

## CHAPTER XI

### THE EGO AND THE ID AT PUBERTY

OF all the periods in human life in which the instinctual processes are beyond question of paramount importance that of puberty has always attracted most attention. For a long time now the psychic phenomena which signalize the advent of sexual maturity have been the subject of psychological study. In non-analytical writings we find many striking descriptions of the changes which take place in character during these years, of the disturbances in the psychic equilibrium and, above all, of the incomprehensible and irreconcilable contradictions then apparent in the psychic life. Adolescents are excessively egoistic, regarding themselves as the centre of the universe and the sole object of interest, and yet at no time in later life are they capable of so much self-sacrifice and devotion. They form the most passionate love-relations, only to break them off as abruptly as they began them. On the one hand they throw themselves enthusiastically into the life of the community and, on the other, they have an overpowering longing for solitude. They oscillate between blind submission to some self-chosen leader and defiant rebellion against any and every authority.

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They are selfish and materially-minded and at the same time full of lofty idealism. They are ascetic but will suddenly plunge into instinctual indulgence of the most primitive character. At times their behaviour to other people is rough and inconsiderate, yet they themselves are extremely touchy. Their moods veer between light-hearted optimism and the blackest pessimism. Sometimes they will work with indefatigable enthusiasm and at other times they are sluggish and apathetic.

Official psychology seeks to explain these phenomena in two very different ways. According to the one theory, this upheaval in the psychic life is probably due to chemical changes, i.e. it is the direct consequence of the beginning of the functioning of the sexual glands. That is to say, it is simply the psychic accompaniment of physiological changes. The other theory rejects the idea of any such connection between the physical and the psychic. According to it, the revolution which takes place in the psychic sphere is simply a sign that the individual has attained to psychic maturity, just as the simultaneous physical changes are signs of physical maturity. It is pointed out that the fact that psychic and physical processes appear simultaneously is no proof that the one group is the cause of the other. Thus the second theory claims that psychic development is entirely independent of glandular and instinctual processes. There is one single point at which these two trends of thought in psychology meet: both are agreed that not only the physical but also the psychic phenomena of

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puberty are of the utmost importance in the development of the individual and that here are the beginning and the root of the sexual life, of the capacity for love and of character as a whole.

In contrast to academic psychology, psychoanalysis has hitherto shown remarkably little inclination to concentrate on the psychological problems of puberty, although in other connections it has very often taken contradictions in the psychic life as a starting-point for its investigations. If we except a few works in which the foundation for a study of puberty has been laid,<sup>1</sup> we may say that analytical writers have rather neglected that period and devoted more attention to other stages of development. The reason is obvious. Psychoanalysis does not share the view that the sexual life of human beings begins at puberty. According to our theory the sexual life has two starting-points. It begins for the first time in the first year of life. It is in the early infantile sexual period and not at puberty that the crucial steps in development are taken, the important pre-genital phases of sexual organization are passed through, the different component instincts are developed and brought into action and the normality or abnormality of the individual, his capacity or incapacity for love, are determined. We expect to derive from our study of this early period the knowledge of the origin and development of sexuality for which academic

<sup>1</sup> Freud, *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie*.—Ernest Jones, 'Einige Probleme des jugendlichen Alters', *Imago*, Bd. IX, 1923, S. 145 ff.—S. Bernfeld, 'Über eine typische Form der männlichen Pubertät', *ibid.*, S. 169 ff.

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psychology seeks in its study of puberty. Puberty is merely one of the phases in the development of human life. It is the first recapitulation of the infantile sexual period; at a later period in life, a second takes place at the climacteric. Each of the sexual periods is a renewal and resuscitation of that which has gone before. In addition, of course, each contributes something of its own to human sexual life. Owing to the fact that physical sexual maturity is attained at puberty, genitality occupies the foreground at this period and the genital trends predominate over the pre-genital component instincts. At the climacteric, when there is a decline in the physical sexual functions, the genital impulses flare up for the last time and pre-genital impulses come into their own again.

Hitherto psycho-analytical writings have been principally concerned with the *similarities* between these three periods of turbulent sexuality in human life. They resemble one another most closely in the quantitative relations between the strength of the ego and of the instincts. In each case—in the early infantile period, at puberty and at the climacteric—a relatively strong id confronts a relatively weak ego. Thus we may say that they are periods in which the id is vigorous and the ego enfeebled. There is, besides, a strong qualitative similarity in respect of one of the two factors in the ego-id relation in these three periods. A man's id remains much the same throughout life. It is true that the instinctual impulses are capable of transformation when they come into collision with the ego and the

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demands of the outside world. But within the id itself little or no change takes place, apart from the advance made from pre-genital to genital instinctual aims. The sexual wishes, which are always ready upon any reinforcement of libido to emerge from repression, and the object-cathexes and phantasies associated with them alter but little in childhood, at puberty, in adult life and at the climacteric. We see then that the qualitative resemblances between the three periods in human life in which libido is increased are due to the relative immutability of the id.

So far, psycho-analytical writers have paid less attention to the *differences* between these periods. These differences arise from the second factor in the relation between the id and the ego, namely, the human ego's great capacity for transformation. The immutability of the id is matched by the mutability of the ego. Let us take as an example the ego in early childhood and the ego at puberty. At the one period and at the other it differs in compass, in content, in its knowledge and capacities, in its subordinate relationships and anxieties. Consequently, in its conflicts with the instincts it makes use of different defence-mechanisms in the different periods. We may expect that a more detailed examination of these differences between early infancy and puberty will throw light on the formation of the ego, just as the instinctual life has been illuminated by the study of the resemblances between these periods.

