Theodore Lidz

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The Person

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From *The Person* by Theodore Lidz

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The closing of the oedipal period brings a consolidation of the child's personality. The child now first achieves a fairly firm integration as an individual. It seems paradoxical to consider that the essential patterning of children's personalities takes place even before they start school. They have scarcely ventured beyond their homes and the protection of their families; they must still accumulate most of the knowledge they will require to guide their own lives, and they will remain dependent upon parental figures for support and guidance for many years to come. Yet, the Jesuits as well as the Communists have placed great emphasis upon these first six years of life, even venturing to say that if they can control these years they do not care who influences the child thereafter. Indeed, psychoanalytic psychology may convey the same impression because of its emphasis upon the events of childhood through the resolution of the oedipal conflicts and their pervasive influence upon all subsequent behavior. Even though personality development is far from completed at five or six and many significant influences will still accrue before a firm integration and a stable identity are achieved, we must examine the paradox and the nature and extent of the organization that has occurred.

The fetus unfolds within the protected and relatively uniform intrauterine environment which helps assure its proper maturation. The child is born into the nexus of the family, and within it, where conditions are far less predictable and stable; the child's personality takes shape and the child is prepared to live in a specific society. Despite its shortcomings, the family forms a reasonably uniform social system that both shields the immature child from the larger society and also prepares the child to emerge into it. It forms a limited world, but the baby and small child are not ready to cope with complexity. The cast of persons with whom the child interrelates within the family remains fairly constant, which permits the child to develop expectancies and build up reasonably consistent behavioral patterns through reciprocal interactions. How children learn to maintain their emotional equilibrium and their sense of well-being within their families sets a pattern for their behavior outside their homes. They will, at first, expect reactions from persons outside the family similar to those learned from parents and siblings.[1] They will tend to change others into figures like their parents and to perceive them in familiar intrafamilial terms. Having managed to find their places within their homes, now at the age of

five or six, children must move on to learn to live in the wider world, a less stable and benevolent place, where they do not occupy specially favored positions. The patterns acquired in the home form the foundations of their ways of interacting and will resist change: throughout their lives their perceptions of significant persons and their ways of relating to them will be compromises between the expectations they developed within their family milieu and the actual ways of persons they encounter.

As we have noted in the preceding chapter, the children's personalities gained considerable organization with the closure of the oedipal period. They became much more firmly grounded in reality by the necessity of accepting their childhood position in the family, by rescinding or repressing desires to possess the parent of the opposite sex as a love object, and by identifying with the parent of the same sex. In the process children gained long-term goals toward which to strive and models to follow into adulthood. The children's gender identities became reinforced through their identifications with the parent of the same sex, and by becoming directed toward seeking a love object of the opposite sex. Their renunciation of hopes of actually possessing parental love objects permitted the children to come to terms with both parents and to find relatively conflict-free positions in relation to them. The transactions between the parents enter into their children's self-concepts and feelings of self-esteem. A boy whose father is loved and admired by his mother can gain a sense of worth in accordance with how he approximates his idealized father; and a girl can accept her worth more readily when the mother is desired and esteemed by her father. Children also gain a feeling of the value of being a father or mother, a husband or wife, as well as of being male or female, from the interactions of their parents.

DEVELOPMENT OF PERSONALITY STRUCTURE

Freud, in an effort to symbolize the nature of the intrapsychic conflicts of his patients, and particularly to clarify the sources of their anxieties, formulated his *structural theory* of the mind. He posited three mental realms or structures: the id, ego, and superego. Freud considered the *id* to be composed of the basic drives, particularly the libidinal drives and their derivatives, of chaotic, seething, unconscious impulses and their inchoate mental derivates that are not subjected to linguistic regulation or logic but seek to gain control of the person in the service of pleasure and sexual gratification.[2] The id, according to this theory, is the source of virtually all motivation. He conceptualized the *ego* as that part of the mind that has access to motility and has the function of decision making. He considered it as an

offshoot of the primitive id, but with access to consciousness. The ego has the difficult task of mediating between the powerful pleasure-seeking, but potentially endangering id on the one hand, and both the reality that must be taken into account and the *superego,* a construct that designates the internalized parental directives. The superego, like the parents in childhood, can provide conscious and unconscious support to the ego in its struggle against pressures from id impulsions and can also punish, as would imagined parental figures. The id pressures can oppose the superego sufficiently to force the ego to allow adequate gratifications. In this manner Freud conceptualized the dynamic conflict that went on within a person, and symbolized how emotional disorders were the result of a failure in the balance between id, ego, and superego. Too forceful an id would lead to dangers, such as efforts to live out incestuous, oedipal desires. Too forceful repression of the id because of superego demands would lead to constriction of the personality. Because the id can be denied expression only with difficulty, when the ego is, so to speak, squeezed between the demands of the id and superego the person can suffer anxiety lest the id impulses get out of control. Neuroses were believed to result from various efforts to find a way out of such dilemma, as we shall examine shortly.

We cannot here become concerned with the intriguing problems of the origins of psychopathology, nor fully weigh the virtues and deficits of this structural hypothesis. The dramatic conceptualization drew attention to the vulnerability of humans in coping with their powerful primitive drives and the demands of socialization, and has had a profound influence upon twentieth-century thought and ethics. We must note, however, that the structural concept is scarcely a description of the mind—at least of the mind as described in Chapter 1—but seems closer to a way of conceptualizing the personality, at least of the motivating and regulating forces of the personality.[3] Other difficulties with the structural concept derive from the reification of the id, ego, and superego. Not only is such reification basically untenable in scientific thinking, but it has lead to pseudo-solutions of various problems concerning personality functioning and malfunctioning.

At this juncture we are concerned essentially with the forces that direct and regulate children's behavior when they move beyond their families and homes. Although their parents will continue to provide guidance and delimitation for many years to come, they can no longer be with their children to serve as omnipresent counselors and protectors. It is clear that in order to function effectively outside their families children need to have gained the capacities to delay, moderate, or rescind the gratification

of drives, impulses, and wishes and have learned the essentials of socialization; they must also have learned many basic techniques of adaptation, including a mastery of the fundamentals of language, and have internalized many parental directives and standards. Although they have been in conflict over the need to control erogenous longings for parents, the impact of sexual drives has not as yet subjected children to their imperious—or infernal—demands. The Structural theory is a highly useful way of symbolizing these various sets of influences that enter into self-direction. We can avoid the reification of the constructs of id, ego, and superego[4] that has so befuddled the psychoanalytic literature by speaking rather of id impulses, ego functions, and superego directives.

