

Also the position of sublimation in a hierarchy (or chronological sequence) of psychic mechanisms seems worth investigating.

As regards energy, although we have hardly touched on this matter, certain possibilities have presented themselves. It seems that a quantitative factor in displacement might permit of a classification in which sublimation would be characterized by complete transfer of cathexes. This naturally suggests the operation (independently or concurrently) of a *qualitative* factor. Indeed one tends to form the opinion that some qualitative change in energy may prove to be the only valid metapsychological criterion of sublimation. An illustration of this qualitative factor would be the process of desexualization to be considered later. Finally, it is obvious that there is much to be gained by an examination of the sources of instincts involved, particularly the relation between reactive instincts and instincts capable of sublimation.

In conclusion, we must remind ourselves of two possible errors in approach. First of all we may have been obsessed by cultural valuations; it may be that we should define sublimation only in terms of protective value (related chiefly to illness). Sublimation might then be regarded as that process which affords the maximum protection from illness with the minimum expenditure of energy. Lastly the factor of social valuation reminds us that in attempting to define sublimation in purely metapsychological terms we may be attempting the impossible. If, as Ella F. Sharpe suggests, sublimation and civilization are conterminous, it would be unreasonable to expect to shoehorn sublimation into a short metapsychological definition.

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*Clinical Investigations.*—We have at last arrived at the proliferating margin of research on sublimation. There are three obvious directions in recent investigation. The first is clinical, the second a re-examination of psychic structure and the third a qualitative investigation of psychic energies. By accepted usage clinical investigation comes first. Clinical investigations can be either direct, in which case we are concerned at first hand with the observation and analysis of processes regarded by common consent as sublimatory, or they can be indirect, by which is implied the observation and analysis of phenomena accompanying or connected with sublimation, but not usually regarded as part of sublimation.

*Transitory Sublimations.* (a) *Developmental.*—A good example of the direct method is the investigation made by Bernfeld (2) into

transitory sublimations occurring in seemingly normal children and adolescents. These transitory sublimations depend, in his view, on the amount of libido the ego has at its free disposal. He has described two extreme cases, (a) where libido gratification, although ego-syntonic : is delayed and the libido is directed towards other ego-syntonic objects of a non-sexual variety ; the condition here is that the ego impulses must not (either independently or as the result of libido frustration) be in a state of deprivation : (b) where the libido tends to subserve ego purposes it can be called upon by the ego when the latter has insufficient energy to effect an ego-aim. From his study of these and other types, Bernfeld suggests some general formulations regarding sublimation : that its amount has a definite relation to the strength of the ego, that plasticity of libido is only one factor and that deviation of aim is only one of many aspects of sublimation.

(b) *During Illness.*—A second example of the direct method brings me to part of the clinical material that is responsible for my own interest in sublimation. I am unable for reasons of space to give details on this occasion and will confine myself to the general description of findings. The material concerns transitory sublimations accompanying pathological states. The states, as might be expected, were not neurotic in type but were partly of the unclassified order, alcoholism, drug-addiction, etc., partly in the nature of neurotic character-formations and partly larval psychoses (e.g. apparently normal individuals with paranoidal formations or schizophrenic reactions). A feature of these cases was the *extreme lability* of the sublimation processes. It was not that the individual was compulsively hunting without any sense of satisfaction for some ideal activity ; all their energies appeared to be poured in one sublimation and then apparently completely displaced to another sublimation, leaving the original interest like an empty husk. And in each phase there was apparently complete satisfaction. Nevertheless, allowing for the change in idiom (in other words, in the presentation content) the activities invariably showed a common denominator of symbolic expression of unconscious phantasy. But although the processes were extremely labile, and in that way differed from the more usual stable formations of adult life, they could not at first sight have been distinguished from sublimations by the most exacting cultural or æsthetic standards, e.g. they were concerned with singing, painting, sculpture, literature, scientific and historical research, etc., etc. In one case presenting delusional features and a general lack of reality feeling, it could be observed that the delusional mechanism

always secured some element of representation in the activities without necessarily interfering seriously with their performance.<sup>4</sup> When, however, owing to some extrinsic cause or some intrinsic factor of guilt any one activity was gradually abandoned, the interval was characterized by restlessness, extreme tension and manifestations of anxiety together with spasmodic outbursts of component sexual activities, e.g. playing with fæces.