As in the investigation of the instinctual processes,

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so in the study of the ego the later development can be understood only from the earlier. We must grasp the nature of the ego-situation in early infancy, before we can explain the disturbances to which the ego is liable at puberty. In little children the conflict between ego and id has its peculiar conditions. The demands for instinctual gratification, which spring from the wishes characteristic of the oral, anal and phallic phases, are extraordinarily urgent and the affects and phantasies associated with the Oedipus complex and the castration-complex are intensely vivid; the ego which confronts them is only in process of formation and so is still weak and undeveloped. Nevertheless, a little child is not a being of unbridled instinct nor, in ordinary circumstances, is it aware of the pressure of instinctual anxiety within it. In the external world, i.e. in the educational influences brought to bear upon it, its feeble ego has a powerful ally against its instinctual life. The situation does not arise in which it has to measure its own puny strength against the very much stronger instinctual impulses, to which, if left to itself, it must inevitably succumb. We hardly leave it time to become aware of its own wishes or to estimate its own strength or weakness in relation to its instincts. Its attitude towards the ego is simply dictated to it by the promises and threats of other people, that is to say, by the hope of love and the expectation of punishment.

Under such external influence little children, in the course of a few years, acquire a very considerable

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capacity for controlling their instinctual life, but it is impossible to determine how much of this achievement is to be attributed to their ego and how much to direct pressure by external forces. If in this situation of conflict the child's ego places itself on the side of the outside influences, the child is said to be 'good'. If it takes the part of the id and fights against the restriction of instinctual gratification which is imposed on it by education, he is 'naughty'. The science which has devoted itself to the detailed study of this oscillation of the infantile ego between the id and the outside world is that of pedagogy. It seeks for means to make the alliance between educational forces and the ego even closer and their common struggle for the mastery of instinct more successful.

But in little children there is also an endopsychical conflict, which is beyond the reach of education. The outside world very soon establishes a representative in the child's psyche, in the shape of objective anxiety. The occurrence of such anxiety is not in itself evidence of the formation of a higher situation—the conscience or super-ego—within the ego, but it is its precursor. Objective anxiety is the anticipation of suffering which may be inflicted on the child as a punishment by outside agents, a kind of 'fore-pain' which governs the ego's behaviour, no matter whether the expected punishment always takes place or not. On the one hand, this anxiety is acute in proportion to the dangerous or menacing behaviour of those with whom the child is in contact. On the other hand, it is

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reinforced by the turning of instinctual processes against the self, is frequently combined with anxiety originating in phantasy and takes no note of objective changes, so that its connection with reality becomes ever looser. It is certain that in the minds of little children urgent instinctual demands conflict with acute objective anxiety, and the symptoms of infantile neurosis are attempts at solving this conflict. The study and description of these inner struggles are debatable ground amongst scientists: some hold that they are the province of pedagogy, while we feel sure that they lie within the domain of the theory of the neuroses.

There is another characteristic feature in the ego-situation of little children, which is never reproduced in later life. In all the later defence-situations both the combatants are already present: an instinct confronts a more or less rigid ego, with which it must come to terms. But in little children the ego is the product of the conflict itself, and that side of the ego which, throughout life, will have to deal with the task of mastering the instincts only comes to birth at this early period under the combined pressure of the id's instinctual demands and that objective anxiety which is external in origin. The ego may be said to be 'made to measure,' i.e. nicely adapted to hold the balance between the two forces: the urge of instinct and pressure from without. We regard the first infantile period as over when this side of ego-formation has

<sup>1</sup> Ultra-modern educational methods might be described as an attempt to make the outside world 'to measure' for the child.

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reached a certain stage. The ego has taken up the position it intends to occupy in its battle with the id. It has decided what proportion of gratification and of renunciation of instinct it means to insist upon in solving its various conflicts. It has accustomed itself to a certain measure of delay in obtaining its desires. The methods of defence which it prefers bear the stamp of objective anxiety. We may say that a *modus vivendi* has been established between the id and the ego, to which, from now on, both will adhere.

In the course of a few years the situation alters. The latency-period sets in, with a physiologically conditioned decline in the strength of the instincts, and a truce is called in the defensive warfare waged by the ego. It now has leisure to devote itself to other tasks and it acquires fresh contents, knowledge and capacities. At the same time it becomes stronger in relation to the outside world; it is less helpless and submissive and does not regard that world as quite so omnipotent as heretofore. Its whole attitude to external objects gradually changes as it surmounts the Oedipus situation. Complete dependence on the parents ceases and identification begins to take the place of object-love. More and more the principles held up to the child by his parents and teachers—their wishes, requirements and ideals—are introjected. In his inner life the outside world no longer makes itself felt solely in the form of objective anxiety. He has set up within his ego a permanent institution, in which are embodied the demands of those around him and

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which we call the super-ego. Simultaneously with this development a change takes place in the infantile anxiety. Fear of the outside world looms less large and gradually gives place to fear of the new representatives of the old power—to super-ego anxiety, anxiety of conscience and the sense of guilt. This means that the ego of the latency-period has acquired a new ally in the struggle to master the instinctual processes. Anxiety of conscience prompts the defence against instinct in the latency-period, just as it was prompted by objective anxiety in the early infantile period. As before, it is difficult to determine how much of the control over instinct acquired during the latency-period is to be attributed to the ego itself and how much to the powerful influence of the super-ego.