Id impulses, then, concern the influences of the basic drives produced by-tissue tensions and serve to assure that the body's homeostatic needs, the sexual drives vital to the continuity of the species, and the aggressive drives that are important for self-defense will receive proper attention.

The tissue needs can be denied only with extreme difficulty, and ignoring them can lead to death. Still, it is possible to starve to death even among plenty for ideological reasons. However, the major concern of psychodynamic theory is with the sexual and aggressive drives which can be denied and displaced, and require delimitation and channeling lest they interfere with interpersonal relationships and the social systems that are essential for human existence. The child, as we have noted, has learned to delay the satisfaction of tissue drives such as hunger and thirst in accordance with the demands of reality and in order to gain parental approbation. Libidinal and aggressive desires and impulsions have also been repressed in varying degrees according to the standards of the culture and the parents.[5] Id impulses are obviously of vital importance but socialization depends upon their control and proper channelling.[6] Freud made us aware of how greatly our behavior and thought are influenced by sexual and aggressive drives even when impulses are controlled and kept out of our conscious awareness.

The *ego functions* have to do with self-direction, we may say with a person's capacities to direct the self into the future; we have been tracing the emergence of such capacities in children as they differentiate from their mothers, develop language, learn to understand the world about them, gain skills, and take on ways of parental-figures through identifying with them. Ego functioning depends very much upon the organization of an internalized, symbolized version of reality, in which imaginative trials can be made without committing the self to the irrevocable consequences of action. Self-direction,

however, does not depend on reason or logic alone, and persons differ from one another, and in themselves from time to time, in how greatly passion sways, or in how current pleasure and future goals are balanced, or in how greatly parental or societal standards influence their behavior.

Children internalize some of their parents' ways as their own ways of living their lives—we may say, as part of their ego functioning—and in the process take on some societal directives. Some parental directives, however, are taken as a reference system of what behavior is prescribed, permitted, or proscribed, which we term the *superego directives.* That is, some behavioral standards are internalized as part of a person's basic ways of thinking, and some continue to be experienced as externally imposed standards to which a person conforms in order to remain at peace with the self, very much as the child had conformed with parental wishes and edicts. Superego directives are very much like the conscience but include positive as well as negative sanctions. Everyone probably conceptualizes and feels that certain parental and cultural ethical influences are added to one's own standards. Somehow, they do not seem to be quite fully incorporated into the self.

Many superego directives are unconscious. Many parental standards and societal sanctions are simply accepted as the ways in which persons should behave and have never been thought about consciously. People tend to feel euphoric when they have adhered to a proper way of life and dysphoric when they have breached the accepted and approved, and they may become self-punitive when they behave contrary to their parents' or their own ethical standards but may have no realization of what has affected their sense of well-being.

Just what self-direction should be considered part of a person's ego functioning and what as superego controls may be difficult to conceptualize and may be simply an academic matter. Indeed, the balance shifts as children grow older, feel less need for parental approval, become less concerned with parental censure, and have developed values of their own. Some ego syntonic standards become more completely integrated into the core of the self (Loewald, 1962). However, the concept of superego controls reflects a basic attitude about self-regulation. Some principles continue to seem externally imposed and are regarded as reference systems that serve to guide actions and feelings, and all persons probably continue to imagine throughout their lives of what their parents would disapprove and what would cause them happiness, even when they decide to improve upon or negate their parental values.

The concept is very useful in work with patients, for it provides a simple means of symbolizing a major set of influences that enters into decision making and into feelings of self-esteem.[7]

Children followed parental directives and prohibitions from an early age; but as they become able to retain a stable image of absent parents, and they cease splitting parents into "good" and "bad" objects and maintain a more consistent concept of them, children also can more clearly direct themselves according to what they have learned will please or displease their parents. In the oedipal transition they take on the values as well as characteristics of parents with whom they identify.[8] Self-esteem rests greatly upon being someone whom a parent would love. Just as it is erroneous to think that the superego controls first appear at the age of five or six, it would be incorrect to believe that the child is now fully capable of self-regulation and that any shortcomings indicate a sociopathic future. Children may internalize parental directives but they remain extremely dependent upon parental standards of right and wrong, and still rely upon tangible adult authority. Their views are now less egocentric but they are still family centered. They lack judgment and tend to believe that rules are inherent parts of games or of life itself, and do not yet appreciate the more contractual nature of social behavior. God has ordained and the parents have taught what is right or wrong, and ethics are therefore likely to be considered in black and white terms. Such childhood rigor of evaluation is apt to continue into adult life. On the other side, they will first learn much of social values and particularly of peer-group values in the years ahead. Fortunately, time for consolidation and modification of the superego remains before the impact of puberty adds powerful new stresses.

Children also have realistic reasons to relinquish immediate gratifications. They have been learning that the pursuit of future objectives often requires renunciation of present pleasures. For instance, if a little boy insists on dawdling in his mother's bed in the morning, he will miss going with his friend to the store. But children have also learned to forgo many erotic and aggressive wishes because they will bring disapproval or punishment, and they have even learned to keep such thoughts from others. Now they are also keeping thoughts and feelings out of their own awareness because they provoke feelings of guilt, shame, or anxiety. The more definitive development of the superego directives at this phase of life also involves the children's realization that they will not necessarily continue to receive affection and protection as an ascribed right, but that it also depends upon achievement—in the sense of retaining affection by adhering to parental moral values. The balance between ascribed and

achieved approval will gain importance as children move beyond the family, as will be considered in the next chapter.

It is important to note that the term "ego ideal" has often been used as a synonym for "superego" in the psychoanalytic literature, but that it has also been given several other meanings, and thus just what "ego ideal" means in the literature depends upon the author and the context. One common and useful usage of ego ideal has been as the ideal image of what the child believes he or she should be, particularly in the form of the ideas the child forms of what the parents wish the child to be and to become. Children measure themselves by such standards and feel inadequate and perhaps depressed when they do not measure up to them. The ego ideal will usually contain large elements of the parent of the same sex whom the child wishes to resemble in order to become capable of gaining a love object like the parent of the opposite sex. Here again it becomes apparent that the organizing influences and the directive influences become confused when each parent negates the value of the spouse; or when they have conflicting values, standards, and ideals. A girl whose father was a philanderer and who frequently left his wife and child and whose mother was a conscientious wife and overly solicitous mother was caught between irreconcilable parents with very divergent values. She needed her mother, who Was the only person upon whom she could depend, and sought to be a conscientious student and fastidious little girl, and when her mother chastised her for masturbating, tried to suppress all sexual feelings. To satisfy her handsome and dapper father who made life seem carefree and easy, she fantasied becoming a woman like his attractive and sensuous mistress who seemed better able to hold him than her mother. Becoming a woman like mother seemed to have few advantages, and yet she needed her mother upon whom she could depend. Alternative and contradictory superegos formed that guided her into two different personality patterns, and eventually to an incipient dual personality.

