards him. When we review the reasons why in some children expectant anxiety in regard to separation and loss of love exist in pathogenic degree, observations made in such settings suggest there are four main ones:

- (1) One determinant is undoubtedly the actual experience of a period of separation. In addition to our own observations (12, 14, 64), those of Edelston (21), Prugh *et al.* (62), Heinicke (42) and Schaffer (68) provide abundant evidence that the child who returns after not too long a period with strangers, whether in hospital or elsewhere, will soon attach himself with great tenacity to his mother and show intense anxiety at any threat of a repetition of the experience. Many cases of older children and adults who respond to separation with unusual anxiety are most readily understood in terms of the persistence of such a psychological state.
- (2) Another determinant is the excessive use by parents of threats of separation or withdrawal of love as sanctions.
- (3) Another is the child's experience of rejection by the mother, especially where her positive feelings are mixed with unconscious hostility.
- (4) Another is any actual event, such as a parent's or sibling's illness or death, for which the child has come to feel responsible and, therefore, guilty and unloved.

There are many papers by analysts which report cases falling under one or a combination of these last three heads (including an early one of my own (10)) and others by clinical psychologists.²² In a study predominantly concerned

²¹ There is another situation which may lead a child to become excessively clinging and which may also masquerade as "spoiling." It is when a mother, for unconscious reasons of her own, communicates to a child her desire that he should not leave her. This is a common finding in cases of so-called school phobia (49a).

²² In a comparison of twenty 6-year-old children reported as overdependent with twenty controls, Stendler (72) found that six of the over-dependent children were 'over-protected' and eleven had suffered major disturbances in their lives between the ages of 9 months and 3 years.

with the consequences of actual separation, however, it would be inappropriate to discuss this large and controversial area more fully. Nevertheless it should be noted that these four sources are not necessarily exhaustive: for example, any set of conditions which results in the child feeling guilty and therefore in danger of not being loved will be effective. At the same time, it is my view that only if each of the four sources listed above has been thoroughly explored and excluded is it wise to postulate other factors. Unfortunately such exploration is, I believe, only possible in the case of younger children and when their mothers are also willing to undertake treatment.

Merely to describe these sources of increased separation anxiety, however, is insufficient: we need also to understand the nature of their effects on the emotional development of the child. It is when we come to consider these effects that the interaction of expectant anxiety and hostility, to which attention has already been drawn, is seen to be so crucial. For each of these experiences—separation, threats of separation, actual rejection or expectation of rejection—enormously increases the child's hostility, whilst his hostility greatly increases his expectation of rejection and loss. Such vicious circles are a commonplace of psycho-analytic practice. Since it is in emphasizing their frequency and immense clinical importance that Melanie Klein has made her special contribution, this is a convenient point at which to reconsider her ideas.

The clinical observations made by Melanie Klein in the twenties, it will be recalled, were that some children who are attached to their mother in unusual degree are, paradoxically, also possessed of strong unconscious hostility directed towards that very mother. In their play they demonstrate much violence towards mother-figures and become concerned and anxious lest they may have destroyed or alienated them. Often after an outburst they run from the analytic room, not only for fear of consequences from the analyst, but also, it seems, to assure themselves that their mother is still alive and loving. These observations are now amply confirmed and demonstrate without doubt that the presence of unconscious hostile impulses directed towards a loved object greatly increases anxiety. This is readily intelligible. As Freud pointed out, we would not expect loss of love or castration 'if we did not entertain certain feelings and intentions within us. Thus

such instinctual impulses are determinants of external dangers and so become dangerous in themselves' (*S.E.* 20, p. 145). The presence of hostile impulses directed to a parent, especially when unconscious, inevitably increases expectant anxiety. In so far as there is concern for the object's safety, it is depressive in character; in so far as there is fear of losing his or her love, it is persecutory. The role of such depressive and persecutory anxieties, springing from unconscious hostility, in persons suffering from an increased level of expectant anxiety in regard to being separated or unloved cannot be over-emphasized; and this remains so whether or not we accept Melanie Klein's particular hypothesis in regard to their origin.

But just as unconscious hostility directed towards the loved object increases expectant anxiety, so does expectant anxiety, especially in regard to whether or not one is loved, increase hostility. It is of both great theoretical and great practical importance to determine, if we can, how these vicious circles begin. Does increased anxiety precede increased hostility, is it the other way round, or do they spring from a common source? Jones (51) recognizes the great difficulty of unravelling the sequence when looking backwards from data provided by the patient in analysis; and I believe this holds for young children as well as for older patients. Indeed it is at this point that I believe Melanie Klein's method has led her to one-sided conclusions.