But the breathing-space provided by the latency-period does not last long. The struggle between the two antagonists, the ego and the id, has scarcely ended in this temporary truce before the terms of agreement are radically altered by the reinforcement of one of the combatants. The physiological process which marks the attainment of physical sexual maturity is accompanied by a stimulation of the instinctual processes, which is carried over into the psychic sphere in the form of an influx of libido. The relation established between the forces of the ego and the id is destroyed, the painfully achieved psychic balance is upset, with the result that the inner conflicts between the two institutions blaze up afresh.

At first there is very little to report on the side of

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the id. The interval between latency and puberty—the so-called pre-pubertal period—is merely preparatory to physical sexual maturity. So far, no qualitative change has taken place in the instinctual life, but the quantity of instinctual energy has increased. This increase is not confined to the sexual life. There is more libido at the id's disposal and it cathects indiscriminately any id-impulses which are at hand. Aggressive impulses are intensified to the point of complete unruliness, hunger becomes voracity and the naughtiness of the latency-period turns into the criminal behaviour of adolescence. Oral and anal interests, long submerged, come to the surface again. Habits of cleanliness, laboriously acquired during the latency-period, give place to pleasure in dirt and disorder, and instead of modesty and sympathy we find exhibitionistic tendencies, brutality and cruelty to animals. The reaction-formations, which seemed to be firmly established in the structure of the ego, threaten to fall to pieces. At the same time, old tendencies which had disappeared come into consciousness. The Oedipus wishes are fulfilled in the form of phantasies and day-dreams, in which they have undergone but little distortion; in boys ideas of castration and in girls penis-envy once more become the centre of interest. There are very few new elements in the invading forces. Their onslaught merely brings once more to the surface the familiar content of the early infantile sexuality of little children.

But the infantile sexuality thus resuscitated no

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longer encounters the former conditions. The ego of the early infantile period was undeveloped and indeterminate, impressionable and plastic under the influence of the id; in the pre-pubertal period, on the contrary, it is rigid and firmly consolidated. It already knows its own mind. The infantile ego was capable of suddenly revolting against the outside world and of allying itself with the id to obtain instinctual gratification, but, if the ego of the adolescent does this, it becomes involved in conflicts with the super-ego. Its firmly established relation to the id on the one hand and the super-ego on the other—that which we call character—makes the ego unyielding. It can know but one wish: to preserve the character developed during the latency-period, to re-establish the former relation between its own forces and those of the id and to reply to the greater urgency of the instinctual demands with redoubled efforts to defend itself. In this struggle to preserve its own existence unchanged the ego is motivated equally by objective-anxiety and anxiety of conscience and employs indiscriminately all the methods of defence to which it has ever had recourse in infancy and during the latency-period. It represses, displaces, denies and reverses the instincts and turns them against the self; it produces phobias and hysterical symptoms and binds anxiety by means of obsessional thinking and behaviour. If we scrutinize this struggle for supremacy between the ego and the id, we realize that almost all the disquieting phenomena of the pre-pubertal period correspond to different phases in the conflict.

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Increased activity of phantasy, lapses into pre-genital (i.e. perverse) sexual gratification, aggressive or criminal behaviour signify partial successes of the id, while the occurrence of various forms of anxiety, the development of ascetic traits and the accentuation of neurotic symptoms and inhibitions denote a more vigorous defence, i.e. the partial success of the ego.

With the attainment of bodily sexual maturity, the beginning of puberty proper, there is a further change, this time of a qualitative character. Hitherto the heightening of instinctual cathexis has been of a general, undifferentiated nature; now a change takes place (at any rate in the case of males), the genital impulses becoming more powerfully cathected. In the psychic sphere this means that the libidinal cathexis is withdrawn from pre-genital impulses and concentrated on genital feelings, aims and ideas of objects. Genitality acquires thereby an increased psychic importance, while the pre-genital tendencies are relegated to the background. The first result is an apparent improvement in the situation. Those responsible for the education of the adolescent, who have been concerned and puzzled by the pre-genital character of his instinctual life during the pre-pubertal period, now note with relief that the whole turmoil of boorishness, aggressiveness and perverse behaviour has vanished like a nightmare. The genital masculinity which succeeds to it meets with a far more favourable and indulgent judgment, even when it transgresses the limits of social convention. Yet this physiological,

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from the resulting crippling of the instinctual life, the fact that the victorious ego becomes rigidly fixed is permanently injurious to the individual. Ego-institutions which have resisted the onslaught of puberty without yielding generally remain throughout life inflexible, unassailable and unsusceptible of the rectification which a changing reality demands.