UNCONSCIOUS MENTAL PROCESSES

An important aspect of children's increased organization concerns the sorting out of feelings, memories, perceptions, and ideas that are permitted to enter consciousness; that is, what children let themselves think about. They cannot tolerate the anxiety caused by ideas and feelings which are unacceptable to the internalized parental standards and which, if expressed, would either produce rebuff or rejection by the parents, or loss of self-esteem. It is safer not to permit temptation to arise than to

be in danger of giving way to it. Yet, much of the temptation arises from within, from longings to have sensuous relationships and from impulses to give vent to aggressive feelings, and from physiological drives that create tensions. Children can keep from recognizing the nature of these tensions or, having learned that such tensions are aroused by certain thoughts and perceptions, can keep such ideas from intruding. It is necessary to examine how this selection of what can enter consciousness occurs, and what happens to thoughts that are excluded.

The explorations of the unconscious processes have been a major achievement of psychoanalysis. Freud did not discover unconscious thought, but lie discovered the dynamic force of unconscious processes and their far-reaching consequences; and through the study of dreams, the neuroses, the associations of patients in psychoanalysis, and the meanings of slips of the tongue, etc., went far in unraveling one of the most difficult and diaphanous topics ever studied. However, it is essential to keep in mind that the workings of the "mind" still present very much of a challenge, and many questions remain unanswered, if not, indeed, unasked.

In following children's cognitive development and the progress of their linguistic abilities we have, for the most part, been examining the conscious processes concerned with problem solving and adaptation to the environment. We have, however, considered the development of fantasy and the problems that arise because of the child's difficulties in differentiating between reality and fantasy. Much of the child's mental activities are carried out in the service of the *pleasure principle*—in seeking gratification more than in coping with reality—and in gaining pleasure in fantasy when reality requires renunciation. Sometime around the age of five or six much of the fantasy is recognized as unacceptable to others, and even to the self, as it runs counter to superego dictates. Much of the oral, anal, oedipal, and aggressive fantasies are shut out and pushed down into the unconscious. We say that they are *repressed,* a term we have used before, but which we shall now examine.

Origins of Unconscious Processes

Actually, from what we can determine, the oedipal child and young school child does not repress very effectively at first. Some of the forbidden material and fantasies are not unconscious but kept in separate compartments, so to speak, dissociated from everyday activities. They are permitted to emerge

under fairly specific circumstances, such as when a little boy of seven is falling asleep and playing with his genitals he can have fantasies of seeing his mother undressed and putting his face against her breast. Another boy, while sitting on the toilet, has elaborate fantasies of an anal-sadistic and aggressive nature in which he imagines himself a superman bombing cities, visualizing the destruction of many little children each time his feces fall into the toilet. Such fantasies become more and more difficult to recall, and may eventually become "unconscious fantasies" that transpire automatically and cannot be recalled. Individuals may become aware retrospectively that time has passed during which they do not know what they were thinking. However, in psychoanalysis, many adults realize that fantasies have persisted in isolation since childhood. A woman who hated her husband but still gained much orgasmic pleasure from intercourse with him, realized that during intercourse she habitually fantasied sitting on an older man's lap and being masturbated—which she eventually traced to early childhood fantasies about her father.

Psychoanalytically oriented play therapy with children also indicates that many of their forbidden wishes and ideas have relatively simple access to consciousness. A six-year-old boy who started to stammer severely after a baby sister was born was watched playing with a family of dolls. He placed a baby doll in a crib next to the parent dolls' bed, and then had a boy doll come and throw the baby to the floor, beat it, and throw it into a corner. He then put the boy doll into the crib. In a subsequent session he had the father doll pummel the mother doll's abdomen, saying "No, no!" At this period of childhood, even though certain unacceptable ideas cannot be talked about, they are still not definitely repressed. Indeed, even in adult life what can enter consciousness varies with the circumstances. Death wishes for a boss who has refused a raise are permitted, but they create guilt and are repressed when the boss becomes ill and may die. Sexual thoughts and even practices are permitted with a call girl that cannot occur with a wife. Superego standards vary with time and place and so does the division between what can be conscious and what must not be.

One reason why unacceptable ideas can remain isolated, and can emerge in play and still not be clearly conscious, is that many of little children's sensuous feelings, desires, and thoughts, as well as their primitive hostile feelings, originated before language was well developed and they were never properly linked up with words; and some were never precise or in a form that could be communicated. Consciousness is related to verbal symbolization if not dependent upon it. There are no simple words for

many of the diffuse ideas and fantasies that the child has felt, or symbolized visually, and they are not a topic for discussion by elders or with elders.[9] They remain very much of a private world, and are thought about in an amorphous combination of feeling states and mental images.

As children grow older they become more aware of which thoughts and impulses are acceptable. Very dependent on the protection and care of parents and other significant figures, children also become more sensitive to the possibility of losing them. Few children can reach the age of five or six without having experienced unbearable feelings of anxiety when parents have left, or the equally terrible depressed feelings that accompany their absence for a prolonged period. Efforts to avoid repetition of such feelings become fundamental motivations in a child's life. Superego directives help children seek to maintain themselves as persons whom the parents will want and will not abandon, and still later as persons who are satisfied with themselves and therefore can feel good. Such efforts require control of id impulses and of hostile feelings toward loved ones, and paradoxically, also finding ways of keeping out of consciousness awareness of parental behavior or traits that would make them less desirable, less protective, or less dependable—as, for example, recognition that Father might not come back after one of the weekends he spends in another house with some woman other than Mother.