*Sublimation and Sexual Perversion.*—A less direct type of observation involves some consideration of the phenomena of sexual perversion. These phenomena have always had some theoretical interest for the student of sublimation. For example, the view that in sexual perversion one or more component sexual impulses are retained and accentuated, as the price of complete repression of other components relating to the Œdipus situation, has a certain resemblance to views held concerning aim-inhibition. Admittedly the degree of direct sexual pleasure enables us to make a clinical distinction, but the refractoriness of many perversions to analysis suggests that, presumably owing to symbolic associations, a considerable deviation of energy from other components has taken place.

On the clinical side the relation of perversion to sublimation is more obvious. In many cases one finds that the perverse activity is more freely exercised where certain æsthetic conditions are fulfilled. For example, an invert with whipping phantasies describes how his erotic activities are inhibited unless the whip conforms to certain æsthetic standards, size, shape, tapering, smoothness, colour, etc., etc. Clothes and shoe fetichists (13) show similar reactions. Underclothes, for example, must conform to certain rigid æsthetic laws of pattern, colour, line and so on. The rigidity of such standards is reminiscent of the severe canons upheld with such religious fervour by critics or exponents of the fine arts. Indeed, if one did not know what was the actual subject matter of association, it would be difficult for the hearer to distinguish some diagnostic discussions of the conditions for perverse sexual gratifications from an æsthetic discussion of the canons of 'good' or 'bad' art.

*Sublimation and Affect.*—Turning from this type of observation to less direct investigations, I will again eliminate detail and present the conclusions which I have formed gradually and with increasing conviction throughout my analytic practice. I think it cannot escape

<sup>4</sup> Ella F. Sharpe (*op. cit.*) says: 'Sublimation springs from the same root as the delusion of persecution.'

the attention of any analyst that in the course of reporting activities of the sublimation type, patients more or less constantly display associated manifestations of anxiety or guilt either directly or in various reactive forms, anger, irritation, criticism of others, feelings of inferiority and self-depreciation, hopelessness, phantastic ambition of a reassurance variety and so forth. And it cannot escape attention that the attempted analysis not only of these reactions but of components of the sublimation evokes intense resistance. Writing some years ago, on the technical aspects of resistance (14), I pointed out the very high defence value of resistances cloaked by sublimation and remarked that not only was the mechanism of displacement exploited or undermined by Id impulses, but that in this situation the mechanism of rationalization could be exploited to any extraordinary degree as a supplementary defence. At the time I merely drew attention to the association of anxiety with sublimation processes, and I did not attempt to pursue the question of a 'formation' any farther. Before doing so now I should like to call attention to a few interesting features of the situation.

Starting with the systems of rationalization just mentioned, it is interesting to note that these are not limited to purely realistic ego considerations which naturally are a feature of sublimated activities. The patient is not content with proclaiming that his activities have no hidden significance and that they represent ordinary accepted social or cultural activities, he usually goes on to proclaim adherence to a system of absolute values, ethical, æsthetic or scientific; in this way he endeavours to bar any investigation of elements that may appear to the analyst to be thin disguises for repressed impulses. And here we can see one of the main practical difficulties attendant on cultural valuation of sublimation. The analyst who has a strong bias in favour of cultural valuations is liable to be hoist with his own petard during the analysis particularly of characterological cases. It is almost as if the patient knew that the analyst had given consent to general values and retorted by raising his own values to a series of absolutes. These absolutes are generally held by the patient to be immune from inspection. Investigation is regarded as a form of blasphemy. The defence is similar to that adopted by theosophically minded patients who endeavour to evade the issue of infantile guilt by reference to the Laws of Karma, the state of their reincarnations, etc. These being in their view beyond discussion, infantile guilt is regarded as a secondary phenomenon of mere academic importance.