It would seem natural to suppose that the issue of the conflict in one or another of these extremes or its happy solution in a new agreement between the psychic institutions and, further, the many different phases through which it passes are determined by a quantitative factor, namely, the variations in the absolute strength of the instincts. But this simple explanation is contradicted by analytic observation of the processes in individuals at puberty. Of course it is not the case that, when the instincts become stronger for physiological reasons, the individual is necessarily more at their mercy or, on the other hand, that with a decline in the strength of the instincts those psychic phenomena become more prominent in which the ego and the super-ego play a greater part than the id. We know from the study of neurotic symptoms and pre-menstrual states that, whenever the demands of instinct become more urgent, the ego is impelled to redouble its defensive activities. On the other hand, when the instinctual claims are less pressing, the danger associated with them diminishes and with it the objective anxiety, the anxiety of conscience and the instinctual anxiety of the ego. Except in cases in

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which the latter is entirely submerged by the id, we find the converse of the suggested relation. Any additional pressure of instinctual demands stiffens the resistance of the ego to the instinct in question and intensifies the symptoms, inhibitions, etc., based upon that resistance, while, if the instincts become less urgent, the ego becomes more yielding and more ready to permit gratification. This means that the absolute strength of the instincts during puberty (which in any case cannot be measured or estimated independently) affords no prognosis of the final issue of puberty. The factors by which this is determined are relative: first, the strength of the id-impulses, which is conditioned by the physiological process at puberty; second, the ego's tolerance or intolerance of instinct, which depends on the character formed during the latency-period; third—and this is the qualitative factor which decides the quantitative conflict—the nature and efficacy of the defence-mechanisms at the ego's command, which vary with the constitution of the particular individual, i.e. his disposition to hysteria or to obsessional neurosis, and with the lines upon which he has developed.



## CHAPTER XII

### INSTINCTUAL ANXIETY DURING PUBERTY

IT has always been recognized that those phases of libido are of immense importance for the analytic investigation of the id. Owing to the heightened cathexis, wishes, phantasies and instinctual processes which at other periods occur unremarked or are confined to the unconscious emerge into consciousness, surmounting, when necessary, the obstacles placed in their way by repression and becoming accessible to observation as they force their way into the open.

It is equally important to focus our attention on these periods of increased libido when we are studying the ego. As we have seen, the indirect effect of the intensification of instinctual impulses is the redoubling of the subject's efforts to master the instincts. General tendencies in the ego, which in periods of tranquillity in the instinctual life are hardly noticeable, become more clearly defined, and the well-marked ego-mechanisms of the latency-period or adult life may be so exaggerated as to produce a morbid distortion of character. Of the various attitudes which the ego may adopt towards the instinctual life there are two in particular

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which, when thus accentuated at puberty, strike the observer with fresh force and explain some of the peculiarities typical of this period. I refer to the asceticism and the intellectuality of adolescence.

*Asceticism at puberty.*—Alternating with instinctual excesses and irruptions from the id and with other, apparently contradictory, attitudes, there is sometimes in adolescence an antagonism towards the instincts which far surpasses in intensity anything in the way of repression which we are accustomed to see under normal conditions or in more or less severe cases of neurosis. In the mode of its manifestation and the width of its range it is less akin to the symptoms of pronounced neurotic disease than to the asceticism of religious fanatics. In neurosis we find that there is always a connection between the repression of an instinct and the nature or quality of the instinct repressed. Thus hysterics repress the genital impulses associated with the object-wishes of the Oedipus complex but are more or less indifferent or tolerant in their attitude towards other instinctual wishes, e.g. anal or aggressive impulses. Obsessional neurotics repress the anal-sadistic wishes which, in consequence of regression, have become the vehicles of their sexuality, but they tolerate oral gratification and have no particular mistrust of any exhibitionistic impulses which they may have, so long as these are not directly connected with the nucleus of their neurosis. Again, in melancholia it is the oral tendencies in particular which are repudiated, while phobic patients repress the impulses associated with castration-complex. In

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there is at least some epinoic gain. Or prohibited forms of gratification are exchanged for other modes of enjoyment, through a process of displacement and reaction-formation, while we know that true neurotic symptoms such as hysterical attacks, tics, obsessional actions, the habit of brooding, etc., represent compromises in which the instinctual demands of the id are no less effectively fulfilled than the dictates of the ego and the super-ego. But in the repudiation of instinct characteristic of adolescence no loophole is left for such substitutive gratification: the mechanism seems to be a different one. Instead of compromise-formations (corresponding to neurotic symptoms) and the usual processes of displacement, regression and turning against the self we find almost invariably a swing-over from asceticism to instinctual excess, the adolescent suddenly indulging in everything which he had previously held to be prohibited and dis-regarding any sort of external restrictions. On account of their anti-social character these adolescent excesses re in themselves unwelcome manifestations; nevertheless, from the analytical standpoint they represent transitory spontaneous recovery from the condition of asceticism. Where no such recovery takes place and the ego in some inexplicable way is strong enough to carry through its repudiation of instinct without any deviation, the result is a paralysis of the subject's vital activities—a kind of a catatonic condition, which can no longer be regarded as a normal phenomenon of puberty but must be recognized as a psychotic affection.

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The question arises whether we are really justified in differentiating the repudiation of instinct during puberty from the usual process of repression. The basis for such a theoretical distinction is that, in the case of adolescents, the process begins with the fear rather of the quantity of instinct than of the quality of any particular impulses and ends not in substitutive gratifications and compromise-formations but in an abrupt juxtaposition or succession of instinctual renunciation and instinctual excess or, as we may say more correctly, in their alternation. On the other hand, we know that in ordinary neurotic repression the quantitative cathexis of the instinct to be repressed is an important factor and that in obsessional neurosis it is quite the usual thing for prohibition and indulgence to succeed one another. Nevertheless we still have the impression that a more primitive and less complex process is at work in the asceticism of adolescence than in repression proper; possibly the former represents a special case, or rather a preliminary phase, of repression. Long ago the analytical study of the neuroses suggested that there is in human nature a disposition to repudiate certain instincts, in particular the sexual instincts, indiscriminately and independently of individual experience. This disposition appears to be a phylogenetic inheritance, a kind of deposit accumulated from acts of repression practised by many generations and merely continued, not initiated, by individuals. To describe this dual attitude of mankind towards the sexual life—constitutional

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aversion coupled with passionate desire—Bleuler coined the term *ambivalence*.

