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SARADINDU BANERJI

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CONTENTS

1. A Dictionary of Defense Mechanisms used in
Psychoanalysis and Life—by Harold Kenneth Fine 91
2. Adolescence : Psycho-Analytic Perspective
—by Saradindu Banerji 116

Volume 39

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Number 4

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A DICTIONARY OF DEFENSE MECHANISMS USED IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND LIFE

HAROLD KENNETH FINK

Defense mechanisms are so important in the understanding of the dynamics of human behavior and relationships, and, whereas they are so poorly treated in the standard textbooks of psychiatry and clinical psychology, it seems that the time is ripe for a comprehensive "dictionary" covering the most common of these methods of avoiding the truth about ourselves.

Defense mechanisms protect the ego from deflation and criticism, and offer an escape from an embarrassing situation such as being caught doing something wrong. Defenses help to reduce tension and frustration, and thereby partially and temporarily satisfy the demands of adjustment. These defenses are fascinating since they are: 1. So commonly used to avoid embarrassment. 2. Used by all of us at times, not just by neurotics and psychotics. 3. Most important, often used without our conscious awareness.

To defend the ego, we may deny that something is true. We may admit but make excuses for unacceptable behavior. (E. g., an alcoholic says he can't help "pawing" women at a party because he's drunk. (Fink, 195 , 1961) Being drunk is used as an excuse for his misbehavior and making a fool of himself. It takes a lot of courage to admit when we're wrong. Usually we try to avoid this and "weasel out" of a situation by the use of Rationalization, the most used defence.)

In a husband-wife or parent-child argument, neither individual wants to admit being wrong, prejudiced, or thinking foolishly. You

rarely hear someone say: "I guess I was wrong—You were right!" This single sentence would stop more verbal fights than any other technic, but requires a good deal of ego strength and inner security to state. During the argument the husband may realize he is wrong, but has gone too far in putting down his wife so he dares not back out now and lose face.

World leaders also find it difficult to back down on their statements and promises. Politicians feel that they cannot admit their errors for fear of losing the faith of their constituents. A politician may, therefore, continue with a losing point of view, promise, or proposed law, till he makes a fool of himself in the press.

Defense mechanisms reduce tension and satisfy drives, thus leading to some degree of adjustment. Since all of us have deficiencies, *defence is a universal phenomenon*. The individual may have physical inferiorities such as a delicate build, cerebral palsy, clumsiness, lameness or other handicaps, lack of skills and talents, be unable to compete in games, feel sexually inferior, homely, etc. He may also have mental lacks, believing that the rest of his family or his school-mates are smarter than he is. He may suffer from social inferiorities, being ridiculed for excessive shyness, be rigid and prudish as a result of overly severe discipline, have guilt about sexual fantasies and behavior, etc.

Inferiority results in a fear of facing life head on, which causes withdrawal and defenses. These defense mechanisms in time become deeply ingrained habits. Through these defenses, the individual assuages his feelings of inferiority and inadequacy. Inadequacy leads to an overassertion of alleged adequacy. The individual may be a loner, hypersensitive to criticism, gullible in that he readily buys flattery. He feels he must always win, taking competition too seriously. He may degrade others, putting them down in order to make himself feel more superior! Thus defenses are conscious or unconscious attempts to avoid facing the truth about ourselves.

Failures of defense mechanisms result in *decompensation*. Too great stress on an individual weakens his defense, causing personality disintegration, panic, and anxiety from the break-through of unconscious material, and may end in a psychotic break. (We have patients who, with the help of medication to calm them down or counteract their depressive moods, manage to get by OK for a while. But gradually

tension and frustration build up as environmental problems add up, till the individual reaches the breaking point and can no longer cope with everyday demands.) He needs a "breather"—a temporary respite from daily living—at a mental hospital, may be for only a few days, to "recharge his batteries" and get ready to face life's responsibilities again. (Contributing factors to these periodic breakdowns are: loss of spouse or boyfriend and the resultant lack of sexual satisfaction and escape; being unable to discipline adolescent children when the father has left the home through separation or divorce, problems of survival through welfare when the individual is incapable of holding a job for any length of time; inability to handle money, alcohol and drugs, etc.)

Defenses protect the self-image from more serious disturbances that might occur without their aid. Without these mechanisms, some individuals would be sicker, so these adjustments are somewhat helpful even though unrealistic and neurotic. (E. g., a fellow on the battlefield sees his buddy killed, causing him terrible guilt: "Why him, not me!" Amnesia for the incident protects him from his painful memory and guilt.)

The main Defense Mechanisms follow:

Adjustment Through Illness

A person may avoid the need to go to work and facing other duties by feigning illness. Or he may talk himself into *really* feeling ill! If he gets sick leave with pay, this only encourages this escape, since he sees no advantage in working!

Aim Inhibition

The individual puts a limit on instinctual demands and accepts a partial fulfilment of his needs. (E. g., instead of wishing for intercourse with a girl he has just met, the man settles for kisses and caresses, or seeks to start a platonic affair. The girl who wants to become a physician settles for becoming a nurse because of the high cost and difficulty in getting medical training.)

Atonement

The guilt-ridden person gains absolution or release from the

consequences of his antisocial acts through atonement and penance, usually some form of ritualistic behavior that he believes will neutralize his bad deeds. The Catholic Confessional can serve this purpose by allaying guilt and getting the individual to go forward with renewed confidence and the spiritual blessing of the Church.

Attention-Getting

Over-indulgent parents can create children who demand constant praise and attention. School and college place a high value on competition. Attention-getting mechanisms in the young child are: refusal to eat; bed-wetting; thumb-sucking; running away from home; complaints about injuries or sickness and accident-proneness; asking questions interminably (!); refusal to conform to the family's rules; etc. If the parents deny love to the child, he may even lie and steal to get attention, believing that it's *better to be separted than to be ignored!* Such an insecure child grows up to become an adult still seeking attention in the wrong way, now by silly behavior at parties, smart-a-leck treatment of women, etc.

Compensation

Failure becomes an intense drive for the person to keep trying in some particular activity. Compensation can be a substitute for achievement in a difficult task. The boy who is poor at school work wins praise for an unusual hobby. Compensation directs attention away from our lacks, and helps maintain status, self-respect and integrity.

In Compensation, the individual overemphasizes a trait because of a personal defect. Compensations may replace real achievements, directing notice away from the deficiency. (E. g., the bully feels physically inadequate, so he beats up weaker schoolmates.) Compensation can involve transfer from one activity to another: A student with limited intellect becomes the school's basketball ace! The individual may chose an unusual talent where there is little or no competition. Parents try to compensate through their children: The father, having always wanted to be a musician, pushes his son into music school.

Thus a person unsuccessful in one area makes up for this by excelling in another: The blind person develops acute sensitivity to

hearing and other senses. I have a deaf patient who has become an expert in reading lips. As long as I look directly at her and enunciate every word carefully, she can understand me almost as well as if she could hear my words. She can also sign but I have not yet learned to do this. If it bothers a person to be short, he can gain height by "Adler elevator shoes", which are made in America. The shy, aloof, friendless schoolgirl compensates by becoming a bookworm and a computer whiz, and ends up gaining prestige by becoming an A student!