Obviously the first step in investigation is to classify the activities in question, next to classify the reactions and then to compare these with reactions to other social situations in which the element of sublimation is not so stressed. I shall not attempt these investigations now; very little reflection suggests, however, that we should have no difficulty in proving how widespread are the ramifications of social anxiety. The element of snobbery which, statistically regarded, is a common accompaniment of æsthetic and cultural preoccupations provides us with a link to another group of social-anxiety reactions, viz. social snobbery; and it would be easy to establish a series of parallels, ethical, religious or even hypochondriacal. Admittedly the value of rationalization would vary in different series, e.g. the standards of social snobbery would gain less universal acceptance than would æsthetic absolutes (15).

Now these data admittedly comprise reactions tending to conceal anxiety or guilt. But it is not difficult to prove that in a large number of instances there is an aura of anxiety surrounding preoccupation with cultural activities. Sometimes it is free anxiety, sometimes fixed on some definite element of substitution. It is practically a universal analytical experience that patients express open apprehension as to the effect of analysis on their artistic or other creative activities; failing a suitable focus for such anxiety in their own personality, they will propound with great seriousness general problems, e.g. would a great master have produced masterpieces had he been analysed; what would have happened had Christ been analysed; are not neuroses the mainspring of cultural achievement, and so on. Ernest Jones (16) has recently published a short communication on one aspect of this subject.

Now I am not concerned for the moment with the interpretation of such attitudes in terms of replacement of presentation. I merely emphasize the fact that anxiety can be detected either directly or through protective reactions in close association with processes of sublimation. Some patients provide the analyst with abundant material of this kind: they will spend days quoting their own researches into the life histories of geniuses, the object being to show that neurotic suffering is an inevitable prerequisite of creative genius.

In addition to anxiety accompaniments of sublimatory activities, one finds frequently a marked association of reactive attitudes. We know that reactive attitudes of hate are a common cover for anxiety states, but the amount of hate and aggression attached to these cultural constellations is so great as to suggest that they provide a more or less

direct outlet for destructive impulses. It is interesting to consider in this connection one of the natural polarities of æsthetic or scientific pursuits, viz. creative and critical (destructive) activities. Interpretation is after all simply a compromise between these tendencies. It is no exaggeration to say that a large proportion of critical activities are concerned less with measurement, correlation and orientation than with direct satisfaction of destructive urges. The amount of heat which can be engendered in these fields of æsthetic activity is popularly discounted for three reasons ; first, that the indulgence is so common, second that destructive trends are cloaked behind the creative aspect of constructive criticism and thirdly that particularly in the case of literary criticism, tendencies of wit and recompense of style (technique) help to conceal or extenuate the more primitive interests.

*Obsessional Sequence.*—In general then there is sufficient evidence of the association of anxiety reactions and aggressive trends with sublimated activities to warrant further investigation. The most natural explanation appears to be that sublimations act as conductors for unconscious impulses and affects. This has already been stated by Freud for the obsessional neuroses ; in that neurosis sublimations act as substitutions and provide suitable points for break through, i.e. for the return of the repressed. If now we find this conductor system in active operation in the general sphere of sublimations, we are bound to ask whether we have somehow failed to recognise an *obsessional sequence of events*. (The obsessional sequence is : reaction formation—return of repressed—defence formation.) The direction of this train of thought is obvious ; all along we have tried to maintain some clear distinction between sublimation and symptom formation, and now we are faced with the possibility that in many instances sublimations are part of larger psychic formations resembling symptoms. The restitution aspect of sublimations emphasised by Melanie Klein and Ella F. Sharpe has distinct resemblances to obsessional formations through the mechanism of undoing.

*Phobia Formation.*—But it is not only a question of obsessional technique in a social or cultural sphere ; wherever we find conductors or substitutions plus a certain amount of anxiety we have all the essential ingredients of a phobia formation. And it is this particular aspect of the problem that I wish to single out on this occasion. Have we any grounds for thinking that sublimations accompanied by anxiety reactions are part of an extended phobia system ? You will remember, of course, that the phobias we meet clinically and treat are

'unsuccessful'; the measures adopted to prevent affect following the return of the repressed have failed. If now we regard sublimations accompanied by anxiety as extended phobias, it may be that we can establish a criterion for true sublimation, viz. that it should be a 'successful phobia', an affectless deviation and displacement of sexual energy. But in that case we should have to admit that it is the rarest of human phenomena. I have already referred to the commonly accepted view concerning sublimation that it promotes *Lust* and diminishes *Unlust*, and have queried whether it is statistically or approximately true. My clinical experience goes to show that it is by no means invariably true.