During the calmer periods of life, the ego's primary antagonism to instinct—its dread of the strength of the instincts, as we have called it—is not much more than a theoretical concept. We conjecture that it is invariably the basis of instinctual anxiety, but for the observer it tends to be obscured by the much more conspicuous and obtrusive phenomena arising from objective anxiety or anxiety of conscience and resulting from shocks to which the individual has been exposed.

Probably the increase in the quantity of instinct at puberty and other periods in life when there is a sudden accession of instinctual energy accentuates this primary antagonism to such a degree that it becomes a specific and active defence-mechanism. If this is so, the ascetism of puberty must be interpreted not as a series of repressive activities, qualitatively conditioned, but simply as a manifestation of the innate hostility between the ego and the instincts, which is indiscriminate, primary and primitive.

*Intellectualization at puberty.*—We have come to the conclusion that in periods characterized by an accession of libido general attitudes of the ego may develop into definite methods of defence. If this is so, it may explain other changes which take place in the ego at puberty.

We know that most of the transformations during this period occur in the instinctual and affective life and, further, that the ego always undergoes a

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secondary modification when it is directly engaged in the attempt to master the instincts and the affects. But this by no means exhausts the possibilities of change in the adolescent. With the accession of instinctual energy he becomes more a creature of instinct; that is natural and needs no further explanation. He also becomes more moral and ascetic, the explanation being that a conflict is taking place between the ego and the id. But he becomes, besides, more intelligent and all his intellectual interests are keener. At first we do not see how this advance in intellectual development is connected with the advance in the development of the instincts and with the strengthening of the ego-institutions to resist the fiercer assaults launched upon it.

In general, we should expect to find that the storms of instinct or affect bore an inverse relation to the subject's intellectual activity. Even in the normal state of being in love a man's intellectual capacities tend to diminish and his reason is less reliable than usual. The more passionate his desire to fulfil his instinctual impulses, the less inclination has he as a rule to bring his intellect to bear on them and to examine their basis in reason.

It seems at first sight that in adolescence the reverse is the case. There is a type of young person whose sudden spurt in intellectual development is no less noticeable and surprising than his rapid development in other directions. We know how often the whole interest of boys during the latency-period is concentrated on things which have an

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actual, objective existence. Some boys love to read about discoveries and adventures or to study numbers and proportions or to devour descriptions of strange animals and objects, while others confine their attention to machinery, from the simplest to the most complicated form. The point which these two types usually have in common is that the object in which they are interested must be a concrete one, not the product of phantasy like the fairy-tales and fables enjoyed in early childhood, but something which has an actual physical existence. When the pre-pubertal period begins, a tendency for the concrete interests of the latency-period to give place to abstractions becomes more and more marked. In particular, adolescents of the type which Bernfeld describes as characterized by 'prolonged puberty' have an insatiable desire to think about abstract subjects, to turn them over in their minds and to talk about them. Many of the friendships of youth are based on and maintained by this desire to meditate upon and discuss such subjects together. The range of these abstract interests and of the problems which these young people try to solve is very wide. They will argue the case for free love or marriage and family-life, a free-lance existence or the adoption of a profession, roving or settling down, or discuss philosophical problems such as religion or free thought, or different political theories, such as revolution *versus* submission to authority, or friendship itself in all its forms. If, as sometimes happens in analysis, we receive a faithful report of the conversations of young people

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or if—as has been done by many of those who make a study of puberty—we examine the diaries and jottings of adolescents, we are not only amazed at the wide and unfettered sweep of their thought but impressed by the degree of empathy and understanding manifested, by their apparent superiority to more mature thinkers and sometimes even by the wisdom which they display in their handling of the most difficult problems.

We revise our opinion when we turn from the examination of the adolescent's intellectual processes themselves to consider how they fit into the general picture of his life. We are surprised to discover that this fine intellectual performance makes little or no difference to his actual behaviour. His empathy into the mental processes of other people does not prevent him from displaying the most outrageous lack of consideration towards those nearest to him. His lofty view of love and of the obligations of a lover does not mitigate the infidelity and callousness of which he is repeatedly guilty in his various love-affairs. The fact that his understanding of and interest in the structure of society often far exceed those of later years does not assist him in the least to find his true place in social life, nor does the many-sidedness of his interests deter him from concentrating entirely upon a single point—his preoccupation with his own personality. We recognize, especially when we come to investigate these intellectual interests in analysis, that we have here something quite different from intellectuality in the ordinary sense of the term. We must

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not suppose that an adolescent ponders on the various situations in love or on the choice of a profession in order to think out the right line of behaviour, as an adult might do or as a boy in the latency-period studies a piece of machinery in order to be able to take it to pieces and put it together again. Adolescent intellectuality seems merely to minister to day-dreams. Even the ambitious phantasies of the pre-pubertal period are not intended to be translated into reality. When a young lad phantasies that he is a great conqueror, he does not on that account feel any obligation to give proof of his courage or endurance in real life. Similarly, he evidently derives gratification from the mere process of thinking, speculating or discussing. His behaviour is determined by other factors and is not necessarily influenced by the results of these intellectual gymnastics.