Logically it is clearly possible for excess anxiety to precede excess hostility in some cases, for the sequence to be reversed in others, and for them to spring from a single source and so be coincidental in yet a third group. Such possibilities, however, are not allowed for by Melanie Klein's formulation. It is to be noted that she attaches no importance to instinctual tensions as such and does not subscribe to the view, advanced by Freud and again here, as well as by many other writers, that primary anxiety is the result of such tension. Instead, her basic tenet is that increased anxiety is always both preceded and caused by increased sadism: that it may sometimes be independent of, sometimes itself provoke, and often spring from the same source as the increased sadism is not conceded.

In my view both an excess of separation anxiety and an excess of hostility are very commonly provoked by the same experience. Further and more important is that, because the hostility is directed towards the loved object, it

is often repressed and, being repressed, tends to generate further anxiety. Thus, on this hypothesis, the increased libidinal need for the object and the increased unconscious hostility directed toward it are both active in promoting neurotic anxiety. This is a view which, it will be seen, derives from the theories both of Freud and of Melanie Klein. It also links with Freud's early expressed belief (*Little Hans*, 1909) that in some way repression plays a crucial role in the genesis of pathological anxiety. Here, however, a distinction needs to be drawn between anxiety which is intense and anxiety which is pathological. Whilst it seems clear that repression is not a necessary condition for the genesis of *intense* anxiety—as is shown by the behaviour of young children in the weeks following return home after a time away from their mothers with strangers—it may well be a necessary condition for its development into *pathological* anxiety. Perhaps when there is no repression of love or hate intense anxiety provoked by separation or rejection subsides, and it is only when repression sets in that the anxiety becomes pathological. This hypothesis will need further examination.

Before ending this section a word must be said about the other pathological form of separation anxiety, namely its absence or presence at unusually low levels. It has already been emphasized that some measure of separation anxiety is the inevitable counterpart of a love relationship. The absence or attenuation of separation anxiety is thus a frequent accompaniment of absent or exiguous love relationships. The psychopathic character, the origin of which is so often a major disturbance in the early mother-child relationship (11, 37), is commonly the one who shows little or no separation anxiety. Either he has never experienced a continuous loving relationship or, more frequently, the relationship he has had has been disrupted so severely that he has not only reached but remained in a phase of detachment. As a result he remains detached and so incapable of experiencing either separation anxiety or grief. Lesser degrees of this condition are, of course, more common than the extreme degrees, and sometimes give the impression of unusually vigorous independence. Analysis, however, shows that the springs of love are frozen and that their independence is hollow.

It is not unlikely that the possibility of promoting early and often apparently vigorous independence in some young children by a measure of frustration of their need for attach-

ment has contributed to the notion that too much affection is bad for a child. There is no doubt that, in the short run, the child who is given more affection is sometimes more strongly attached and so, therefore, more prone to separation anxiety than are some of those who are treated more toughly (though by no means more so than all of them). However, since such 'dependence' in the well-loved child is outgrown and later provides the basis for a stable independence, it would be a mistake to suppose it pathological. On the contrary, as in the case of grief, the capacity to experience separation anxiety must be regarded as a sign of the healthy personality.

Though I believe that much of the variation between different individuals in respect of their proneness to pathological anxiety is to be understood as resulting from experiences such as we have been discussing, it seems probable that part of it is due to other factors. Thus it is most unlikely that all human infants are equipped by inheritance with instinctual response systems prone to develop responses of the same degree of intensity; whilst in others brain damage, caused before, during, or after birth, may make for undue sensitivity. Whatever the reason for it may be, those in whom the potential intensity is high will be greater risks for becoming entangled in the vicious circle of anxiety—hatred—more anxiety—more hatred—than will others. Only direct observations made whilst the child is developing in relation to his mother during the first two or three years of life can, I believe, throw light on this issue. It is to this task that research needs to be directed.