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We cannot continue discussion of this point without some precise understanding of the nature of *social anxiety*. The complications of this subject are due to the different manifestations of anxiety and the modifications they undergo at different stages of development. Freud's (6) (7) most recent teaching takes cognizance of primary anxiety states, the phobia formations of early childhood and the classical phobias of adult life. Concentration of interest on adult phobias tends to obscure two important facts; the unassisted dispersal or spread or spontaneous modification of early phobias, and the distinction between external anxiety and endopsychic (guilt) factors which can be observed in infantile phobias. To put the matter simply, there is a tendency to confuse social anxiety with guilt, and there has been a tendency to easy acceptance of the view that certain anxiety states are spontaneously *resolved* rather than *dispersed* in smaller formations.

We have become accustomed to subdivide the conditions for anxiety in a certain order, starting with those dangers which can be attributed to aggression from without (loss of love, castration anxiety) and ending with a completely endopsychic condition (fear of loss of love on the part of the super-ego). This last form of anxiety gives rise to the affect of guilt experienced directly or in the form of need of punishment, and is regarded as having a special relation to the aggressive impulses. The external factor becomes modified in course of time from anxiety about actual aggression to anxiety regarding external criticism. The internal factor is and remains an anxiety of internal criticism. The anxiety regarding external criticism which is identical with anxiety regarding loss of love is distinguished as social anxiety. It can be expressed also in the simple formula—fear of consequences if found out. A prominent factor in childhood, it is probably grossly

under-estimated in relation to adult life. Its relation to internal criticism is, however, very intimate and sharp distinction is difficult. This is to a large extent due to the operation of the mechanism of projection; in the first place the aggression of external authority is exaggerated by projection and in the second the sharpness of internal criticism can be temporarily reduced by displacing it in the form of social anxiety. In the same way introjection processes blur the sharp dividing-line between the two situations. Both are, however, subject to a certain amount of modification in the course of adolescence. Conditions of social anxiety are more precise, and in the same way the most superficial aspects of super-ego criticism begin to merit the term of social or conscious conscience. Recent investigation suggests that the onset of 'endopsychic conditions of anxiety' (guilt) is much earlier than has been supposed, but, speculation apart, we have no proof as yet that guilt and external anxiety reactions are organized simultaneously. And in the meantime theoretical considerations seem to justify the view that primarily fear reactions precede guilt.

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*Return of Dispersed Phobias.*—If now we re-examine the affects and reactions accompanying sublimations, we see that whilst the element of anxiety is in many cases obvious, the reactions appear to present a mixture of social anxiety with displaced guilt. A fair distinction can be drawn between preoccupations that are more or less compulsively followed in order to acquire merit (liquidate guilt) and those in which the desire not to be found out plays an important part. It is not overstating matters to say that many individuals who appear to have spent their lives in cultural pursuits can be found on examination to have been clinging anxiously to a thin façade of cultural preoccupation in order to escape detection and criticism. Doubtless the strength of aggressive components associated with the activity determines whether the reaction falls into one group or the other.

Anyhow we have to consider the possibility that the spontaneously disappearing phobias of earlier life have not in fact disappeared, but have become dispersed and that they tend to reassemble and organize themselves in association with sublimated activities. These formations are of course not so closely knit or condensed as phobias, hence contain anxiety better. At the same time we must ask whether the freedom from manifest obsessional states enjoyed by a large number of people is not due to displacement of obsessional technique to activities which



according to cultural valuations are not suspected of being symptomatic.