There is yet another point which strikes us when we analyse the intellectual processes of adolescents. A closer examination shows that the subjects in which they are principally interested are the very same as have given rise to the conflicts between the different psychic institutions. Once more, the point at issue is how to relate the instinctual side of human nature to the rest of life, how to decide between putting sexual impulses into practice and renouncing them, between liberty and restraint, between revolt against and submission to authority. As we have seen, asceticism, with its flat prohibition of instinct, does not generally accomplish what the adolescent hopes. Since the danger is omnipresent,

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he has to devise many means of surmounting it. The *thinking-over* of the instinctual conflict—its intellectualization—would seem to be a suitable means. Here the ascetic flight from instinct is exchanged for a turning towards it. But this merely takes place in thought; it is an intellectual process. The abstract intellectual discussions and speculations in which young people delight are not genuine attempts at solving the tasks set by reality. Their mental activity is rather an indication of a tense alertness for the instinctual processes and the translation into abstract thought of that which they perceive. The philosophy of life which they construct—it may be their demand for revolution in the outside world—is really their response to the perception of the new instinctual demands of their own id, which threaten to revolutionize their whole lives. Their ideals of friendship and undying loyalty are simply a reflection of the disquietude of the ego when it perceives the evanescence of all its new and passionate object-relations.<sup>1</sup> The longing for guidance and support in the often hopeless battle against their own powerful instincts may be transformed into ingenious arguments about man's inability to arrive at independent political decisions. We see then that instinctual processes are translated into terms of intellect. But the reason why attention is thus focussed on the instincts is that an attempt is being

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Margit Dubowitz, of Budapest, for the suggestion that the tendency of adolescents to brood on the meaning of life and death reflects the destructive activities in their own psyche.

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made to lay hold of and master them on a different psychic level.

We remember that in psycho-analytical meta-psychology the association of affects and instinctual processes with ideas of words is stated to be the first and most important step in the direction of the mastery of instinct which has to be taken as the individual develops. Thinking is described in these writings as 'an experimental process in which the smallest possible quantities of instinct are employed.' This intellectualization of instinctual life, the attempt to lay hold on the instinctual processes by connecting them with ideas which can be dealt with in consciousness, is one of the most general, earliest and most necessary acquisitions of the human ego. We regard it not as an activity of the ego but as one of its indispensable components.

Once more we have the impression that the phenomena here comprised in the notion of 'intellectualization at puberty' simply represent the exaggeration, under the peculiar conditions of a sudden accession of libido, of a general ego-attitude. It is merely the increase in the quantity of libido which attracts attention to a function of the ego performed by it at other times as a matter of course, silently and, as it were, by the way. If this is so, it means that the intensification of intellectuality during adolescence—and perhaps, too, the very marked advance in intellectual understanding of psychic processes which is always characteristic of an access of psychotic disease—is simply part of the

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ego's customary endeavour to master the instincts by means of thought.

Here, I think, we may note a secondary discovery to which this train of thought has led us. If it is true that an increase in libidinal cathexis invariably has the automatic effect of causing the ego to redouble its efforts to work over the instinctual processes intellectually, this would explain the fact that instinctual danger makes human beings intelligent. In periods of calm in the instinctual life, when there is no danger, the individual can permit himself a certain degree of stupidity. In this respect instinctual anxiety has the familiar effect of objective anxiety. Objective danger and deprivations spur men on to intellectual feats and ingenious attempts to solve their difficulties, while objective security and superfluity tend to make them comfortably stupid. The focussing of the intellect on instinctual processes is analogous to the alertness which the human ego has found to be necessary in face of the objective dangers which surround it.

Hitherto the decline in the intelligence of little children at the beginning of the latency-period has been explained in another way. In early childhood their brilliant intellectual achievements are closely connected with their enquiries into the mysteries of sex and, when this subject becomes taboo, the prohibition and inhibition extend to other fields of thought. No surprise has been felt at the fact that, with the rekindling of sexuality in the pre-pubertal period, i.e. with the breakdown of the sexual repression of early childhood, the

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subject's intellectual capacities revive in all their old strength.

This is the ordinary explanation, to which we may now add a second. It may be that in the latency-period children not only *do not* indulge in abstract thought: they may have no need to do so. Infancy and puberty are periods of instinctual danger and the 'intelligence' which characterizes them serves at least in part to assist the subject to surmount that danger. In latency and adult life, on the other hand, the ego is relatively strong and can without detriment to the individual relax its efforts to intellectualize the instinctual processes. At the same time we must not forget that these mental performances, especially at puberty, brilliant and remarkable as they are, remain to a great extent unfruitful. This is true in one respect even of the intellectual feats of early childhood, which we admire and prize so highly. We have only to think how the infantile sexual investigations, which psycho-analysis regards as the clearest manifestation of the child's intellectual activity, hardly ever lead to a knowledge of the true facts of adult sexual life. As a rule, they result in the construction of infantile sexual theories, which do not represent the reality but reflect the instinctual processes in the mind of the childish observer.