Where there is a lack, the individual may make up for it in an exaggerated way: The psychoanalyst, Adler, noted that *nature tends to compensate to make up for a physical lack*. If one lung has been impaired by TB, the other lung compensates by greater effort and superior function. The poor bowler finds he can become a superior tennis player. A handicap may be attacked in an aggressive way (e.g., Demosthenes who stuttered, put pebbles in his mouth to create a more challenging and difficult enunciation exercise to combat).

Overcompensation

At one of the universities where I taught 40 years ago, one of my students told me about the daughter of a local fundamentalist preacher. According to her parents, almost everything pleasurable or interesting was viewed as sinful: the use of cosmetics and jewelry, movies, playing cards (even if not gambling), etc. Even rollerskating with a boy was dangerous, though I don't see how anything sexual could happen on a roller rink floor in front of all the other skaters! The child *overcompensated* by being as wild as she could outside her home in order to embarrass and punish her parents for their rigid Puritanical prudishness. She used heavy makeup, short skirts (new in those days), and was known as a "five dollar prostitute," who would do anything sexual for a boy for that amount! (In 40 years, inflation has certainly changed the basic price:) Without revealing what their daughter was up to, I spoke the parents, begging them to be more loving and lenient toward her to prevent her from becoming more rebellious and negativistic. My home visit was a waste of time: The parents were adamant and, in the name of religion, would not change their cold attitude toward their daughter (Fink, 1954).

I once took a Dale Carnegie course in public speaking, with the promise from the teacher that I would be able to teach it some day. A member of our class had an unrepaired "harelip" or split lip from birth, which affected his speech and appearance. He had guts to join the class where, every evening, all of us had to make a brief speech, either prepared or spontaneous. He was apparently *overcompensating* for his defect by doing something daring to defeat it!

Compromise Formation

Repressed, disturbing impulses may be modified enough to pass "censorship" in the unconscious, the modified form being called a Compromise Formation. The child in the Oedipal Complex who wants to sleep with his mother, settles for sitting on her lap periodically and being hugged and kissed.

Condensation

This is the compression of many ideas or feelings into an oversimplified form called Condensation, as frequently noticed in schizophrenics. Several unconscious elements or processes merge to form a single element which represents and hides all the elements combined. The merging can make the process more acceptable to the super-ego of the individual. In a dream, several individuals or experiences may be condensed into one individual or experience to camouflage the true meaning of the dream. A complex idea may be expressed by a word or phrase (e.g., the disgusted person, rather than shouting "I am fed up with this damn job and everyone in it!" may simply say "Shit!"). A simple slogan may win buyers for an ordinary product. An obscene word may cause a bar fight.

Convergence

Acceptance of an action that *conflicts with a belief* because the action is supported by more powerful considerations is called Convergence- (E. g., dispensing cigarettes from college or service machines is opposed to the health of the students or servicemen, but brings needed income to the college or Army.)

Conversion

Conversion is the basis of *psychosomatic illness* whereby psychological conflicts produce physical symptoms. Psychological problems are translated into somatic symptoms. The convenient headache allows the individual to postpone going to the dentist, or having sex when he is disinterested or afraid of it. In World War Two, we had patients at a Naval Hospital who had, in sea battle, developed paralyzed arms that prevented them from being able to load and fire ship canons. The violinist, afraid to face his first concert audience, may also find his arms temporarily paralyzed, *the unconscious coming to his rescue* through neuromotor change.

Deferment

Deferment is putting off the responsibility for an action till a later time, similar to Procrastination, q.v.

Delusions Of Grandeur

To be normal, a child or adult needs love and attention. The insecure child or adult may develop Delusions of Grandeur to overcome feelings of worthlessness. If the parents remain overly strict and unloving, the delusions may persist.

Denial

In Denial, the person turns his attention away from the traumatic situation, as if it didn't exist, to something benign and unthreatening. The individual simply ignores the problem, acting as if it didn't exist, as in the case of some alcoholics who will not admit they have a drinking problem (Fink, 1959, 1951). Many cigarette smokers believe that others—*not themselves*—might get cancer from smoking!

Devaluation

Devaluation is related to the Sour Grapes type of Rationalization (e.g., an unobtainable love object is devalued and thus becomes less of a loss and less desirable). In Retrospective or Retroactive Devaluation, the individual puts himself down for some alleged wrong he has done, thus attempting to atone verbally for his mistake.

Displacement

When feelings cannot be expressed toward one person, they may be expressed toward another individual (e.g., the man who gets scolded by his boss at work and dares not fight back for fear of losing his job, takes it out on his wife at home, without realizing that he is unconsciously getting back at his boss. He lets off steam on his innocent wife who becomes the scapegoat.) Thus Displacement is the transfer of an emotion produced in one situation (e.g., feelings toward one's father in childhood) to an unrelated person in adulthood (e.g., to one's spouse, boss, teacher, or analyst!). This is the same as Freud's classic concept of the *transference*. The defensive nature of the transference is that it is safe, since the individual is unaware of the real source of his anger or love.

Dissociation

As the result of a painful or traumatic experience, mental elements split off from the conscious mind, becoming deeply repressed. Feelings may be dissociated from a concept or experience. The concept can remain conscious, but the feeling becomes buried in the unconscious. (E.g., the schizophrenic may laugh at the news of his mother's death, or smile in situations where you'd expect him to be upset, angry, or frightened. His mind is elsewhere, not on the topic you are discussing!)

In *Multiple Personality*, Dissociation occurs of large parts of the personality which become *isolated entities* in their own right. As recorded in the psychiatric literature, the personality can split into a dozen or so personalities, but at least one of these does not know its true identity. The first recorded case in the medieval ages was "Mary-Molly": Mary was a dutiful but bored and neglected housewife whose husband gave her little attention. In a trance state, she would rise from her bed at night, dress in peasant clothes and, acting like a tramp, pick up men on the street. When she returned home in the morning, she would have amnesia for the night's adventures, thus avoiding embarrassment and guilt, and could resume the role of the prim and normal housewife!

Distortion

So that the ego can accept something that might ordinarily be

deemed unacceptable, Distortion involves a twisting of ideas and facts. In dreams, the dream content that is unacceptable to the super-ego is modified and disguised. If the dreamer can accept the true meaning of his dream, he will see through the disguise. If the truth would upset him, he can reject the symbols as "just another crazy dream!" The man having an affair with a married woman keeps reminding himself that she plans to leave her husband.

Diversion

Diversion is a distraction from an important conflict that the individual wishes to avoid. (The defensive distraction may be obtained through recreational pursuits, drinking, sex, etc.)

Extension

Extension means expanding the meaning of a term to an irrelevant area. (E.g., "I am intelligent; therefore I will be successful," is a false statement, since the intelligent individual also needs sufficient energy and motivation, plus an activity that offers a reasonable chance of success, in order to achieve his goal!)