Children have been developing ways of maintaining their equilibrium and avoiding distress by disregarding reality or by altering their perceptions of it; these include ways of keeping id impulsions from becoming conscious. These ways are termed the *mental mechanisms of defense* against experiencing anxiety, and stated symbolically, help the "ego" to satisfy superego injunctions and withstand id impulses for immediate and unacceptable gratification. In the context of the physiological homeostasis of the organism, these mental mechanisms also protect the individual from the physiological impact of anxiety and depression which can have deleterious effects upon the body's functioning (see Chapter 20). There are many different mechanisms of defense that influence thought, behavior, and character formation, as we shall consider later in the chapter.

With the aid of various mental mechanisms of defense, various thoughts, impulses, and feelings that conflict with superego standards are banned from consciousness. Unconscious material cannot regain access to consciousness under ordinary conditions because defenses block associational pathways to it, or assimilation to schemata does not occur consciously; or, as we might put it in computer terms, the

material "is programmed out." The material or the impulses are not extinguished but merely contained, shunted aside, or, sometimes, altered to more acceptable form. Thus sidetracked, the unconscious processes and materials do not enter directly into decision-making functions or reasoning, but they continue in a more primitive, nonverbal type of activity that can exert potent influences upon conscious thought and behavior. The unconscious processes exert their influence in disguised and roundabout ways in order to assert the demands of the body's drives, the desires for sensuous gratification, or the pressures of aggressive feelings. The analogy can be made to a subversive organization that goes "underground" when it is banned by the government. It awaits and ferrets out opportunities to assert itself and influence the governmental procedures in hidden ways. It often utilizes individuals and organizations that do not even know that they are being used. Just as the government pays the price of not knowing what goes on beneath the calm surface, individuals do not know what is festering in them unconsciously. If repression in the service of a rigid or harsh superego is extreme and permits little pleasure or satisfaction of the body's needs, the unconscious strivings may upset the equilibrium. Inexplicable irrational behavior erupts or ego functioning gives way to dissociated experiences or even to disorganized behavior.

The unconscious mental processes, then, do not generally serve reality testing and adaptation to social living, but *largely* the libidinal and aggressive drives that are unacceptable because they run counter to superego injunctions. They gain force from an individual's need for sexual outlets or for giving vent to unbearable feelings of hostility and aggression, and, in less demanding form from the intense desires to regain the sensuous gratifications and care of childhood that are denied to the older child and adult. Having renounced such impulses and desires, a person can no longer control their unconscious derivatives and the uses they make of perception and memories. The person is not free of them, for through influencing dreams, fantasies, and trends of associations, the unconscious processes often gain the upper hand. They may, so to speak, remain anonymous, but at the price of becoming the power behind the throne—that is, the person's thoughts and activities are influenced by, or even controlled by, the forbidden, but in a disguised form.

CONSCIOUS, PRECONSCIOUS, AND UNCONSCIOUS MENTATION

The mind, according to psychoanalytic psychology, is divided into three layers: the *conscious,*

preconscious, and *unconscious.* The preconscious, however, consists of material that is not repressed and has ready access to consciousness but simply is not in focus, or the subject of attention at the moment. The conscious is limited to material which is being consciously thought about at the moment. The preconscious is not dormant but carries out activities in a fashion very much like that used by the unconscious, as will be explained presently.[10] Psychoanalytic psychology has been largely concerned with the dynamic unconscious—that is, the material that is denied access to consciousness. There are other sources of unconscious material. Ideas and ways of behaving that are inherent in the family or to the culture may be unconscious in that the individual never has reason to question them or even think about them. Egocentricity means, in a sense, unawareness that there are other, different ways of thinking or perceiving. Many of the unexpressed foundations of our belief systems and our way of life are unconscious.[11]

The Primary and Secondary Mental Processes

Freud designated the type of thinking that transpires unconsciously as the *primary process,* contrasting it with the *secondary process* thinking that is reality-oriented and seeks to regulate behavior in terms of the future welfare of the individual. The primary process has been studied largely in terms of dream processes, which may well differ from the primary process that goes on constantly during waking states. Freud tended to consider the primary process a forerunner of the secondary process. Secondary process rational thinking is a verbalization and syntactical organization of the diffuse primary process in accord with the demands of the superego directives and reality testing. However, it seems likely that the two types of thought processes which subserve different functions are carried out differently and that the secondary process does not simply reorganize more primitive material.[12] Transitional forms between the primary and secondary-process are found in fantasies, semiwaking states, and in children's play.

Dreams are composed primarily of visual images. The *manifest dream* may derive from visual impressions of the preceding day and the associations they have unconsciously evoked translated into visual symbols. Thus, a female college student who has been rather promiscuous, dreams of a young man she saw on the campus for the first time and thought attractive. In the dream she is lost in the country with him in an old auto. A sign points to her hometown fifteen miles in the direction opposite to that in which she is driving. The dream is somewhat akin to a charade, but the meaning is masked from the

dreamer. As Freud showed in his study of dreams, it expresses a wish. She is on a date with the man who attracted her, and this is symbolized by driving with him in a car. The car also conveys much more; for, when asked to give her associations to various elements of the dream, she recalls that it is a car her family owned five years previously in which she first had sexual relations. She is lost in the country. She associates ideas of being a lost woman because of her promiscuity. She is fifteen miles from home. She had confided to a friend on the preceding day that she had had sexual intercourse with fourteen different men: the fantasy concerns a fifteenth. She is, so to speak, fifteen men away from home, and going further away. She is driving. She is the seducer rather than the seduced, a factor which introduces her wishes to dominate men. There is an element of anxiety about being lost in the dream. It involves her sexual drives and aggression that have led her to run away from home symbolically. These are her primary associations, and it is apparent that each trend can be followed further, and in this respect the dream symbolizes a great many past experiences, current wishes, and problems that converge in this brief dream fragment.

The young woman's dream has expressed a great deal, but much concerns matters that she prefers not to think about and motivations which she has hidden from herself. It condenses a wish for intimacy with a specific man, but it also includes residua from previous sexual experiences. It condenses time, for it mingles elements of experiences that took place five years earlier with a depiction of her current wish. Similarly, places are symbolic rather than actual; she could not go on a date with the young man fifteen miles from home, as she is at college two thousand miles from home. Such apparent contradictions are not contradictory, for we see that morally she feels she is fifteen miles from home. The wish may also arouse anxiety, for its fulfillment is not only counter to her superego but she feels it would further separate her from her parents. The manifest content of the dream, which consists simply of her driving in a car with an attractive young man, neither runs counter to superego dictates nor creates anxiety; but the latent content—that is, the associated material symbolized in the dream—contains many disturbing elements. In order to express all of the material symbolized in the dream, the young woman would have had to tell herself a lengthy story about her life and desires, and it would have to have contained the contradictions and irrationalities that constitute so much of human behavior but are difficult to express in language. We may assume that even though the latent content had been hidden from consciousness it might have influenced her behavior, or indicated that she was in the process of reassessing her behavior—for she

had just decided to seek psychotherapy because of her concerns over her increasing promiscuity.