*The Anxiety Character.*—Now on this point some suggestive work has already been published by Ernest Jones in his paper, 'The Anxiety Character'. (8) Basing himself on the view that if defensive reactions to anxiety are localized they are *a priori* phobia formations, he defines an anxiety character as that state where anxiety trends and the defensive reactions are built into the structure of the personality as a whole. They are diffuse and laid down early in the defensive process. He sees three components in the formation, a positive one relating to the amount of libidinal excitation, the development of anxiety and its displacement (in the case of anxiety character) by absorption into the personality. The individual reacts to social situations wherever they present possibilities of loss or injury of symbolic significance (operations, loss of valued objects) or where they represent minor social deprivations (slights and rebuffs, etc.). Should, nevertheless, the developed anxiety prove objectionable a third component can be distinguished, a concealed anxiety reaction against anxiety. This frequently takes the form of hate reactions, anger and irritability, although here too the relations to guilt reactions are very close. On the whole he has selected social situations in illustration of this condition, but it is easy to see that it could be held to include most of the formations I have already described in reference to cultural activities. The justification for the concept of an anxiety character is a wider issue into which I shall not enter, except to remark that whilst some characteristics of timidity, cautiousness, etc. seem to be formations, they are certainly more *mobile* than the usual character reactions. This apart, it is evident that a quantitative factor should help us to decide on possible differences between the anxiety character and sublimations associated with anxiety (or obsessional) technique. And I want to suggest that although these latter states are much more diffuse than localized phobia symptom formations, they are nevertheless by comparison with the diffuse anxiety preparedness described by Ernest Jones sufficiently fixed and highly enough charged to deserve a special category.

*Anxiety and Inhibition.*—A third possible view of the relation of anxiety to sublimation is suggested by Melanie Klein (10) (12) in her work on the neurotic inhibitions of childhood. According to an earlier paper, there occurs even in successful repression a displacement of affect (in the form of anxiety) from the repressed to ego tendencies; the displacement is effected by identification (later symbolism) and

the ego activity in question has in any case some degree of primary libidinal cathexis. The anxiety is not shown directly, but manifests itself in the form of inhibitions. In some cases these can be termed normal inhibitions, but where repression is unsuccessful the amount of displaced anxiety is greater and the inhibitions are of a neurotic type. A complementary relation between repression and sublimation is necessary for a neurotic inhibition. Not only must repression be unsuccessful, but there must also have existed strong sublimatory interests in the ego activity in question. The situation has resemblances to a phobia formation, but differs from it in two ways—first that the anxiety is bound in the inhibition, whereas it is freed in the phobia, and second, that where symptom formation exists fixation has led to repression at an earlier stage, before successful sublimation has been effected.

Melanie Klein's later views emphasize the fact that owing to anxiety, induced by frustration and phantasies about the parents' organs, identification with non-sexual objects is stimulated; anxiety is then displaced to the appropriate ego interests. This displacement has adaptation value because through identification (symbolism) energies are transferred to ego tendencies. But the degree of anxiety is important; if early anxiety is excessive it inhibits symbolism and therefore capacity to sublimate (i.e. transfer of interest): if, however, the transfer of anxiety is excessive it is liable to end in inhibition of the ego activity (sublimation).

The earlier theoretical reconstruction of the course of events is not entirely satisfying, partly because it makes use of a now abandoned theory of anxiety, and partly because the relations between repression, sublimation and symptom formation are rather schematic, and depend at some points on the use of terms such as "unsuccessful" repression or sublimation. But the clinical findings are not in dispute, viz. that when inhibitions are analysed quantities of anxiety are freed, that inhibitions (unless presumably pseudo-inhibitions due to absence of transferred interest) are superimposed on existing sublimations, and that transfer of both interest and anxiety takes place along lines of displacement.

*Classification.*—Now I agree that there is no special virtue in elaborating classifications of clinical phenomena; on the other hand, it is improbable that we can grasp the detailed relations of sublimations and anxiety states so long as we remain content with broad clinical groupings. So making due allowance for over-elaboration and over-

lapping, there would appear to be at least four groups of phenomena to be considered: (a) Classical phobia formations (symptoms), which interfere with sublimations in a secondary sense, (b) minor, almost occult, phobia formations (Ernest Jones' 'anxiety character' type) which, again secondarily, interfere with sublimations, (c) inhibitions which conceal the direct attachment of anxiety to sublimations, and (d) anxiety states directly associated with sublimations. The latter, though open anxiety states, are not recognized clinically owing in part to the social sanction given to such reactions or to a social conspiracy of silence (or inattention) on such matters. Other groups could doubtless be added, e.g. (e) sublimations which perform a protective function similar to the protective function of an obsessional neurosis, (f) sublimations in which a delusional element plays a part.