Externalization

This defense signifies attributing one's feelings, perceptions, and thoughts to something in the environment. (E.g., a hallucinatory voice experienced by a paranoid schizophrenic may be believed by the patient to be coming from *outside* rather than *inside* his head. Feelings toward oneself may be experienced by some people as feelings toward others (a type of Projection) and feelings toward others may be expressed as being directed by them toward oneself (Introjection).

Fainting

Rarely used today is this technic for avoiding unpleasant awareness or necessary decisions!

Fantasy

Fantasy is *the great escape from reality*, available to everyone, young and old, well or sick, costing nothing, and without the dangers of drug addiction! Fantasy is a means of creating excitement where

none exists, as in a boring life or job. This defence permits an escape for the moment from anxiety, laziness, inadequacies, frustrations, parental restrictions when we are young, school and business failure, social and love-life disappointments, etc. Couples who find love life has become routine & common-place may fantasize making love with movie stars to spice up their own sex relations.

All children of course use fantasy as a harmless escape from the stark reality of growing up in an adult world. It is an antidote to fear, a way to act successful - or at least *feel* that way - in love and work when we are having problems in those areas (Cf. Delusions of Grandeur, q. v). It is the most available escape, costing only a loss of productive energy, can be turned on and off at will, accompany life's occasional boring routines such as doing repetitive work 8 hours a day in a factory, and can be obtained without any equipment in a bare prison cell or concentration camp situation. In extreme (continuous) form, fantasy can lead to psychosis, the patient no longer being able to concentrate on his job and other duties. (One might add that *sleep* permits even deeper escape, accompanied by wish-fulfilment dreams of a rosy nature.)

Generalization

False Generalizations (a type of Rationalization) may serve as an excuse for one's prejudices and behavior. (E. g., "All men are beasts! All they're interested in is sex!" By this slogan, the woman, frightened by intimacy, avoids it through an exaggerated and false generality, but unfortunately also misses out on normal human relationships.)

Hypochondria

The individual avoids his responsibilities by feigned illness, which he ultimately comes to believe is *real* sickness. (E. g., "I am too sick to take care of the house; you'll just have to hire someone to come in and help me!")

Idealization

In this mechanism, a person rates someone unrealistically as "almost perfect", as in a wide-eyed, teenage love affair. It protectively avoids having to face the truth about the other person's obvi-

ous faults and deficiencies. Virtues are exaggerated while the negative aspects of the personality are overlooked and ignored. But perhaps few marriages would be consummated without the help of this mechanism, the human "blinders" serving to neutralize the fear of marriage that is normal in each partner. It is a dangerous defense because, when the partners wake up to the truth about each other, it may take a lot of determination and effort to keep the marriage from deteriorating.

Identification

Identification is like Introjection, but the individual sometimes goes further and becomes very much like his idol in habits and mannerisms, lifestyle, etc. The individual models his behavior after that of a person he admires assuming that person's personality traits in order to feel better about himself, while gaining prestige and recognition. Such a person may indulge in hero worship by identifying with a famous musician, singer, adventurer, etc. An individual identifies with someone else particularly when he, himself, feels inadequate and weak, insecure, and dependent. A child may imitate his father by yelling at his brother, making himself feel strong by controlling his sibling, or by refusing to eat tomatoes (e.g.) because his father dislikes them.

The child or adult may *identify with an oppressor* or feared object to remove the anxiety about that person as in the Patricia Hearst kidnapping case where Pat began to identify with her captors and believe in their crusade against capitalism and limited ownership of wealth. This is because Identification means *incorporating* the essence of the other person into oneself and thus (as in primitive totemism) allegedly gaining the strength of the person identified, a type of *magical thinking*. (The African native who eats a wild animal assumes that animal's strength and courage). Men join social clubs, identifying with the prestige of the organization in order to absorb fame and recognition.

The college student tries to be like his favorite professor. In later life, identification may become a problem as with the medical student who identifies with his patients and fears he has caught all their diseases. A woman may fear that she will die in childbirth because her mother did. One of my patients, though very young,

worried about his heart, felt he would soon die of heart failure because his father did !

I need to emphasize that this mechanism is *normal and usual* in childhood when the little boy patterns himself after his dad and the little girl tries to be like her mother. The son identifies with an (allegedly) strong father figure. Even if the father is a milquetoast, the son may see him as strong. But when the father grows feeble in old age, this may traumatize the son who is no longer able to lean on his father for strength.

Ignorance

The individual escapes responsibility through repeated expressions of alleged "ignorance." (E. g., a male patient once confided in me : "The first night of our marriage, my new wife asked me to help with the dishes. She washed and I dried. I broke two plates so that she never has asked me to help again !" This was a deliberate manoeuvre and she accepted it as either "male clumsiness" or as "blackmail" that was not worth fighting about !)

Incorporation

Incorporation is related to Identification or hero-worship : The individual "absorbs" the traits of his hero to make himself seem more desirable and noteworthy.

Inferiority Complex

Playing up one's alleged inferiority may enable one to avoid doing things one dislikes doing (Cf. Ignorance, above). ("Since I'm worthless, how can anyone expect anything from me !" "I'm too dumb to get a college scholarship, so there's no point in me wasting time studying !") The person thus uses his alleged inferiority to excuse himself from his duties and opportunities.

Insulation

By this defense the individual becomes inaccessible, to avoid life's threats and pressures. The individual withdraws and becomes coldly indifferent to people, avoiding having to deal with them by cutting off such relationships.

Intellectualization

A person may avoid facing his feelings and the truth about himself through intellectualizing a situation, often a problem with analytic patients. (The well-read patient asserts : "I have an Oedipal problem," rather than admitting, "I love my mother, but I hate my father !")

Internalization

Internalization is related to incorporation. The individual adopts as his own the ideas, practices, standards, and values of his idol. (This is normal in child development where the superego represents the Internalization of the parents' standards, morals, and ethics, thus socializing the child.)

Introjection

Introjection is the uncritical acceptance of others' viewpoints, ideas, and prejudices, particularly of authority figures, as if they were his own. He lacks the courage of his own conviction. He is a Yes-man, perhaps a henpecked husband and a milquetoast. As a child, he played up to his parents, agreeing with their every remark and decision in order to win more attention, approval, and love. If he doesn't conform to his parents' rules, he feels guilty. The child's superego, then, develops through adopting the parental standards and ideals of behavior.

A woman may Introject or absorb the beliefs and behavior of her lover, losing her own personality. Introjection sometimes is even more extreme than Identification. In identification, the person imitates someone he loves or admires, but usually may still retain his or her own personality. In Introjection, the individual goes further, becoming so like the admired object that she loses his or her own identity with their (supposed) macho-ness and strength. Being frightened himself and lacking the courage of his own convictions, he seeks shelter under the wings of an (allegedly) strong organization, such as the one mentioned or the KKK. He becomes like a sheep, following the herd, but finding his strength in losing himself in the "herd."