CONCLUSION

Although in the course of this paper we have strayed into areas of difficult and abstract theory, my interest in the problem stems from clinical observation. At first I was struck by the calamitous after-effects which are sometimes to be found following a prolonged separation or series of separations occurring in early childhood. Next, in my work with James Robertson, we were both struck by the intensity and universality of separation anxiety when very young children are removed from their mothers, by the processes of grief, mourning, and defence which habitually follow if child and mother are not reunited, and by the acute exacerbation of separation anxiety after the child's return home. Finally, like most other clinicians, I have been impressed both by the frequency with which separation anxiety is

exhibited at high levels in neurotic patients and by its ubiquity at more modest levels in the everyday life of all of us. It has been the attempt to understand and explain these observations which has led to this exploration of theory.

It will have been seen that the hypothesis advanced to account for separation anxiety is an immediate corollary of that advanced to account for the child's tie to his mother. In the earlier paper reasons were advanced why it was both legitimate and economical to conceive the child's tie as being the direct outcome of a number of instinctual response systems—crying, smiling, sucking, clinging, and following—which have become bred into the species as a result of their survival value. When they are activated and the mother-figure is available, attachment behaviour follows. Similarly, as we have discussed in this paper, when they are activated and the mother-figure is temporarily not available, protest behaviour and separation anxiety follow. This formulation not only has the merit of appearing to account for the facts but is also simple. Furthermore, it brings separation anxiety into immediate relation to grief and mourning, which in this scheme are seen respectively as the subjective experience and the psychological processes which occur when the responses mediating attachment behaviour are activated and the mother-figure is permanently unavailable, or at least believed to be so. A liability to experience separation anxiety and grief are thus the ineluctable risks of a love relationship, of caring for someone. This intrinsic connexion between separation anxiety and grief, and both with attachment to a loved object, to which Freud called attention in the final pages of *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, is also the theme of succeeding papers on grief and mourning in infancy.

APPENDIX

A Note on Terminology

In a passage in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (S.E. 18, p. 12) Freud seeks to differentiate between the conditions denoted respectively by the German words 'Schreck', 'Furcht', and 'Angst', namely 'fright', 'fear', and 'anxiety': "Anxiety" describes a particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one. "Fear" requires a definite object of which to be afraid. "Fright", however, is the name we give to the state a person gets into when he has run into

danger without being prepared for it; it emphasizes the factor of surprise.' As we have seen, six years later in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, he further differentiates the concept of anxiety, postulating two forms, one an 'automatic phenomenon' characteristic of id impulsiveness, the other a 'rescue-signal' characteristic of ego foresight.

The concepts and terminology advanced here have much in common with Freud's. Thus what I am terming respectively 'primary anxiety' and 'expectant anxiety' correspond closely to Freud's two forms of anxiety. The notion of primary anxiety, moreover, is very close to his original notion that anxiety is in some way connected with an 'excess of excitation' which cannot be discharged (see his paper on anxiety neurosis, C.P. 1, p. 76).

In general the concept of 'fright' advanced here also resembles Freud's, though it identifies it more precisely than did Freud with primitive instinctual response systems. Both concepts agree, however, that in fright the cognitive component is at a simple level and that, in contrast to fear, there is no 'definite object of which to be afraid'.

Unfortunately in colloquial English the word 'fear' is used in many senses, often being synonymous with expectant anxiety and sometimes with fright. It is therefore doubtful how wise it is to make any attempt to give it a precise technical meaning. Were we to do so, I suggest it might be reserved for the subjective state accompanying the responses of escape and 'freezing' whenever the cognitive component of these responses is at a higher level, namely whenever there is a clear conception of what object has activated them. Such a usage would, I believe, be close to what Freud had in mind.

Most other workers conceive anxiety in ways similar to that advanced here. Thus Goldstein (34) contrasts it with fear and postulates that anxiety is experienced when the organism is unable to cope with a situation and, as a result, is in danger of disorganization. This is a concept to which we shall be returning in a paper to follow in which the nature of depression will be discussed. Recently Gerard (32), approaching the problem from the point of view of neurophysiology, has remarked: 'Anxiety is largely connected with frustrated drives . . . with unfinished business . . . with events to come.' Like Goldstein, he emphasizes uncertainty and the unsolved nature of the problem. Several writers, on the other hand, for example

SEPARATION ANXIETY

111

McDougall (60) and Basowitz *et al.* (5), whilst agreeing in general approach, seem to me in their description to be too preoccupied with behaviour dependent on foresight (and therefore with expectant anxiety) and to give too little attention to the more primitive processes underlying primary anxiety. McDougall in fact uses the term 'anxiety' as synonymous with 'expectant anxiety', and the term 'fear' to denote what I am terming 'fright'.