*Summary.*—The upshot of this discussion is as follows: If we take a wide enough view, it cannot be said that the outcome of sublimation is invariably to promote *Lust* and diminish *Unlust*. We do in fact find *Unlust* in frequent and close association with sublimated activities. This does not exclude the possibility that there is a type of pure sublimation which has such an effect, but it does suggest that pure sublimation is rather a rare phenomenon. We may indeed inquire whether we have not imported into the concept a subjective and phantastic standard, a kind of omnipotent valuation which detracts from the usefulness of the term in workaday analysis. From this point of view we are thrown back rather on a protective standard in estimating sublimations. Secondly, observation of the phenomena of transitory sublimations in normal states and of their regression or mobility in pathological states is a useful preliminary to study of processes such as 'desexualization'. The mobility supports the idea of a store of permanently neutral energy which can follow on the heels of unmodified and merely displaced pilot impulses. Regressional changes and reduction of sublimations to symbolisms suggests that the unmodified energy is quantitatively more than a mere pilot impulse, no matter how much neutral energy is in store.

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*Modification of Energy*—This brings us to the second phase in the development of the concept of sublimation, viz. research on the *modifications of energy* involved by sublimation. In essence this is a theoretical matter, a matter of Id psychology; our clinical contact is practically limited to a discussion of sources of instincts and to observation of the phenomena connected with reactive instincts. Needless to say the texts

on which all such discussions hang are to be found in the *Ego and the Id* (17). They are firstly that 'the transformation of object libido into narcissistic libido which thus takes place (when an erotic object-choice is transformed into a modification of the ego) implies an abandonment of sexual aims, a process of desexualization; it is consequently a kind of sublimation'. It is suggested here that perhaps the ego after this transformation has been effected goes on to give the transformed libido another aim. The second suggestion is that there exists in the mind a neutral displaceable energy which can augment the cathexis of an erotic or destructive impulse. This Freud regards as an indispensable concept, particularly in relation to his discrimination between Life and Death instincts. This neutral energy 'is probably active alike in the ego and in the id and presumably proceeds from the narcissistic reservoir of libido', is 'desexualized Eros'. It might also be described as sublimated energy. The third assumption is that the identification with the father from which the super-ego arises is 'in the nature of a desexualization or even of a sublimation'. But it seems 'there occurs at the same time an instinctual defusion'. After sublimation the erotic components cannot 'bind the whole of the destructive elements' and 'these are released in the form of inclination to aggression and destruction'.

If we try to express these ideas in familiar metapsychological terms it will be seen that they can be contained under the heading of deviation of aim. But it is obvious that the 'desexualisation' implied is something more fundamental: it implies a permanent neutrality. From this point of view the regression phenomena observed clinically in sublimation activities merit careful consideration. A mere cessation of activities could be attributed simply to withdrawal of this auxiliary energy. But a regression, or if you prefer it, a replacement of sublimations by manifest erotic urges suggests two possibilities. It might imply an excess of displaced but not completely desexualized pilot energy existing in the formation. Or it could be due to the transfer of neutral energy to a previously weakly cathected or strongly repressed erotic trend. Moreover, it is to be noted that the energies are derived from external object cathexes of an advanced type. And this leaves the problem of some earlier component sexual instincts rather in the cold. Then as to the view that the erotic component is mainly sublimated after the 'defusion' of withdrawn object cathexes: the simplest explanation of this process would be that the absorption of defused aggressive components by the super-ego provides the addi-

tional impetus necessary to initiate sublimations of whatever variety. Another possibility is worth considering; it might be regarded as a rider to the first proposition. It can be stated as follows: is the defusion simply an inevitable result of withdrawal of cathexis and the sublimation simply a necessary fate of the withdrawn erotic component; or is sublimation only possible after defusion has taken place, i.e. after the destructive components have been isolated and bound in super-ego activity?