Attributes of Primary Process Mentation

The study of unconscious or primary process mentation is a complex matter and highly conjectural.[13] We must be content here to note some of the salient aspects of dreaming, and then to examine some of the effects of unconscious processes on behavior. The dream we have just examined briefly contained the following characteristics: thinking is carried out largely in visual symbols; the manifest content disguises and symbolizes a multitude of associations; it condenses many feelings and experiences and displaces ideas and feelings from one experience to another; it is timeless in the sense that old experiences have the same intensity as recent ones and connect to current experiences across time; opposites do not necessarily contradict but express a similarity between the apparent contradictions. The dream is also overdetermined; that is, the convergence of many related feelings and associations determines the actual manifest content of the dream.

It is not known how much of the dream is organized during waking hours at the time some passing thought or perception is repressed and then unrolls during the night when conscious censorship is in abeyance, and how much is composed during sleep.[14] For example, the young woman's dream may be composed largely of repressed associations that unconsciously went on at the time when she saw the attractive man and a fleeting thought of trying to meet him and seduce him was repressed.

Unconscious Processes and Behavior

Let us examine another example which can illustrate something of the influence of unconscious mentation upon behavior. A medical student becomes acutely anxious during a physiology seminar and feels forced to leave. While crossing a bridge on his way home he fears that he might throw himself off of it. His anxiety increases and he hastens to the university psychiatrist, who manages to see him immediately. When he relaxes in the psychiatrist's office and tries to remember just what had been happening when he became so apprehensive in the seminar, he recalls that he had been looking at a fold in his trousers. The position of the fold led him to fantasy that he had a very large penis, and he went on to daydream of future sexual conquests. Then, with a shift in his position, the fold disappeared and the

anxiety started. The trivial occurrence assumed importance because of the student's particular life situation. He had been crippled in early childhood and used crutches. He had been engaged to marry but his fiancée had died during the preceding year. Because of his disability he found it difficult to form intimate relationships with girls, and he had felt very lonely and sexually frustrated since the death of his fiancée. He recognized that his feelings of physical inadequacy included concerns that his penis might be too small. The immediate reasons for the onset of the attack of anxiety when the fold in his trousers collapsed had been clarified, but in the next visit the student recalled a related episode that will serve to illustrate the workings of unconscious processes.

The incident that disturbed him had occurred a few months earlier while he was spending a weekend on a farm where he had previously vacationed on several occasions. While walking along a quiet road he had a transient vision, almost hallucinatory, of a bear coming out of the woods and menacing him. He fantasied defending himself with a crutch. When asked to give his associations to the occurrence without censoring them, he recalled that after his fiancée died he had spent a few weeks at this farm; and finding one of her handkerchiefs in his pocket he had, in a sentimental gesture, buried it precisely at the spot where he later had the vision of the bear. The psychiatrist, noting a similarity in the student's pronunciation of "bear" and "buried," simply commented that it seemed as though the buried had returned. The student then told of his despair after his girl's death, and thought perhaps he had tried to overcome his grief by burying the handkerchief. He then felt impelled to speak of another incident, even though he did not know why. It was about his last date with his fiancée. They had gone to dine in a Russian restaurant which, he suddenly remembered, displayed a Russian *bear* on its sign. After they had sat down, his friend had complained of a headache and he went out and bought her some Bayer aspirin. After dinner they had gone to the girl's apartment, petted, and he had been *embarrassed* by the extent of her passion; as the psychiatrist suggested, *embarrassed* at being "bare-assed." The student went on to tell how they had undressed completely for the first time and he had been embarrassed by his deformity. Although a great deal more emerged, including concerns that his paralysis had been a punishment for masturbation, and that his girl had become ill because of their sexual activities, the material conveys how a series of associations about a bear—Russian bear, Bayer aspirin, embarrassed, bare-assed, buried—had unconsciously been organized and reappeared as a single symbol of a threatening bear; a symbol which the reader may be able to grasp stood for an entire sequence of

painful memories and which related to his current loneliness and deprivation, as well as to the feelings of genital inadequacy that had triggered his anxiety attack.

In the above illustration, one might consider that there is a type of logic in the associations that converged in the bear symbol. It had to do with connecting up a series of episodes about which the student felt guilt and for which he may have felt that he required punishment. He had tended to exclude these painful memories of his fiancée from his consciousness, but they clearly had been troubling him, and they became associated with the feelings of physical and sexual inadequacy that he had momentarily sought to resolve through fantasy during his seminar.

Preconscious Primary Process Thinking

The material that is subjected to primary process thinking may not be repressed but may be simply preconscious—that is, out of the focus of consciousness. Thus, a student who was reading Freud for the first time became convinced of the importance of unconscious mental activity by two episodes that happened in rapid succession while he was reading about unconscious determinants of behavior. Following an example in the book (Freud, 1901), he asked his roommate to say the first number that came to mind. He wished to see whether he could learn why his friend had selected that particular number. The roommate promptly said, "Forty-three," but insisted that he could offer no ideas why he had made this random selection. The student of Freud, however, said that he believed he could follow the reasons and wondered whether his roommate had actually had the thoughts he now attributed to him. He reminded his friend that half an hour earlier, the last time they had spoken, he had told his roommate that he had just mailed a dollar bill to a friend to whom he had lost a seventy-five-cent bet on a football game. Had his roommate not thought, "Why are you sending a dollar, four quarters instead of the three that you owe him?" His surmise was correct, for his roommate had thought just that. The second episode that impressed the student occurred a few minutes later. His roommate had asked him to check a letter he had written to a book dealer in Germany with whom he was having a dispute over a bill. He had found his roommate's German letter grammatically correct except for the closing phrase. His roommate had intended to write *"Hoch Achtungsvoll,"* meaning "(with) great respect," but inadvertently had written *"Hoch Verachtungsvoll,"* or "(with) great contempt," which of course came closer to expressing his actual feelings.