* * *

The author is much indebted to James Robertson for the observations on which he has drawn,

to Robert Hinde and Anthony Ambrose for discussions in which ideas were clarified, and to Willi Hoffer for suggestions in revising the review of literature. The enquiry was undertaken as part of the work of the Tavistock Child Development Research Unit, which is supported by the National Health Service and by grants from the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, the Foundations Fund for Research in Psychiatry, and the Ford Foundation, to all of which our thanks are due. An advanced draft of the paper was prepared whilst the author held a Fellowship at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford, California.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In most cases references to the works of Sigmund Freud are given in the text, wherever possible to the Standard Edition. S.E. = Standard Edition; C.P. = Collected Papers.

(1) ABRAHAM, K. (1911). 'Notes on the Psycho-Analytical Investigation and Treatment of Manic-Depressive Insanity and Allied Conditions.' *In: Selected Papers on Psycho-Analysis.* (London: Hogarth, 1927.)

(2) ANTHONY, E. J. (1956). 'The Significance of Jean Piaget for Child Psychiatry.' *Brit. J. med. Psychol.*, 29, 20-34.

(3) ANTHONY, S. *The Child's Discovery of Death.* (London: Kegan Paul, 1940.)

(4) BALINT, M. (1952). 'New Beginning and the Paranoid and the Depressive Syndromes.' Reprinted in: *Primary Love and Psycho-Analytic Technique*, by M. Balint. (London: Hogarth, 1953.)

(5) BASOWITZ, H. *et al.* *Anxiety and Stress: an Interdisciplinary Study of a Life Situation.* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1955.)

(6) BASTOCK, M., MORRIS, D., and MOYNIHAN, M. (1953). 'Some Comments on Conflict and Thwarting in Animals.' *Behaviour*, 6, 66-84.

(7) BENDER, L., and YARNELL, H. (1941). 'An Observation Nursery: a Study of 250 Children on the Psychiatric Division of Bellevue Hospital.' *Amer. J. Psychiat.*, 97, 1158-72.

(8) BENEDEK, T. *Insight and Personality Adjustment: a Study of the Psychological Effects of War.* (New York: Ronald Press, 1946.)

(9) BERNFELD, S. (1925; Eng. trans. 1929). *The Psychology of the Infant.* (London: Kegan Paul.)

(10) BOWLBY, J. (1940). 'The Influence of Early Environment in the Development of Neurosis and Neurotic Character.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 21, 154-178.

(11) — (1944). 'Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves: Their Characters and Home Life.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 25, 19-52 and 107-127.

(12) — *Maternal Care and Mental Health.* W. H. O. Monograph, No. 2. (London: H.M.S.O., 1951.)

(13) — (1953). 'Some Pathological Processes Set in Train by Early Mother-Child Separation.' *J. Ment. Sci.*, 99, 265-272.

(14) — (1954). 'Psychopathological Processes Set in Train by Early Mother-Child Separation.' *In: Proceedings of Seventh Conference on Infancy and Childhood* (March, 1953). (New York: Jos. Macy, Jr., Foundation.)

(15) — (1957). 'An Ethological Approach to Research in Child Development.' *Brit. J. med. Psychol.*, 30, 230-240.

(16) — (1958). 'The Nature of the Child's Tie to his Mother.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 39, 350-373.

(17) BURLINGHAM, D. and FREUD, A. *Young Children in War Time.* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1942.)

(18) —. *Infants without Families.* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1944.)

(19) DEUTSCH, H. (1937). 'Absence of Grief.' *Psychoanal. Quart.*, 6, 12-22.

(20) DIXON, J. J., DE MONCHAUX, C., and SANDLER, J. (1957). 'Patterns of Anxiety: an Analysis of Social Anxieties.' *Brit. J. med. Psychol.*, 30, 107.

(21) EDELSTON, H. (1943). 'Separation Anxiety in Young Children: A Study of Hospital Cases.' *Genetic Psychol. Monograph*, 28, 3-95.

(22) ERIKSON, E. H. *Childhood and Society.* (New York: Norton, 1950.)

(23) FAIRBAIRN, W. R. D. (1941). 'A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses.' *In: Psycho-Analytic Studies of the Personality.* (London: Tavistock, 1952.)