*Sublimation and Aggressive Impulses.*—Some points in favour of this view may be suggested here: it is well known that aggressive impulses are more tenacious of aim than sexual impulses. Their objects can be changed and the mode of gratification altered, but the aim remains. And it would appear plausible that this factor must cause difficulty in the displacement of fused impulses. We can see in the case of certain object relations how erotic impulses can light up aggressive tendencies and aggressive tendencies stimulate erotic relations. To prevent confusion it may be emphasized that we are not concerned at the moment with transformation of love into hate or, except in the most general sense, with ambivalence, but merely with the concept of fusion. Returning to our clinical data, it is to be observed that in practically all cases where *Unlust* is associated with sublimation, analysis demonstrated without any difficulty the carry over of some component of unmodified aggression. On the other hand, one of the most compelling forms of sublimation appears to be that in which, following the Sharpe-Klein pattern, restitution through creation cancels out existing, but repressed, destructive impulses and phantasy formations.

*Masochism.*—It has been pointed out that in these recent formulations the study of energy commences at a fairly advanced stage of development, i.e. where incestuous object cathexes are withdrawn. And in the original definition of sublimation we were accustomed to think of the energy being derived mainly from the component impulses, some of which do not necessarily require an external object. Further, as Freud (18) has told us, 'the classical piece of evidence for the existence of "instinctual fusion" is *moral masochism*.' Masochism at the time of his *Three Contributions* was rated as one of several paired sets of component impulses. Now moral masochism has 'loosened its connection with what we recognize to be sexuality'. We must therefore ask: does the sublimation of impulses apply only to that amount which has gone through a phase of external object attachment and has

been withdrawn; and, another problem, is moral masochism a sublimation?

This last is not simply an academic issue: it has frequently to be dealt with in the course of analyses, especially of women. I have often had the problem put to me by patients, some of whom, familiar with analytic theory, stated it in technical terms, and others in a more general way. It amounts to this: if masochistic trends are put to a biological purpose in the sexual activities of women and if sublimation implies a deviation of aim (sexual gratification), then the sublimation of masochism must interfere with adult capacities: therefore, according to social valuation of sublimation, moral masochism would not qualify as a true sublimation. According to the older views of sublimation, this could be answered in two ways; first, that whatever the nature of the component instinct, the part sublimated was that which has been directed to an external object, and, second, that sublimation applied only to frustrated object impulses, not to that amount which was ego-syntonic and would therefore be gratified in sexual adaptation.

A more complete explanation is contained in Freud's discrimination between the moral urges due to reinforcement of the super-ego by the sadistic component freed in defusion and the moral masochistic urges due to an increase in the masochism of the ego after defusion. The latter contain a regressional gratification of Oedipus wishes, the former reinforce the repression or defence against Oedipus wishes. This explanation is a satisfying one, but it weakens the original definition, viz. that sublimation simply implies a deviation from the aim of sexual gratification. Descriptively speaking, moral masochism shows deviation from sexual aim, and even if we agree that there is an element of primitive erotogenic masochism behind all moral masochism, it is not openly manifested as such. Freud has appealed to the usages of speech in this matter, and has said that familiar application of the term masochist to those who behave as 'moral masochists' do, connects the behaviour with erotism. That may be true, but this plainly phenomenological usage cripples the equally familiar application of the term sublimation to manifestly non-sexual activities, or, alternatively, detracts from the value of social standards in assessing sublimation.

*Instinct and Aim-deviation.*—Space does not permit of any detailed consideration of sadism and masochism, but it is obvious that future investigation of the dynamics of sublimation will be concerned more and more with the relation of destructive to libidinal impulses. But it

is equally obvious that, no matter how convenient it would be to use the term solely in a dynamic sense, and no matter how much confusion is introduced by the application of descriptive and social standards, it will never be possible to neglect the factor of aim-deviation. Indeed, a closer study of the lability of instinctual aims will be an important part of future research. It does not require much reflection to see that, judged by the lability of aims, the old Freudian classification of instincts was in some respects more convenient than the recent antithesis of death and life instincts. It is characteristic of certain instincts of self-preservation that they are most refractory of all to repression or modification. It is equally characteristic of sexual impulses that they can be completely repressed and completely modified or, to put it more cautiously, modified beyond recognition.