Primary process mental activity is not pathological or even less useful than the secondary process. It not only helps assure attention to basic needs by transmitting drives to the thought processes, but we are dependent upon such unconscious and preconscious types of thinking for much of our creativity. If persons cannot trust their unconscious, they can have little spontaneity, intuition, or empathy. Not only does artistic creativity rely heavily upon primary process organization,[15] but problem solving can also occur without conscious awareness. Thus, the mathematician Poincare (1956) described how he resolved problems concerning Fuchsian functions that had defied his conscious abilities only after he had ceased trying. The answer came into his mind when he awoke in the morning; and subsequently another aspect resolved itself, so to speak, just as he was stepping onto a streetcar and was no longer consciously thinking of the problem. Awareness of problems can emerge in dreams in symbolic form, and answers to intellectual problems sometimes appear.[16] Some matters, such as with whom one falls in love, depend upon decisions that include factors that never even enter consciousness, as will be elucidated when we consider marital choice (Chapter 13).

The child relies upon primary process thinking far more than the adult, and the differentiation between the primary and secondary processes is not as yet so clearly drawn. Children are more intuitive in their likes and dislikes, more spontaneous in their decision making, and closer to their infantile experiences. The closing of the oedipal period does not suddenly block off access to ideas and feelings that are more clearly drive derivatives. As children grow older, just what material must be denied access to consciousness depends upon the nature of the superego injunctions and also upon the need to repress or exclude impulses that interfere with adaptive tasks. The screening or censorship occurs unconsciously and employs the various mechanisms of defense. Just how this sorting out occurs cannot be answered properly, but what answers can be given require consideration of the mental mechanisms of defense.

ANXIETY AND THE MECHANISM OF DEFENSE

Children experience anxiety and depressive feelings which are extremely unpleasant. They seek means of preventing the recurrence of such feelings. Anxiety and depression both contain physiological components. Alterations in bodily function that accompany anxiety or depression serve as warning signals. For example, the slight speeding of the heart or the tightening of muscles that accompanies fear or anxiety unconsciously becomes a signal. The warning signal throws a switch, so to speak, and

unconsciously one or more mechanisms of defense are brought into operation that serve to alter the perception of the danger or block out some temptation. When the warning signals an external danger, the person becomes alert and may take measures to counter the danger. Properly speaking, an external danger evokes fear, not anxiety.[17] However, as so much of anxiety derives from internal danger—that is, from the danger that the person will give way to a forbidden desire—many defenses serve to block out awareness of the impulse, memory, or potentially dangerous train of associations. The use of a fragment of the physiological effects of anxiety as a warning is termed "signal anxiety." It takes effect without conscious awareness, and to some extent it is a matter of conditioning.

The mechanisms of defense are varied: some block out memories of disturbing experiences; some prevent the linkage of memories or experiences that would become disturbing if connected; some prevent emotions from linking with experience; some alter the perception of a drive or wish; some transform the drive into a form more acceptable to the superego (A. Freud, 1936). Certain mechanisms of defense are more common in childhood than other, more sophisticated defenses. An examination of some of the more significant mechanisms will serve to illustrate how profoundly they can affect thought, behavior, and personality development.

Repression, by which a drive or forbidden impulse is barred from consciousness, has already been discussed. It includes the barring or banishment of memories, perceptions, or feelings that would arouse the forbidden. Thus, in order to prevent rearousal of some childhood sexual experience or the discomfort of remembering sexual desires for a parent, the entire period of early childhood may be repressed. Repression is unconscious in contrast to suppression, which concerns conscious efforts to keep memories or feelings from intruding. Repression has been considered a central mechanism of defense and, in a sense, the cause of the "dynamic unconscious," which theoretically is composed of repressed materials. Repression often requires the collaboration of other defenses to maintain its effectiveness.

Isolation is another basic defense that we have noted in connection with the separation of childhood fantasies from the remainder of consciousness. Material may be available in consciousness but it does not become linked up with other associations, at least not with material that would arouse anxiety. Thus, in the story of the young man, the memory of burying the handkerchief had not been repressed, but it had been isolated from memories of other experiences that would have brought painful memories of

his last evening with his fiancée. It is not always clear whether something has been isolated or repressed.

Regression has also been noted. It can be considered a mechanism of defense in which the child falls back to an earlier phase of development at which he or she felt secure—in particular, secure in being cared for and having others assume responsibility for the child. Some use of regression is a normal aspect of development—the falling back to regain security after overreaching for greater independence. It starts very early in life and is a major childhood adaptive technique. It can be anticipated in all persons who become physically ill and are no longer capable of taking care of themselves. It is almost a necessary accompaniment of placing oneself in the hands of a physician, and therefore it is important that all physicians recognize the phenomenon of regression and take it into account in caring for patients. Sick persons can readily be misjudged, for they are often more childish, petulant, demanding, than when well. Further, regression is so tempting and so thoroughly patterned in childhood that many patients try to counter their tendencies to regress by refusing to become properly dependent when ill; and, conversely, an inability to overcome such regressions and again face the problems of living often complicates recovery . Regression to childhood stages of development is a major source of psychopathology.

Fantasy formation has already been adequately discussed as a major adaptive mechanism and defense of childhood. Creative fantasy is usually an asset and may prepare the child for future reality-oriented behavior as well as dull the pain of reality. Of course, some children will turn their backs on reality to a degree that interferes with adaptation. When it becomes a strong mechanism of defense, fantasy is accompanied by isolation.

Sublimation is often considered to be a more sophisticated defense. The original meaning was borrowed from chemistry—the transformation of a solid into a gas without its going through a liquid state —and connoted the unconscious alteration of a drive into something more sublime such as poesy. However, it now has a much broader connotation. Sublimation is an essential part of a child's development. The child redirects drives and wishes into more acceptable channels but still has some outlet for them, as when aggression toward a sibling is transmuted into hammering on a toy, or when a wish to smear feces finds an outlet in finger painting. One might even say that a prizefighter who recognized in therapy that he had sworn as a child to beat his father to a pulp, had sublimated his

aggression into a socially acceptable channel. Since the advent of psychoanalytic ego psychology the term *neutralization* has become important. It concerns the neutralization of a libidinal or aggressive charge with some counterenergy, thus permitting it to be used in the service of adaptation or intellectual functioning. The term bears a close relationship to sublimation. The concept of neutralization is useful and necessary only to those psychologists who are conceptualizing vicissitudes of libidinal energies. The cathexis of libido is neutralized by a *countercathexis,* and is then free for use for more constructive purposes.