(24) — (1943). 'The War Neuroses—Their Nature and Significance.' *In: Psycho-Analytic Studies of the Personality.* (London: Tavistock, 1952.)

- (25) — (1951). 'A Synopsis of the Development of the Author's Views Regarding the Structure of the Personality.' In: *Psycho-Analytic Studies of the Personality*. (London: Tavistock, 1952.)
- (26) FREUD, A. (1952). 'The Mutual Influences in the Development of Ego and Id.' *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 7, 42-50.
- (27) — (1953). 'Some Remarks on Infant Observation.' *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 8, 9-19.
- (28) FREUD, S. (1916-17; Eng. trans. 1922). *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. (London: Allen and Unwin.)
- (29) — (1926; Eng. trans. 1936). *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*. (London: Hogarth.)
- (30) — (1931). 'Female Sexuality.' In: *Collected Papers*, 5.
- (31) — (1932; Eng. trans. 1933). *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. (London: Hogarth.)
- (32) GERARD, R. W. (1958). 'Anxiety and Tension.' *Bull. N.Y. Acad. Med., Second Series*, 34, 429-444.
- (33) GOLDFARB, W. (1943). 'Infant Rearing and Problem Behaviour.' *Amer. J. Orthopsychiat.*, 13, 249-265.
- (34) GOLDSTEIN, K. *The Organism*. (New York: American Book Co., 1939.)
- (35) GREENACRE, P. (1941). 'The Predisposition to Anxiety.' In: *Trauma, Growth and Personality*. (New York: Norton, 1952.)
- (36) — (1945). 'The Biological Economy of Birth.' *Ibid.*
- (37) — (1945). 'Conscience in the Psychopath.' *Ibid.*
- (38) — *Trauma, Growth and Personality*. (New York: Norton, 1952.)
- (39) HARLOW, H. F. (1958). 'The Nature of Love.' *Amer. Psychologist*, 13, 673-685.
- (40) HARLOW, H. F. and ZIMMERMANN, R. R. (1958). 'The Development of Affectional Responses in Infant Monkeys.' *Proc. Amer. Philosophical Soc.*, 102, 501-509.
- (41) HAYES, C. *The Ape in our House*. (New York: Harper, 1951.)
- (42) HEINICKE, C. M. (1956). 'Some Effects of Separating Two-Year-Old Children from their Parents: a Comparative Study.' *Human Relations*, 9, 105-176.
- (43) — (1957). 'The Effects of Separating Two-Year-Old Children from their Parents: a Comparative Study.' Paper read at the International Congress of Psychology, Brussels.
- (44) HERMANN, I. (1936). 'Sich-Anklammern—Auf-Suche-Gehen.' *Int. Zeitschr. für Psycho-Anal.*, 22, 349-370.
- (45) HINDE, R. A. (1954). 'Factors Governing the Changes in Strength of a Partially Inborn Response.' *Proc. Roy. Society, B*, 142, 306-331.
- (46) — (1954). 'Changes in Responsiveness to a Constant Stimulus.' *Brit. J. Animal Behaviour*, 2, 41-55.
- (47) HUG-HELLMUTH, H. VON (1913; Eng. trans. 1919). *A Study of the Mental Life of the Child*. (Washington: Nervous and Mental Disease Pub. Co.)
- (48) ISAACS, S. (1952). 'The Nature and Function of Phantasy.' In: *Developments in Psycho-Analysis* by Klein *et al.* (London: Hogarth.)
- (49) JAMES, W. (1890). *A Textbook of Psychology*. (New York: Holt.)
- (49a) JOHNSON, A. M., FALSTEIN, E. I., SZUREK, S. A., and SVENSDEN, M. (1941). 'School Phobia.' *Amer. J. Orthopsychiat.*, 11, 702-711.
- (50) JONES, E. (1927). 'The Early Development of Female Sexuality.' In: *Papers on Psycho-Analysis*, (London: Baillière, 5th ed., 1948.)
- (51) — (1929). 'Fear, Guilt and Hate.' *Ibid.*
- (52) — *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work*, Vol. 3. (London: Hogarth, 1957.)
- (53) KELLOGG, W. N., and KELLOGG, L. A. *The Ape and the Child*. (New York: Whittlesey, 1933.)
- (54) KLEIN, M. *The Psycho-Analysis of Children*. (London: Hogarth, 1932.)
- (54a) — 'On Criminality.' *Brit. J. med. Psychol.*, 14.
- (55) — (1935). 'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States.' In: *Developments in Psycho-Analysis* by Klein *et al.* (London: Hogarth, 1952.)
- (56) KLEIN, M. and RIVIERE, J. *Love, Hate and Reparation*. (London: Hogarth, 1937.)
- (56a) KRIS, E. (1956). 'The Recovery of Childhood Memories in Psychoanalysis.' *Psychoanal. Study Child*, 11, 54-83.
- (57) LEVY, D. (1937). 'Primary Affect Hunger.' *Amer. J. Psychiat.*, 94, 643-52.
- (58) LIDDELL, H. (1950). 'Some Specific Factors that Modify Tolerance for Environmental Stress.' In: *Life Stress and Bodily Disease*. (New York: Assoc. for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease.)
- (59) LORENZ, K. Z. (1950). 'The Comparative Method in Studying Innate Behaviour Patterns.' In: *Physiological Mechanisms in Animal Behaviour* (No. IV of Symposia of the Society for Experimental Biology). (London: Cambridge Univ. Press.)
- (60) MCDUGALL, W. *An Outline of Psychology*. (London: Methuen, 1923.)
- (61) ODIER, C. (1943, Eng. trans. 1956). *Anxiety and Magic Thinking*. (New York: Int. Univ. Press.)
- (62) PRUGH, D., STAUB, E. M., SANDS, H. H., KIRSCHBAUM, R. M. and LENTHAN, E. A. (1953). 'Study of Emotional Reactions of Children and Families to Hospitalization and Illness.' *Amer. J. Orthopsychiat.*, 23, 70-106.
- (63) RANK, O. (1924; Eng. trans. 1929). *The Trauma of Birth*. (London: Kegan Paul.)
- (64) ROBERTSON, J. (1953a). Film: 'A Two-Year-Old Goes to Hospital.' (London: Tavistock Child Development Research Unit.)