The facts concerning destructive impulses are interesting. The aims of destructive impulses are refractory to modification. Given a certain association with libidinal impulses they can be repressed or opposed by reaction formations or preceded by expiations. But the modification is only accomplished with great difficulty. Indeed, unless repressed, the aims of aggressive impulses, though capable of change from object to subject, are not much modified. The mode of gratification can be altered. The use of aggressive words alters the outcome, as far as the object is concerned (a fact incidentally that goes far to compensate for the occasional traumatic identification of words and deeds): but it does not do more than inhibit the aim. So we cannot talk strictly of aim-deviation in the case of destructive impulses. Speech may sublimate certain erotic components but it does not alter the aim of destructive components. These can only be repressed or held in check or anticipated by the opposite. It is therefore an open question whether the importance of sublimation is primarily that it prevents the damming up of libido by displacing quantities of frustrated energy, or whether its function is to control our surplus of frustrated aggressive impulses by anticipatory expiation which establishes a lien on friendly and helpful relations to objects. Psycho-analytical anthropologists will doubtless have a good deal to say on this point, but in the meantime the question is mainly of clinical interest, viz. does sublimation prevent illness by reducing anxiety, or does it prevent illness by liquidating guilt?

*Conclusion.*—In the present uncertain state of our knowledge concerning sublimation, we are not in a position to attempt any binding formulations. A few tentative opinions may perhaps be expressed.

It would appear that from the point of view of metapsychology any fundamental conception of sublimation must be expressed in terms of energy (its source and the nature of its modification). The earlier and more descriptive standpoint does not lend itself to the purposes of metapsychology. Nevertheless the term has considerable descriptive (i.e. practical) value. It would be much more useful if we could establish a more precise relation between sublimation and symbolism. Pending further research, we are justified in using the term (*a*) for loose descriptive purposes, and (*b*) as a basis of metapsychological investigation of instinct. But we must realize that this double application of the term is liable on occasion to give rise to considerable confusion.

And here I think we can effect a compromise on the vexed question of cultural valuation. From the very outset Freud has emphasized the importance of sublimations in preventing neurotic regression, also the ætiological significance of any breakdown of sublimation. On the other hand, introduction of ethical or cultural valuations has so far caused more trouble and confusion than it has been worth. So long as repression exists, the individual valuation of cultural and social sublimations remains an unknown quantity. Admittedly we are entitled to estimate the social value of other people's sublimations, but that is not the immediate concern of individual psychology, still less the concern of metapsychology. On the other hand, we are on perfectly safe ground if we maintain that sublimation performs a protective (or defensive) function—operates like a compensating balance. According to the taste of the investigator, this function can be expressed in terms of the pleasure-reality principle, or in terms of illness (which includes secondarily maladaptation to existing social regulations). If we attach a cultural (or any other) fixed form of valuation, we are attributing to the pleasure and reality principles a rigidity of function which would seriously impair their psychological utility, and incidentally we saddle ourselves with the incubus of 'absolute values' without any prospect of adequate remuneration. In other words, a sublimation can be regarded socially as pursuing cultural aims, if and when individual protection from illness takes the form of cultural pursuits. In any case, we must keep a sharp look-out to make sure that the sublimations in question do not run in close association with open anxiety formations or concealed obsessional formations. If such should prove to be the case, we can no longer regard the formation as a true sublimation but as a conductor (substitute) formation, accompanied by or heralding the return of the repressed. And here the factor of symbolism is



probably decisive. Should we have any difficulty in arriving at a conclusion as to the significance of any one sublimation, the ultimate appeal must be to analysis. Because, unless the sublimation shows patent signs of having deteriorated into a complex of symbolisms, we may not be able to verify any suspicions until we have examined the effect of releasing repression in analysis. The long-sanctioned practice of advising patients not to make binding decisions regarding their career until their analysis is finished is in itself a tacit recognition of this possibility. In any case, it is good practice to query the significance of a sublimation, so long as the individual concerned is in any degree incapacitated, unhappy or ill.

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