Boys normally identify with their dads and thus Introject manly qualities of courage and maturity. A teenager may bathe in the

reflected glory of a famous person like being a band leader's groupie. He indulges in hero worship and name-dropping, imitates his hero's way of life, as he idealizes him, and through association with him, gains public notice.

Inversion

An Inversion of affect (feelings) is a sudden change, say, from love to hate, when an individual has been hurt in a lost love affair. It is related to the Sour Grapes type of Rationalization ("She was a tramp anyway!").

Invulnerability

This delusion (of grandeur) that the individual cannot possibly be hurt or injured protects him only in Fantasy.

Isolation

This defense resembles Repression except that the underlying impulse is *consciously* recognized, but divorced from present behavior. Isolation is common in obsessive-compulsive neurotics (Fink, 1963). It can also mean the separation of an object from the feeling tone it generates, i.e., the person feels nothing about the object even though at one time he may have been very involved or in love with it.

Messiah Complex

As an adult, the person with this defense may believe he is a great teacher, politician, or religious martyr or leader. In the Messiah or Martyr Complex, the individual wants to prove how much he has suffered, freely tells everyone all his terrible problems, implying that *no one else has suffered as much as he has*. He blames other (Projection) for keeping him from getting ahead. As a baby, he probably found that crying got him immediate sympathy and attention.

Negativism

Two couples in New York City shared a taxi to go down-town to a disco. On the way one passenger said he didn't want to dance, but would rather go to a movie. The other three individuals, being less selfish and more considerate, catered to his wish. The result

was his Negativism (*resistance to the will of others*) caused an unhappy evening for both couples since the movie, a nonparticipant event, was not what the majority wanted, and furthermore was a lousy film. Thus Negativism is *doing the opposite* of what people, such as parents or friends, want one to do, just to get attention, or prove one's power to control others. It is an infantile method used by children to punish their parents and in the adult to prove one's power over others, resulting in instant enmities.

In extreme form in the child, he displays temper tantrums, lying on the floor, kicking anyone who comes near. If he gets his way, he is encouraged to repeat this coercive behavior the next time he wants his own way! By tantrum-like behavior, a child or adult thus wins the limelight and shows "strength" through *defiance of authority and convention*. The person who has to do this is obviously insecure. If he felt adequate, he would not have to prove his manhood this way but could arbitrate about decisions in a mature, civilized manner.

Negativism is also masochistic, narcissistic, and selfish, and such a person alienates others, only winning Rejection and punishment.

Overdeterminism

A behavior disorder has many causes, so that the first discovered in psychoanalysis may not be the only or even the most important cause. The patient may blame a particular cause (which to him is more acceptable) for his behavior when another or several causes are more significant.

Perfectionism

By being "perfect," the neurotic believes he can escape criticism and the resulting guilt (See Fink, 1963, pp. 83-5; 89). He is cautious about what he does and how he does it, checks everything several times, dares not make any errors (such as leaving the front door unlocked), so as to be protected from criticism. Unfortunately, trying to be perfect all day requires a great amount of energy and concentration and results in a lot of anxiety, resulting from the fear that he will fail in his Don Quixote quest.

Phobias

Phobias are "defense mechanisms, protecting—though in a

neurotic and anxiety-arousing way—the individual from himself” (Fink, 1965, p. 86). “Mysophobia, or the morbid fear of germs and dirt can result from excessive guilt over actual or alleged mistakes, failings, immoral acts, etc.” (Fink, 1962, p. 87). Phobias are *irrational* fears that relieve the person of duties that he does not want to fulfill. If it seems odd that a phobia could be an unconscious defense to avoid responsibilities, let me give an example which makes this very clear. Today (1985), “house fathers” who take care of the home and children while the wife (preferably) goes out to work are quite common, but 30 years ago they were rare. In 1950, I had a male patient who suffered from agoraphobia or a morbid fear of “open spaces,” that is, he was afraid to go to work because he’d have to leave his apartment and enter the street. Unconsciously, it turned out that he had a frightening impulse to go up to women and embrace them on the street, so *the phobia protected him from his sexual urges*. I finally induced him to take a taxi to my office, and even had his whole family in a city park one Sunday, which he claimed he enjoyed. But then he regressed, did not make further progress, refused to come to analytic sessions and I had no time for further home visits. He loved being with his children. His wife loved getting out of the house and working, with the fringe benefit of social contacts at work. The result: She no longer encouraged her husband to see me, but got a job, accepting her husband’s desire to stay home during the day to watch the children. The two final checks bounced, a convincing hint that therapy was over. The couple had made an adjustment, partly neurotic, whereby both partners were satisfied with the niche they had chosen.

Procrastination

We all are victims of this defense at times but the neurotic person may too frequently and consistently put off things he should accomplish because they require some (unpleasant) effort: “If I started to learn to dance at my age, people would laugh at me!” If I wrote that letter to my mother after all this time, I’d have to think up some excuse for not writing sooner!” “I’m too tired to put up the shelf today. May be tomorrow!” “I’ll definitely put gas in the car tomorrow on the way to work.” (The car stalls to a stop half to work!)

Projection

Projection is allied to Rationalization, but with a difference. In Projection, someone else is always blamed for the person’s troubles and ineptness. The individual sees in others his own defects. If he feels hostile, he complains that others are hostile to him! In a word, he puts his own ideas, feelings, and biases into others, blaming them for his own mistakes and errors, calling other people prejudiced to hide his own biases. In sibling rivalry, a child may always blame his younger brother for broken toys, etc.

Projection is one of the sickest forms of unconscious defenses. The individual is not usually aware that s-he blames others for the very faults that s-he displays. If an individual cannot face or accept his own antagonistic impulses, he exclaims: “Everyone is so hateful!” Thus the individual is protected from recognizing his own hostility. Alcoholics accuse their wives of being frigid or unfaithful, a projection of their own impotence (Fink, P959, 1061). The philanderer watches his wife carefully, feeling sure she is cheating on him! Paranoid delusions in the schizophrenic are the most extreme form of Projection: “People are out to get me, trying to poison me,” etc.

Prudishness

The individual, defending against his “impure” thoughts or impulses: “I am pure-minded: I do not think about (naughty) sex. In fact, I have no interest at all in it!”

Rationalization

In Rationalization, the person defends his behavior by making excuses for it, even though the reasons given may be false or irrelevant. She chooses excuses that will be socially acceptable and let him or her “off the hook.” This is a very common mechanism that *all of us use at one time or another*. But the well-adjusted person tries to be honest with himself and others, rather than dodging the truth of his actions. Rationalization makes one’s behavior seem to conform to social norms: Whatever happens is blamed on “fate” or some other circumstance, and thus is *out of one’s control*. Rationalization can worsen, becoming paranoia (e.g., the student who flunks a test and claims his teacher hates him or is prejudiced against him as a member of a minority race).

Rationalization is the most used defense. We make phoney excuses for our failures to cover up our deficiencies. Rationalization buries our feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, guilt, and failure. The individual *saves fate, avoids criticism and humiliation*. (E. g., the office worker who is regularly late "because of heavy traffic at the rush hour;" the dinner that is not ready "because the children got in the way;" the student who fails the exam "because of a headache;" etc.) But failure to accept responsibility for one's actions indicates immaturity and cowardice. In sexual immorality, e.g., adultery, the individual rationalizes: "I couldn't help myself!"