The intellectual work performed by the ego during the latency-period and in adult life is incomparably more solid, more reliable and, above all, much more closely connected with action.

*Object-love and identification at puberty.*—Let us now

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consider how the asceticism and intellectualization characteristic of puberty fit into our scheme of orientation of the defensive processes according to anxiety and danger. We see at once that both the methods in question come under the heading of the third type of defence. The danger which threatens the ego is that it may be submerged by the instincts; what it dreads above all is the *quantity* of instinct. We believe that this anxiety originates very early in the development of the individual. Chronologically, it belongs to the period during which an ego is gradually being isolated out of the undifferentiated id. The defensive measures which its dread of the strength of the instincts impels it to adopt are designed to maintain this differentiation between ego and id and to ensure the permanence of the newly established ego-organization. The task which asceticism sets itself is to keep the id within limits by simply imposing prohibitions; the aim of intellectualization is to link up instinctual processes closely with ideational contents and so to render them accessible to consciousness and amenable to control.

Now when, with the sudden accession of libido, the individual falls back to this primitive level of dread of the strength of the instincts, the rest of the instinctual and ego-processes are bound to be affected. In what follows I shall select two of the most important of the many peculiarities of puberty and trace their connection with this process of ego-repression.

The most remarkable phenomena in the life of

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adolescents are at bottom connected with their object-relations. It is here that the conflict between two opposite tendencies is most visible. We have seen that the repression prompted by the general antagonism to instinct usually selects for its first attack the incestuous phantasies of the pre-pubertal period. The suspicion and asceticism of the ego are primarily directed against the subject's fixation to all the love-objects of his childhood. The result of this is, on the one hand, that the young person tends to isolate himself; from this time on, he will live with the members of his family as though with strangers. But it is not only his relation to external love-objects which attracts the ego's innate antagonism to instinct; his relation to the super-ego suffers likewise. In so far as the super-ego is at this period still cathected with libido derived from the relation to the parents, it is itself treated as a suspicious incestuous object and falls a victim to the consequences of asceticism. The ego alienates itself from the super-ego also. To young people this partial repression of the super-ego, the estrangement from part of its contents, is one of the greatest troubles of adolescence. The principal effect of the rupture of the relation between ego and super-ego is to increase the danger which threatens from the instincts. The individual tends to become asocial. Before this disturbance took place, the anxiety of conscience and sense of guilt which arose out of the relation of the ego to the super-ego were the former's most powerful allies in its struggle with the instincts. At the beginning of puberty there is

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often evidence of a transient attempt to effect a hyper-cathexis of all the contents of the super-ego. This is probably the explanation of the so-called 'idealism' of adolescence. We now have the following situation: asceticism, itself due to an increase in instinctual danger, actually leads to the rupture of the relation with the super-ego and so renders inoperative the defensive measures prompted by super-ego anxiety; with the result that the ego is still more violently thrown back to the level of pure instinctual anxiety and the primitive protective mechanisms characteristic of that level.

Self-isolation and a turning-away from love-objects are not, however, the only tendencies which come into play in the object-relations of adolescents. Many new attachments take the place of the repressed fixations to the love-objects of childhood. Sometimes the individual becomes attached to young people of his own age, in which case the relation takes the form of passionate friendship or of actually being in love; sometimes the attachment is to an older person, whom he takes as his leader and who is clearly a substitute for the abandoned parent-objects. While they last, these love-relations are passionate and exclusive, but they are of short duration. Persons are selected as objects and abandoned without any consideration for their feelings, and others are chosen in their place. The abandoned objects are quickly and completely forgotten, but the form of the relation to them is preserved down to the minutest detail and is generally reproduced, with an exactness which

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almost suggests obsession, in the relation to the new object.

Besides this striking faithlessness to the love-object we note another peculiarity of the object-relations at puberty. The adolescent does not aim so much at possessing himself of the object in the ordinary physical sense of the term as at assimilating himself as much as possible to the person who at the moment occupies the central place in his affection.

The changeableness of young people is a commonplace. In their handwriting, mode of speech, way of doing their hair, their dress and all sorts of habits they are far more adaptable than at any other period of life. Often a single glance at an adolescent will tell us who is the older friend whom he admires. But their capacity for change goes even further. Their philosophy of life, their religion and politics alter, as they exchange one model for another, and, however often they change, they are always just as firmly and passionately convinced of the rightness of the views which they have so eagerly adopted. In this respect they resemble a type of patient, described by Helene Deutsch, in a clinical work on the psychology of adults, as being on the borderline between neurosis and psychosis.<sup>1</sup> She calls them persons of the 'as if' type [*'als ob' Typus*], because in every new object-relation they live *as if* they were really living their own life and expressing their own feelings, opinions and views.

In a young girl whom I analysed the mechanism

<sup>1</sup> Helene Deutsch, 'Über einen Typus der Pseudofaktivität ('Als ob')', *Internationale Zeitschrift für Psychoanalyse*, Bd. XX, 1934, S. 323 ff.