Denial simply refers to the ability to deny the existence of something disturbing, such as one's own anger or sexual feelings. Children may insist that they are *not* angry, and we hare noted the tendency and ability of a little boy to deny that creatures without penises exist. Most commonly it is a denial of one's own responsibility with *projection* of blame onto a parent or another child. *Reaction formation* may accompany denial: an unacceptable feeling is turned into its opposite. The jealousy and hate of the newborn sibling may be *denied, undone,* and turned into its opposite. Reaction formation is apparent in individuals who turn anal impulses into overtidiness or scrupulous cleanliness.

Projection and *introjection* are defenses that are particularly important in personality development and character formation. Projection concerns the attribution to another of one's own impulses or wishes. A little boy, for example, cannot accept or tolerate his feelings of hostility for a brother but instead believes that the brother is hostile to him. The defense is related to the physiological efforts to rid the body of something harmful as by vomiting or defecating—and, indeed, vomiting can symbolically represent efforts to be rid of an unacceptable feeling or wish. Projection is a complicated defense that enters into much of psychopathology and cannot be discussed adequately here.[18] The following is a clear-cut example of psychotic projection. A young soldier kept hearing a voice threatening "I'll kill you." At times he believed that a specific friend was threatening him. In therapy he recalled that he had started hearing the voice when his "buddy " had left him and become pals with another youth. Then his own inner voice had said, "Say I'm your best friend or I'll kill you." His homicidal impulse was untenable to him, and the threat was turned against himself by projection and the friend he wished to threaten seemed to become the one who did the threatening.

Introjection, which is related to identification, has more to do with the defense against

disillusionment in a needed person. Children not only need their parents but need good parents. They may blame themselves, or attribute to themselves a parental trait, in order to preserve the worth of the needed love object, or object of his identification. In simplified terms, the child says, "It is not his fault, Father is not bad; I am." Or it may go, "They are not hostile to me, they do not take care of me because I am hostile to them, or because I am worthless."

Personality Constriction

There are many other mechanisms of defense, some of which will be presented in specific contexts in later chapters. It is important, however, to note the more sweeping result of overstrict superego controls. The rigid restrictions imposed on a child by parents can become self-delimitations that require *constriction* of the personality and many defenses to maintain. The restrictions lead the child to *constrict* thoughts, feelings, activities in order to continue to feel desirable. Such children may be very good, overly good, but their inner lives become impoverished. The constriction usually occurs gradually and unconsciously. Children may grow up in homes in which parents believe that such overconformity and denial of impulses are the only proper way. However, occasionally constriction is more or less purposeful and seems the only means of preserving equilibrium and equanimity. Thus, a college girl who had grown up in a seriously disturbed home in which her parents were in constant discord, and whose only sibling had become psychotic, appeared to be reasonably well adjusted. However, she had given up haring many friends, used few of her assets, and consciously strove to maintain acceptable relationships with both of her parents. She had taught herself not to think about her feelings toward her parents as well as never to express them, and indeed she had learned never to think back and recall disturbing events that had occurred during the day. She had learned that she could not tolerate having feelings, for they were almost always painful, nor could she have memories that would be certain to arouse hostility or despair. She maintained her emotional equilibrium but at the price of a relatively impoverished personality.

Mechanisms of Defense and Distortions of Perception

The various mechanisms of defense which we have been discussing may seem very complicated and beyond the capacities of a small child. In some respects we have outdistanced our slowly developing children in seeking to describe the organization of their personalities. Still, four-or five-year-olds

commonly experience considerable anxiety, particularly at night, when wolves and tigers invade their dreams and projected hostilities harrow their fantasies. These problems are within the child who requires mental mechanisms to counter them. The various defenses help the child to maintain equanimity and prevent the intrusion of forbidden, unacceptable, or otherwise disturbing impulses and ideas into consciousness. In the process they limit and distort the perception of reality. They change the view of the self, of motives, and of the significant others, and thereby can create difficulties in adaptation. However, some degree of self-deception is probably necessary for survival. As Goethe reputedly wrote, "who destroys illusion in himself and in others, nature punishes tyrannically." As the same defenses or combinations of defenses tend to be used repeatedly by the same person, the defenses contribute to determining personality types and character. Whereas they help provide stability, they also create problems and foster some degree of neurotic behavior in everyone.

We have been reviewing how children's personalities became organized within the shelter of their families, and have been considering constructs useful in discussing personality functioning. Now children are about to enter school; new important influences will enter into shaping their personalities, and they will build upon structures already organized within the family. Children's abilities to function in new environments and the ways in which they will utilize what they encounter depend upon the emotional security and the intellectual equipment they have gained in the home. Although their parents will still provide, guide, and remain major formative influences for many rears, children have by now become sufficiently well integrated to emerge into less sheltered environments and expand their horizons. They have achieved something of a self-concept (Mead, 1934) through reacting to and internalizing the attitudes of family members to each of them, but such concepts of the self are limited because they derive largely from interactions with parents in intrafamilial situations. Ego functions have developed along with linguistic and cognitive growth; and they have gained sufficient experience to begin to appreciate that others have somewhat different ways, including ways of understanding and believing, that must be taken into account in relating to others. They have completed their primary socialization and can control or contain wishes for sensuous gratification and outbursts of aggressivity. They are helped by their internalizations of parental standards and dictates which guide them when parents are not about, and by their identifications with parents. Concomitantly, cognitive and emotional development has been channeled into appreciation of what they can consciously perceive, recall, and

think about—in part in order to maintain parental approbation and their own self-esteem, and in part because the language and the parents have conveyed what is taboo, what is inconsequential, what can be noted, and what it is vital to perceive.

The psychoanalytic "structural concept," which divides the personality into id, ego, and superego; the "topographic concept," which divides mental functioning into conscious, preconscious, and unconscious processes; and a presentation of various mental mechanisms of defense have been utilized in modified form to summarize the integrative processes. These concepts contain various shortcomings, whether they are presented in classical form or as modified in this chapter,[19] but they provide useful constructs for conceptualizing and discussing the inordinately complex process of integration; and the literature on personality development and functioning is scarcely intelligible unless the reader is familiar with them.