The more this defense is utilized, the more does adjustment deteriorate. Thus Rationalization is *always* damaging to the ego and to one's integrity. *Rationalization does more harm than any other defense*. Being dishonest with oneself makes it easier to lie the next time! We can lie so often that we begin to *believe* our lies. Such individuals can no longer distinguish fact from fiction.

There is a mild type of excuse that is *not* destructive—the *white lie*. *White lies can prevent injured feelings*. It would be sadistic to tell your aging mother how old she looks, when she asks! You say you can't go to the party "because of a previous engagement" rather than that you feel it will be boring. *White lies serve as a social lubricant* that helps smooth relationships and avoids hurting people. Excuses to avoid getting into trouble, on the other hand, are evasions of responsibility because of fear of the consequences (being fired, being charged by a law officer, etc.). The person who uses frequent excuses finds it increasingly easier to repeat them and more difficult to tell the truth! Some persons have such a fragile ego that they can't risk failure or censure. Phobias, alcoholism, anxiety, and hypochondria are common Rationalizations people manoeuvre with. Some people blame the environment for their failures (Projection). Those with limited feelings of worth are more apt to make excuses.

Treatment involves helping the individual to strengthen his feelings of self-respect. Parents who rationalize a lot on the phone, etc. encourage their children to do the same with their friends and teachers. At seven, children begin to worry what others think of them and want to meet their own standards. Neurosis and psychosis

are the *ultimate* excuses for failing to realize one's potential ("I can't help myself!").

Sour Grapes is a subtype of Rationalization, which involves *self-deception*. In *Sour Grapes* we rationalize that our goal was not worth striving for, when we fail to achieve that goal. We can thus "justify" failure and feelings of inferiority. We give up trying to reach our goal and then avoid the pain of defeat by convincing ourselves that the goals were stupid in the first place! (E. g., the serviceman who receives a "Dear John" letter breaking up an engagement, comments: "She was an old bag anyway!") Because it distorts reality, *Sour Grapes* is an unconstructive adjustment.

Reaction formation

When a person cannot attain a desired goal, he denies that it is a good one by Repression, and overemphasizes the advantage of *another goal which may be its opposite*. This is an unusual form of Rationalization. The little boy, scolded for getting dirty while playing in the mud on a rainy day, becomes a *fanatic* about cleanliness and avoids situations, henceforth, where he might get the least bit dirty. The sadistic child who yanks the tail of his pet kitten, gets scratched and bitten and become afraid of his hostile, aggressive feelings, and may choose to become an animal lover. People, afraid of illness and death, may train to become nurses and physicians as a safety measure, facing illness through expert knowledge. The mother who views her child as a pest and in the way of her having any leisure time fun may feel guilty and become over-protective of the child as a means of atonement.

Reaction Formation is thus the establishment of a trait or behavior pattern opposed to a strong unconscious pressure. It is a type of Compensation where the individual develops actions and viewpoints the opposite of his fears. He does the opposite of something to overcome it, as in the case of the claustrophobic individual who forces himself to ride elevators rather than use the staircase in the building where he works (Fink, 1981). The bully is inwardly a coward who challenges others to fight to prove his macho nature and alleged fearlessness. The individual becomes aggressive to conceal his own fears, or becomes very sympathetic in order to hold sadistic impulses in check.

Replacement

The person defends himself by putting aside his negative beliefs and acts. Thus, replacement is the substitution of normal thoughts and actions for neurotic thoughts and behavior.

Repression

Forgetting may—as a sign of Repression—be a means of avoiding something disturbing, frightening, or guilt-arousing. Unfortunately *the repressed material continues to cause anxiety* in the ego. Repression means *selective forgetting* of unpleasant happenings and the resultant guilt and shame. This is one of the most commonly used defenses whereby sinful or evil ideas and impulses are unconsciously shoved into the unconscious and forgotten, as a protection for the ego.

The prudish, overscrupulous individual may in truth have an intense interest in anything sexual, but be afraid of thinking about it, for fear of the consequences of his sexual behaviour if he should let himself indulge in it. He feels that sex is wicked even to fantasize about. A scrupulous Catholic patient years ago felt guilty about holding his penis while urinating! (He felt guilty about masturbation and holding his penis reminded him of this Act (Fink, 1954). Painful experiences in childhood may be repressed only to cause later pathology as the child grows up. A person may act shy and aloof when he really aches for human contact. His fear of interpersonal contact has caused his desires to be repressed, and he feels safer avoiding people rather than is king Rejection or hostility from someone.

Restitution

The individual atones in some way to assuage guilt about something that he has done that he feels is wrong. His atonement may consist of prayers or so no kind of ritual or self-punishment.

Retribution

Retribution is self-punishment (as in Atonement, q.v.) for an alleged wrong or injury against someone, to erase the shame and guilt.

Reversal

Reversal is the same as Reaction Formation, q. v.

Righteous Indignation

The individual covers his errors by excoriating his critics with allegedly "Righteous indignation": "How dare you call me prejudiced!"

Seclusiveness Or Withdrawal

Failure is avoided by not even trying to complete or accomplish some task. The shy individual is ruled by fear and persistent frustration. Shy people remain unnoticed, so their maladjustments are not obvious. *Pseudo-retardation* is a condition mistaken for stupidity (See Ignorance): The person gives up trying to better himself, claiming it's because he's dumb and can't help it.

Acute withdrawal occurs in schizophrenics who lose interest in daily occurrences, become apathetic as an escape from having to face the problems of daily living. Negativism q.v., can be viewed as a type of withdrawal through rebellion against authority and society, and a refusal to co-operate with others. Daydreaming (see Fantasy) is another type of withdrawal, most severe and persistent in psychotics, wherein the individual fantasizes satisfactions and success that are absent in his real life: The person may visualize himself as a brave and fearless knight of old, a conquering hero, as God or king, or the unappreciated martyr working for the good of others.

Segregation Or Compartmentalism

The individual with this defense keeps his ideas in logic-tight (isolated) compartments. Segregation is related to Repression in a way. Ideas, feelings, and attitudes are isolated, and unwanted thoughts or beliefs are excluded from the conscious mind. Politicians often use this technic. The shrewd but dishonest businessman hides morality in a separate compartment where it will not disturb his questionable business deals. The racial bigot, when dealing with minority groups, ignores the Bill of Rights and the rules of equality guaranteed by our Constitution. Other mechanisms may be involved with Segregation, such as Rationalization, Projection, and the Superiority Complex.

Social Dichotomization

The world is conveniently divided by the person utilizing this

defense into good and bad, black and white. There are no intermediate grey areas. The person of course views himself as "white" and "pure".

Splitting

Unpleasant experiences are split off from consciousness and end up buried, as in Repression, q.v.