SEPARATION ANXIETY

113

- (65) — (1953b). 'Some Responses of Young Children to the Loss of Maternal Care.' *Nurs. Times*, April, 1953, 382-386.
- (66) — (1958). Film: 'Going to Hospital with Mother.' (London: Tavistock Child Development Research Unit.)
- (67) ROBERTSON, J. and BOWLBY, J. (1952). 'Responses of Young Children to Separation from their Mothers.' *Courier de la Centre Internationale de l'Enfance*, 2, 131-142.
- (68) SCHAFFER, H. R. (1958). 'Objective Observations of Personality Development in Early Infancy.' *Brit. J. med. Psychol.*, 31, 174-183.
- (69) SCHAFFER, H. R. and CALLENDER, W. M. (1959). 'Psychological Effects of Hospitalization in Infancy.' *Pediatrics*, 24, 528-539.
- (69a) SPITZ, R. A. (1946). 'Anaclitic Depression.' *Psycho-Anal. Study Child*, 2, 313-341.
- (70) — (1950). 'Anxiety in Infancy: a Study of its Manifestations in the First Year of Life.' *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 31, 138-143.
- (71) — (1953). 'Aggression: its Role in the Establishment of Object Relations. In: *Drives, Affects and Behaviour*. Ed. Loewenstein. (New York: Int. Univ. Press.)
- (72) STENDLER, C. B. (1954). 'Possible Causes of Overdependency in Young Children.' *Child Development*, 25, 125-146.
- (73) SUTTIE, I. D. *The Origins of Love and Hate*. (London: Kegan Paul, 1935.)
- (74) THORPE, W. H. (1950). 'The Concepts of Learning and their Relation to those of Instinct.' In: *Physiological Mechanisms in Animal Behaviour*. Symposium IV of S.E.B. (London: Cambridge Univ. Press.)
- (75) WINNICOTT, B. W. (1952). 'Psychoses and Child Care.' In: *Collected Papers*. (London: Tavistock, 1958.)
- (76) YERKES, R. M. *Chimpanzees: A Laboratory Colony*. (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1943.)
- (77) YERKES, R. M. and YERKES, A. W. (1936). 'Nature and Conditions of Avoidance (Fear) Response in Chimpanzees.' *J. comp. Psychol.* 21, 53-66.
- (78) ZETZEL, E. R. (1955). 'The Concept of Anxiety in Relation to the Development of Psychoanalysis.' *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Ass.*, 3, 369-388.