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Notes

1 Piaget (1962) notes that many subsequent interpersonal relationships will be assimilated to the schemata established in adaptation to the parents, particularly the affective schemata of interpersonal relationships. The transference relationships discussed in Chap. 21 rest on such foundations.

2 Freud considered the pleasure principle a major directive in development and behavior. The organism is motivated to seek pleasure and avoid unpleasure (Unlust). Pleasure was, at times, equated with tension reduction, and tension—such as that created by "uncathected libido"—was equated with unpleasure. However, Freud also recognized that some pleasure was not simply the reduction of tension. The id seeks to follow the "pleasure principle," but the ego must modify its strivings in keeping with the demands of the superego and reality, or the "reality principle," for purposes of adaptation.

3 As noted briefly in the Preface, considerable confusion entered psychoanalytic theory when Freud sought to replace his "Topographic" concept of the mind; that is, the division into Unconscious, Preconscious, and Conscious realms (which will be considered later in the chapter) with his structural concept. In so doing he endowed the id with virtually all of the attributes he had previously given to the Unconscious. The Structural and Topographic concepts, if not taken literally, do not conflict, for the

Structural theory is a way of conceptualizing the personality in a useful, simplified manner, and the Topographic theory is a useful concept of certain characteristics of the mind or mental process.

4 Attempts to define these constructs very precisely and to allocate just what should be included under each, rather than utilizing them as useful terms, leads to confusion rather than precision. Rapaport (1960), who was one of the most scholarly, knowledgeable, and brilliant students of psychoanalytic theories, finally stated that the concepts were not indispensable to psychoanalytic theory and gave up his efforts to clarify the theoretic confusions involved in their usage.

5 In some societies, as among the headhunters of New Guinea, the children are taught to be aggressively defensive at a very early age as is essential to their survival, but still it is aggression against enemies and not against fellow villagers that is condoned. The degree of sexual repression required also varies widely. Among some peoples, the young children masturbate openly and play at sexual intercourse, and in our society many parents seek to have the children refrain from masturbation only in public.

6 In classic theory, the libido or sexualized energy was often considered the source of all "psychic" energy—and in extreme forms of theory, the ultimate source of all motivation. T he untenable idea that such libido remained quantitatively constant, and that much of behavior and motivation was to be understood in terms of how quantities of this hypothesized energy were "cathected"—or invested in various parts of the body and in various objects (persons)—has been a major source of confusion in psychoanalytic theory.

7 Thus, the inability of a person to permit himself any sensuous gratification can be considered in terms of the ego's conformity to superego demands formed in terms of childhood perceptions of paternal prohibitions: some hallucinations can be understood as externalizations of threats from the superego for incipient infractions; certain depressive reactions are concerned with superego punishment—usually for hostile feelings and resentment toward significant persons.

8 Freud considered that the superego formed at the time of the resolution of the oedipal conflicts, at times as a precipitate of the oedipal situation, with the libidinal energy that had been invested in the parent of the opposite sex turned into the service of repression. Superego formation can be understood without resorting to such notions of shifts in libidinal energy.

9 In Piaget's terms affective schemata are not apt to be verbal schemata and new assimilations are made to them nonverbally. See also E. Schachtel, "Memory and Childhood Amnesia."

10 Freud, at least at times, considered that the preconscious mind used "secondary process" thinking. Indeed, the preconscious is often included when one is talking about the conscious mind. However, "preconscious thought" is usually very different from conscious thinking.

11 Another reason for maintaining material outside of conscious awareness requires mention even though it has received little if any attention in psychodynamic psychologies. As noted previously, each culture categorizes experiences differently. As experience tends to be continuous, what lies between these categories, between experiences and things that are recognized as entities and named—is kept from consciousness. Leach (1964) suggests that they are taboo; and as the separation of the self from the surrounding is particularly important, those substances that are ambiguously self and nonself or which have been self but become nonself, such as excreta, hair cuttings, semen, are particularly subject to taboo in most societies. The same reasoning can be applied to nursing and sexual relations that blur the boundaries between the self and another.

12 Freud also described the functioning of the id in terms of primary process activity. When he formulated the structural concept (that is, the division of the mind into id, ego, and superego), he shifted much of his conceptualization of the unconscious as a division of the mind to the id, and thereby started the current confusions between the topographical concept of the mind (that is, the division of the mind according to layers of consciousness) and the structural concept.

Piaget has presented a different conceptualization of unconscious processes and suggests a continuity between what Freud has termed

"primary" and "secondary" processes. His cogent critique of Freud's approach to cognitive matters warrants careful study (see Chapter 7 in *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*).

13 The reader is referred to Chapter 7 of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams and Lecture 10 in A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis. A different approach to the topic can be found in Chapter 7 of Piaget's Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood. Erich Fromm's The Forgotten Language presents still another approach to the understanding of dreams.

14 Currently, there are indications that dreaming is an essential physiological process, carried out largely during those periods of sleep when rapid eye movements are going on (REM sleep); and consistently depriving the sleeper of just this phase of sleep by awakening him when his eyeballs are moving causes emotional disturbances (Fisher, 1965; West et al., 1962).

15 Friedrich Schiller, in response to a friend's complaints of his (the friend's) lack of creativity, warned the friend that he would never be truly creative, rather than a critic, because he could not remove the guards at the gates of his consciousness.

16 I am, of course, not referring to the selection of race horse bets through the use of dream books, but rather to such things as Kekule's discovery of the formula for the benzene ring in a dream of two snakes each with the other's tail in his mouth.

17 Soldiers in combat properly experience fear. When they can no longer tolerate the situation—the fear, deprivation, hostility to officers, etc.—they may begin to wish to be finished with it, even by letting themselves get killed. The real danger is then within the self and a soldier becomes anxious, and may then experience heightened danger by "projecting" the inner danger on to the enemy.

18 The use of projection can also indicate that a person has failed to establish adequate "ego boundaries," and still is unclear about what originates within the self and what originates in others. A child who is close to the original symbiotic tie with the mother will be apt to blame her for what upsets the child or what goes wrong with what the child plans—and it is not particularly pathological in a child.

19 Three efforts to clarify psychoanalytic theory by leading psychoanalytic theoreticians serve to highlight the basic inconsistencies of psychoanalytic theory and the need for its thorough reorganization. See D. Rapaport (1960), M. M. Gill (1963), and J. Arlow and C. Brenner (1964).