Sublimation

Many id impulses of a sexual, aggressive, or other taboo nature cannot acceptably be expressed, so these tendencies may be changed or *transferred into other, more acceptable activities*. Sexual activity which currently has no satisfactory object may be used in *creative activities* such as music, art and writing. One can work off aggression and hostility in exercise such as sports and jogging, or in competitive school and business work. Sublimation may even determine the choice of profession. (E. g., a single woman with strong maternal needs may seek work in a child care center or a hospital maternity ward. The sadistic-natured man may become a great surgeon where cutting up people wins praise and prestige. This does not mean, of course, that *all* surgeons are basically sadistic!)

Sublimation is thus the redirection of the energies of a drive motive into socially acceptable channels as a means of reducing guilt associated with sex, aggression and sadism, etc. The act may be good, desirable, and healthy, even though the *reason* for it (guilt, shyness, etc.) may be neurotic or irrational. We are grateful to the millionaire who donates large sums of money to charity' even if his secret motive is that he feels embarrassed inheriting all that money without having to work for it!

Sublimation may occur through developing new friendships, hobbies, social work, teaching, the helping professions, art and music, scientific research, sports, and religious activities. Curiosity about the female body in childhood may push the young medical student into selecting gynecology as his board speciality. He thus satisfies his childhood curiosity through voyeurism of the female body and genitals without the fear of criticism or reprisal. Aggression is often sublimated through ruthless competition or contact sports like football or soccer.

Thus Sublimation acts as a safety valve by neutralizing excess libidinous and other energies, conflicts, and frustrations in a way that contributes to success in a socially acceptable manner.

Substitution

This defense is related to Sublimation, above. The person who cannot have what he desires, substitutes something else for it: The baby, deprived of sufficient oral satisfaction at his mother's breast, may suck his thumb, while seeking love and affection from another maternal image such as the grandmother. As an adult, such a person may run to the refrigerator whenever she feels unloved or deprived, so that oral satisfaction is again achieved through a substitute activity. The analytic patient finds the analyst (through the transference) a substitute for the rejecting parents or others in his life who failed to give him needed support and build-up.

Superiority Complex

If success comes too easily to someone as he grows up, s/he may develop a Superiority Complex and lack the fire and ambition to better himself or herself. This is one of the most effective protections against the damaging effects of inferiority feelings and failure. The egocentric person pretends to have superior qualities to hide his basic inferiority. But where false superiority exists, inferiority usually underlies it. Other mechanisms may join with Superiority such as hero worship (Introjection), Rationalization, and Projection. Parental overindulgence may create a false superiority in children, making them feel like "little kings," as if entitled to special treatment which they won't get when they grow up. Superiority is also encouraged when parents and others *overvalue* the child's accomplishments. (I recall a family I visited where the little girl was always paraded out by the proud parents to show off the ballet dancing that she was learning. She grew up to become a snobbish teenager. A young man I met at a summer biological lab. told me that his parents let him know in childhood that he could do no wrong! Although he felt very secure because of his parents' worshipful stance, he was obnoxiously conceited since he had come to *believe* his parents when they were simply trying to give him confidence).

The individual with a Superiority Complex may be loud and boastful, with endless stores of his accomplishments at work and "in the War." He may be arrogant, contemptuous, and condescending (reluctantly tolerating "lesser creatures!"). Such people crave attention and recognition. But Superiority leads to the development of other defenses, particularly Projection or blaming others for one's own defects. In extreme cases, the Superiority Complex develops into *Delusion of Grandeur* (q. v.), persecution, and reference.

Suppression

Whereas Repression is *unconscious forgetting*, Suppression is *conscious forgetting*: Ideas are forced out of awareness into the unconscious because the individual refuses to think about something that disturbs him. (E. g., one of my alcoholic patients claimed in his first session that he had not touched alcohol "for a year," but his relatives assured me that he had cans of beer several times during the year, something which the patient chose not to remember, or did not want to admit. He had suppressed the memory of these slips in order to convince himself and his family—and me—how long he had been "on the wagon.")

Symbolism

Symbolism is related to Condensation. Words are symbols, as are slogans. Symbolism is related to children's magical thinking and is deeply imbedded in the unconscious. A symbol is a concept or sign that represents many feelings and ideas, such as the flag, the cross. Mother, patriotism, friendship, etc. Dream symbols may represent something the dreamer wants to disguise because he can't face it. Phallic symbols are more or less universal around the world, but many other symbols are specific in meaning to the individual having the dream or fantasy.

Undoing

The person symbolically acts out *in reverse* something he has already done or thought about, which is unacceptable to his ego and society. Undoing is meant to erase anxiety and guilt about his behavior. (E. g., a mother who punishes her child too harshly, feels guilty about it, then tries to make up for it by smothering the child

with affection, thus confusing the child and leaving it insecure in the face of her *unpredictable* behavior.). Thus, in Undoing, performing a certain "constructive" activity is intended to cancel out a prior destructive activity, as in the rituals of the obsessive-compulsive neurotic (Fink, 1963).

Withdrawal

The individual removes himself from facing life's problems, getting his satisfaction from sleeping, daydreams, alcohol and drugs, or being a workaholic.

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ADOLESCENCE : PSYCHO-ANALYTIC PERSPECTIVE *

SARADINDU BANERJI

Introduction

Adolescence is a period of development when the child blossoms into an adult beset by conflicting emotions, struggling to maintain self-control and to achieve self expression under the impact of sensations and impulses that are scarcely understood but insistently demand attention.

It is a time of seeking : a seeking inward to find who one is ; a searching outward to locate one's place in life ; a longing for another with whom to satisfy cravings for intimacy and fulfilment. It is a time of turbulent awakening to love and beauty but also of days darkened by loneliness and despair. It is a time of carefree wandering of the spirit through realms of fantasy and in pursuit of idealistic visions, but also of disillusionment and disgust with the world and the self. It can be a time of adventure with wonderful episodes of reckless folly but also of shame and regret that linger. The adolescent lives with a vibrant sensitivity that carries to ecstatic heights and lowers to almost untenable depths. For some, the emotional stability achieved in childhood and the security of the family attachments contain the amplitude of the oscillations and permit a fairly steady direction ; whereas others must struggle to retain a sense of unity and a modicum of ego control.

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Definition

Adolescence can be defined as the period between pubescence and physical maturity. However, in considering personality development, we are concerned with the transition from childhood, initiated by the prepubertal spurt of growth and impelled by the hormonal changes of puberty, to the attainment of adult prerogatives, responsibilities, and self-sufficiency. In term of years, it extends roughly from the age of eleven to the age of nineteen. Although adolescence currently covers the teenage period, its onset varies with constitutional differences, in times of sexual maturation and its duration is influenced by socio-economic and other cultural factors. We shall, however, somewhat arbitrarily, consider that adolescence ends around the age of nineteen, when most persons have completed their physical growth, and have become legally responsible for themselves.