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on which these processes of transformation are based was specially clear. Several times in the course of a single year she changed in this way from one friendship to another, from girls to boys and from boys to older women. On each occasion she did not merely become indifferent to the abandoned love-object but conceived for the person in question a peculiar and violent dislike—verging on contempt—and felt that any accidental or unavoidable meeting between them was almost unbearable. After a good deal of analytic work we finally discovered that these feelings towards her former friends were not her own at all. Every time she changed her love-object, she felt obliged to model her behaviour on and adopt the views of her new friend in all sorts of matters relating to both her inner and her outward life. So she no longer experienced her own affects but those of the friend of the moment. Her dislike of the people she had formerly loved was not really her own. By a process of empathy she had come to share the feelings of her new friend. Thus she was giving expression to the jealousy which she fantasied that *he* felt towards everyone whom she had once loved or to *his* (not her own) contempt for possible rivals.

The psychic situation in this and similar phases of puberty may be described very simply. These passionate and evanescent love-fixations are not object-relations at all, in the sense in which we use the term in speaking of adults. They are identifications of the most primitive kind, such as we meet with in our study of early infantile development,

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before any object-love exists. Thus the fickleness characteristic of puberty does not indicate any inner change in the love or convictions of the individual but rather a loss of personality in consequence of a change in identification.

The processes revealed by the analysis of a fifteen-year-old girl may perhaps throw some light on the part played by this propensity for identification. My patient was an exceptionally pretty and charming girl and already played a part in her social circle, but in spite of this she was tormented with a frantic jealousy of a sister who was still only a child. At puberty the patient gave up all her former interests and was thenceforth actuated by a single desire—to win the admiration and love of the boys and men who were her friends. She fell violently in love, at a distance, with a boy rather older than herself, whom she used sometimes to meet at parties and dances. At this time she wrote me a letter, in which she expressed her doubts and worries in connection with this love-affair.

'Please tell me,' she wrote, 'how to behave when I meet him. Ought I to be serious or gay? Will he like me better if I show that I am intelligent or if I pretend to be stupid? Would you advise me to talk about *him* the whole time, or shall I talk about myself too? . . . ?' When the patient next came to see me, I answered her questions verbally. I suggested that perhaps it was really not necessary to plan her behaviour in advance. When the time came, could she not just be herself and behave as she felt? She assured me that that would never

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do and gave me a long dissertation on the necessity of suiting yourself to other people's preferences and wishes. She said that only in that way could you be sure of making them love you and, unless this boy loved her, she simply could not go on living.

Shortly afterwards, this patient related a phantasy in which she pictured something like the end of the world. What would happen, she asked, if everybody died? She went through all her friends and relations, until finally she imagined herself left quite alone on the earth. Her voice, her emphasis and the way in which she described all the details showed that this phantasy was a wish-fulfilment. She enjoyed relating it and it caused her no anxiety.

At this point I reminded her of her passionate desire to be loved. The mere idea of one of her friends not liking her and of losing his love had sufficed, only the day before, to plunge her into despair. But who was to love her if she were the sole survivor of the human race? She calmly dismissed my reminder of her worries of the previous day. 'In that case I should love myself,' she said, as if at last she were rid of all her anxieties, and she heaved a deep sigh of relief.

This little analytic observation in the case of a particular patient does, I think, indicate something which is characteristic of certain object-relations at puberty. The rupture of former relations, antagonism to the instincts and asceticism all have the effect of delibidizing the external world. The

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adolescent is in danger of withdrawing his object-  
libido from those around him and concentrating it  
upon himself; just as he has regressed within the  
ego, so he may regress in his libidinal life from  
object-love to narcissism. He escapes this danger  
by convulsive efforts to make contact once more  
with external objects, even if it can only be by way  
of his narcissism, that is, through a series of identifi-  
cations. According to this view, the passionate  
object-relations of adolescence represent attempts  
at recovery—another respect in which they resemble  
the state of psychotic patients whose disease is  
about to take one of its periodic turns for the worse.

In my account of puberty I have so often com-  
pared the peculiar characteristics of that period  
with the phenomena of grave disease that (although  
this study makes no pretence at completeness) I  
ought perhaps to say a word about the normality  
or abnormality of the processes which take place  
during this phase.

We have seen that the basis of comparison between  
puberty and the beginning of one of the periodic  
advances in psychotic disease is the effect which  
we attribute to quantitative changes in cathexis.  
In each case the heightened libidinal cathexis of the  
id adds to the instinctual danger, causing the ego  
to redouble its efforts to defend itself in every  
possible way. It has always been realized in psycho-  
analysis that, because of these quantitative processes,  
every period in human life during which libido is  
increased may prove the starting-point of neurotic  
or psychotic disease.

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Secondarily, puberty and such accesses of psycho-  
sis resemble one another in the emergence of  
primitive defensive attitudes which we associate  
with the ego's dread of the strength of the instincts  
—an anxiety which goes further back than any  
objective anxiety or anxiety of conscience.

The impression which we receive of the normality  
or abnormality of the processes at puberty in any  
individual will probably depend upon whether  
there is a predominance of one or other of the  
characteristics which I have enumerated or of  
several of them at once. The ascetic adolescent  
strikes us as normal, so long as his intellect functions  
freely and he has a number of healthy object-  
relations. A similar proviso applies to adolescents  
of the type which intellectualizes instinctual pro-  
cesses, to those of the idealistic type and also to  
those who are carried headlong from one enthusi-  
astic friendship to another. But, if the ascetic  
attitude is rigorously maintained, if the process of  
intellectualization overturns the whole field of  
mental life and relations to other people are based  
exclusively on changing identifications, it will be  
difficult for a teacher or analyst to decide from  
observation how much may still be regarded as a  
transitional phase in normal development and how  
much is already pathological.