Three subperiods of Adolescence

To bring some order to the description and discussion of the dynamics of this lengthy period of adolescence, following Theodore Lidz (The Person), we shall divide it into three subperiods. However, these divisions cannot be considered as definitive separations because adolescents vary considerably in how and when they work through various aspects of adolescence. Three overlapping phases consist of (a) *Early adolescence*, including the prepubertal phase when the spurt in growth initiates developmental changes and the onset of puberty which does not usually provoke a marked shift in orientation. (b) *Mid-Adolescence* : About twelve or eighteen months after pubescence, an expensive period of mid-adolescence sets in, when movement toward the opposite sex begins to break up peer groupings and intimate friendships. It is then that the period of revolt and conformity, so characteristic of adolescence, is apt to start—revolt from parental adult dictates and conformity to peer-group standards, loyalties, and ideologies. New horizons open which the adolescent wishes to explore. It is also a time of marked ambivalence and mood swings. (c) *Late adolescence* : Sooner or later a period of delimitation, late adolescence sets in when the young person becomes concerned with the tangible tasks of coming to grips with the future. The boy becomes concerned about his career, and currently the girl

may become caught up in the difficult problem of how she will reconcile a career and marriage. The reorganisation of adolescence comes to an end. The period of late adolescence carries the individual into occupational and marital choices which consolidate the ego identity and capacities for intimacy. (However, these are partly adolescent problems.)

Some psychological problems of Adolescence

(a) *Oedipus complex & Super-ego*: Adolescence is a period during which children prepare for self-sufficiency and independence while still gaining support, protection, and guidance from parents. The need to gain increasing independence from one's parents creates serious difficulties both for adolescents and for their families. The movement beyond the family gains impetus from the upsurge of sexual drives. In contrast to the erotized and sensuous longings and desires of childhood, sexual feelings are now driven by hormonal impulsions and are not easily repressed. The Oedipal attachments have to be resolved once again, but at a different level and this time the sexual feelings will not be repressed so much as redirected away from the parents, i.e., family circle.

Both the move toward independence from the family and the control and redirection of sexual impulsions require reorganization of *super-ego* directives. Although the youth may continue to accept and adhere to parental standards in many areas, they should become one's own standards rather than rules imposed by parents; they should become more completely internalized and, as far as some directives are concerned, become more ego functions rather than *super-ego* edicts (Loewald,). The *super-ego* directives must also change to become suited to help direct adult rather than childhood behaviour and to permit sexual gratification and intimacy.

The functioning & character of the *super-ego* undergo change in adolescent's relationship with the parents. The developing boys and girls begin to find fault with the parent, criticizing him or her, convincing themselves that the parent is not attractive and not an object worth seeking. The criticism also spreads to the parent of the same sex, for they begin to try to free themselves from the domination of *super-ego* injunctions based in large part on internalizations of parents and their dictates. They do so by devaluating the worth

of the parent. This process will pick up intensity as adolescence progresses to mid-adolescence.

The girl is apt to dream of being a woman more capable than her mother, a person more attractive to her father, and may begin to talk to her mother in rather condescending tones. It is generally helpful to the girl and her development if the mother is not angered by the condescension and can allow her daughter to indulge in such fantasies of being a more desirable female and potential sexual partner than her mother. It helps the girl gain self-esteem and enables her to feel capable of relating successfully to boys.

Young adolescents are about to start the process of emancipation, to begin experience feelings that are difficult to contain, and to relate to people more as adults than as children. It is a difficult time indeed, and during the beginning of adolescence they are not yet ready to assume responsibility for themselves and to be capable of containing their drives and fantasies on their own. They still require direction and protection and even though they may be beginning to be rebellious, they are apt to feel unloved and unwanted unless the parents place limits upon their behaviour—and provide safeguards against their venturing beyond their depth. It is a time marked by revolt and conformity—a strange and interesting admixture—that characterizes the height of the adolescent period.

During later childhood the repression of sexual impulses had been sweeping and was reinforced by many ego defences. The prohibition cannot be raised now simply by turning away from parental injunctions or even by parental permissiveness, because it has become firmly incorporated in the individual as *super-ego* directives. The lifting of the repression requires both changes in attitudes toward parental authority and modification of the *super-ego* standards to permit more latitude for sexual expression. We can conceptualize the situation by saying that the strengthened id impulses push the ego to challenge the *super-ego* restrictions and standards that were suited to the less driven child. However, much of the ego's strength and security in the ability to take care of and direct the self was gained by identifying with the parents and accepting their authority. Attempts to deny *super-ego* restrictions mean turning away from identifications that had provided strength and stability. A precipitous break with the source of identification can undermine the self

provoke intense guilt, and a loss of self-esteem in this process of achieving greater freedom for expression. Efforts to turn super-ego directives can provoke severe anxiety that ego functions will completely give way before the force of the id impulses. After years in which children have accepted, if not admired their parents, and during which they have felt guilt when disobedient, achieving success in surmounting either parental authority or their authority internalized as super-ego directives can provoke intense feelings of guilt and depression. Adolescence is the proper time to want to be—and to be—both dependent and independent.

Early Love, Sexual Identity & Bisexuality

An important aspect of finding an adult identity and becoming capable of intimacy involves the clarification and strengthening of gender identity. Gender identity becomes established within the first few years of life and is strengthened by the resolution of the oedipal phase and by peer-group identifications during the juvenile period. However, during adolescence the choice of a love object of the opposite sex helps to settle residues of identifications with the opposite sex.

This is possible due to the innate bisexuality of man. In love situation, working out of the bisexual components will help both the love partners in consolidating their respective masculinity and femininity.

Sometimes during late mid-adolescence or early in late adolescence the young person is likely to fall in love. It is quite likely that the first heterosexual love will contain narcissistic components. The boy may well fall in love with a girl whom he unconsciously recognizes as someone he would like to have been, had he been a girl. The girl may fall in love with the boy she might have been. These early loves can be important in fostering a more secure gender identity. While there are still some narcissistic and homosexual components in this type of object love, for it is a stage in the movement from narcissistic love to heterosexual love, something significant happens for identity formation: the boy in placing the feminine components of himself—the residue of his identification with his mother—onto the girl he loves. He no longer needs to contain these elements in himself because he can have them in the girl he loves and whom he seeks to possess. His masculinity is solidified and confirmed and he becomes ready to achieve an ego identity of his own and to

move toward intimacy with another. The same process is likely to happen with the girl and perhaps in an even more dramatic manner. In falling in love with a boy and finding herself loveable to a boy, she needs no longer regret not being a boy or having the prerogatives of a male. She can be satisfied with loving the boy who has the penis and and who may be all too willing to share it with her. She again feels complete and is ready to progress toward interdependence with another. In this way her femininity is consolidated by identifying with the male partner in love situation.

Adolescent Mechanisms of Defence

(1) *Fantasy*: The newly gained capacities for conceptual and hypothetical thinking not only increase the intellectual control of ego functioning but also make possible a greater elaboration of the mechanisms of defence. At this age the adolescents may not gain much sexual gratification in reality, but their active fantasies help them ward off impulsive activity that might create realistic dangers or generate "instinctual" anxiety of complete loss of control in the sexual act. Masturbation is usually accompanied by fantasies that relieve the emptiness and the loneliness of the act.

(2) *Sublimation*: Fantasy formation relates to the defence of sublimation, in which sexual impulses are re-directed into less earthy and more "sublime" activities. Poetry bubbles within and flows from their lips.

(3) *Intellectualization*: Adolescents are also beginning to intellectualize, utilizing their capacities to think and reason in order to control impulses, not necessarily by reasoning out rational solutions of problems, but through diverting interests into intellectual channels, such as the nature of the universe, significance of life, etc.

(4) *Interest in Ideology*: Adolescents are also likely to attach themselves to an ideal or an ideology in order to find an outlet for their energies, including their sexuality and aggressivity, but also to achieve new guidelines through having a more meaningful way of life. The ideology may now take precedence over parental teachings and modify the examples of parental behaviour that have guided them previously.

(5) *Asceticism*:—Related to such abnegation of the self for ideologic purposes, is another common means used to control the

provoke intense guilt, and a loss of self-esteem in this process of achieving greater freedom for expression. Efforts to turn super-ego directives can provoke severe anxiety that ego functions will completely give way before the force of the id impulses. After years in which children have accepted, if not admired their parents, and during which they have felt guilt when disobedient, achieving success in surmounting either parental authority or their authority internalized as super-ego directives can provoke intense feelings of guilt and depression. Adolescence is the proper time to want to be—and to be—both dependent and independent.

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(5) *Asceticism*:—Related to such abnegation of the self for ideologic purposes, is another common means used to control the

upsurge of sexual and aggressive impulses. It is, as if, the strength of the erotic drives were turned against themselves and the super-ego injunctions that the id seems on the verge of overthrowing, were strengthened to deny any pleasures.

Search for Identity

The period leading upto the closure of adolescence is particularly important, for now the personality must get into a workable integrate. Achieving a successful integration depends not only upon a reasonably successful passage through all prior developmental stages, but also upon the solution of a number of tasks specific to adolescence which leads to a reintegration and reorganization of the personality structure to permit the individual to function as a reasonably self-sufficient adult. One of Erikson's major contributions to psychology was his emphasis upon the crucial importance of late adolescence. Now, the young person must gain an ego identity, an identity in his or her own right and not simply as someone's son or daughter, an identity in the sense of a unique consistency of behaviour that permits others to have expectations of how the person will behave and react. The person will have, in a sense, answered the question "Who am I?" and therefore others will know who the individual is.

Identity formation involves the drawing together and resynthesis of a process that has been going on since birth and the crystallization out of an individual who will tend to preserve his or her identity despite the vicissitudes of life that are yet to come. The individual has passed through a series of developmental phases, and at each level there has been an identity and there has been a relatedness between the identities at each phase. Still, these identities always had a tentative quality, for each was a phase in becoming, but now it is time to be. The concept of ego identity was formulated by Erikson to emphasize that the developmental phases of childhood are not ends in themselves but stages in the progression toward developing into an integrated and reasonably self-sufficient person capable of filling an adult role in life and fitting into the social system in which the person lives. The integration is not achieved simply by passing through successive stages of psycho-sexual development without trauma or undue fixations, but depends on constant reorganization during the process, and then, during adolescence, a reintegration to permit

moving from childhood dependency, to adult responsibility. It is concerned not simply with inner organization but also with how that organization permits the individual to move properly into the social roles permitted and expected of an adult in a given society and its sub-systems.

The concept of "ego identity" is not definable in very precise terms. Barely, it concerns the consistency that characterizes individuals despite the changes that occur over time, and as they move into the many different roles they fill at any one period in their lives. We might say that by the end of adolescence the individual's name—as should be the case with all nominal words—provides a degree of predictability concerning how its bearer will behave and what others can anticipate from that individual under a variety of circumstances. Equally important is that the person also has some idea of how he or she will behave, relate, and feel under varying conditions. Of course human behaviour is so complex and subject to so many contingencies, as well as, conscious and unconscious influences, that prediction of how a person will react and interact in unfamiliar situations remains limited.

Identity formation has much to do with the person's past identifications and their fusion into a new integrate. The identifications with the parents remain basic despite the many vicissitudes they have undergone, but to them have been added the identifications with ideal figures and both friends and enemies, for something remains of all. Various significant persons who have been lost—or more or less abandoned—particularly the parents, are preserved within the self. Identity formation also involves identification with groups, as well as individuals: the family as a unit with its traditions and specific mores; the social class into which one is raised; ethnic and religious groupings; and one's nation and time in history, which are usually taken for granted, as well as, one's gender, which forms a keystone in stable identity formation. To gain coherence of personality functioning and a sense of unity, aspects of identifications that are inconsistent with the total pattern, which are ego-alien, must be discarded or repressed. "Identity formation", as Erikson has pointed out "begins where the usefulness of identification ends. It arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications, and their absorption

in a new configuration, which in turn, is dependent on the process by which a society (often through subsocieties) identifies the young individual, recognizing him as somebody who had to become the way he is, and who, being the way he is, is taken for granted" (Erikson, 1956, p. 113, A. J. Psa.). Adolescents are seeking consistent ways of relating to others, for finding their way through life and for solving problems. What an adolescent will do with his or her life helps answer the query, "who am I?"

Identity Crisis

In some situations identity formation may be hindered giving rise to identity crisis. The recognition that a turning point in life has been reached when decisions of a fairly irrevocable nature must be made precipitates a crisis. The individual realizes dimly or with anxiety-provoking acuteness that if he or she does not make decisions the passage of time will make them instead. Friends move on, move past, embark on careers, prepare to marry. The pause can lengthen into a paralysis of indecision. The responsibility of independent choice and its consequences can bring a period of perplexity, turmoil, and sometimes profound despair. Adolescents may fly from their surroundings, leave college, leave home—as if, distance will resolve their problems. The change may bring respite, and though it is unlikely to solve intrapsychic problems, a moratorium during which an adolescent can gain additional experience, a broadened perspective, or increased emotional maturity can help one find direction. Some will seek to transcend their conscious abilities to find their identities and become "seekers" who use drugs to "expand consciousness" and somehow reveal unknown abilities; or search out a "guru", who in cryptic, oracular fashion can provide guidance; or become involved in one or several consciousness expanding groups; or enter therapy with an analyst who will help probe their "unconscious". Most individuals, however, manage the transition with reasonable calm as a natural progression into an acceptable identity.

Ego Diffusion :

The opposite pole of *ego-identity* is *ego-diffusion*. As late adolescence is so often a time of conflict, possibility of some neurotic suffering cannot be ruled out. However, more difficult problems

occur and the seriousness of these may be difficult to assess. The dangers lie not in failing to reach an immediate solution and find an identity and way of life—for many persons will take several years until they find themselves—but in finding a negative solution: adolescents give up, feel defeated, and suffer "ego diffusion", in which they virtually cease trying to direct their lives consciously, leaving themselves prey to unconscious motivations, and they drift, perhaps becoming more or less schizophrenic; or they become embittered about the ways of society and become alienated, refusing to become committed to a way of life; or they embrace alienation itself as a way of life.

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