



## On the Criteria for the Termination of a Psycho-Analysis

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The criteria for the ending of an analysis are an important problem in every psycho-analyst's mind. There are a number of criteria on which all of us would agree. Here I shall suggest a different approach to this problem.

It has often been observed that the termination of an analysis reactivates in the patient earlier situations of parting, and is in the nature of a weaning experience. This implies, as my work has shown me, that the emotions felt by the baby at weaning time, when early infantile conflicts come to a head, are strongly revived towards the end of an analysis. Accordingly, I arrived at the conclusion that before terminating an analysis I have to ask myself whether the conflicts and anxieties experienced during the first year of life have been sufficiently analysed and worked through in the course of the treatment.

My work on early development<sup>2</sup> has led me to distinguish between two forms of anxiety: persecutory anxiety, which is predominant during the first few months of life and gives rise to the 'paranoid-schizoid position', and depressive anxiety, which comes to a head at about the middle of the first year and gives rise to the 'depressive position'. I arrived at the further conclusion that at the beginning of his postnatal life the infant is experiencing persecutory anxiety both from external and internal sources: external, in so far as the experience of birth is felt as an attack inflicted on him; and internal, because the threat to the organism, which, according to Freud, arises from the death instinct, in my view stirs up the fear of annihilation—the fear of death. It is this fear which I take to be the primary cause of anxiety.

Persecutory anxiety relates mainly to dangers felt to threaten the ego; depressive anxiety relates to dangers felt to threaten the loved object, primarily through the subject's aggression. Depressive anxiety arises through synthetic processes in the ego; for as a result of growing integration, love and hatred and, accordingly, the good and bad aspects of the objects came closer together in the infant's mind. Some measure of integration is also one of the preconditions for the introjection of the mother as a complete person. Depressive feelings and anxiety come to a climax—the depressive position—at about the middle of the first year. By then persecutory anxiety has diminished, although still playing an important part.

Interlinked with depressive anxiety is the sense of guilt relating to harm done by cannibalistic and sadistic desires. Guilt gives rise to the urge to make reparation to the harmed loved object, to preserve or revive it—an urge which deepens feelings of love and promotes object relations.

At weaning time the infant feels that he has lost the first loved object—the mother's breast—both as an external and as an introjected object, and that his loss is due to his hatred, aggression and greed. Weaning thus accentuates his depressive feelings and amounts to a state of mourning. The suffering inherent in the depressive position is bound up with an increasing insight into psychic reality, which in turn contributes to a better understanding of the external world. By means of the growing adaptation to reality and the expanding range of object relations, the infant becomes able to combat and diminish depressive anxieties and in some measure to establish securely his good

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<sup>1</sup> Paper read at the 16th. International Psycho-Analytical Congress, Zürich, August, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> cf. the following papers by Melanie Klein:

'A Contribution to the Psychogenesis of Manic-Depressive States'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1935.

'Mourning and its Relation to Manic-Depressive States'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1940.

Both contained in Klein, *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, 1921–45. (International Psycho-Analytical Library, No. 34, Hogarth Press, 1948.)

'Notes on some Schizoid Mechanisms'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1946.

'A Contribution to the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt'. *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1948.

Freud has described the testing of reality as an essential part of the work of mourning. In my view, it is in early infancy that the testing of reality is first applied in attempts to overcome the grief inherent in the depressive position; and whenever in later life mourning is experienced, these early processes are revived. I have found that in adults the success of the work of mourning depends not only on establishing within the ego the person who is mourned (as we learned from Freud and Abraham), but also on re-establishing the first loved objects, which in early infancy were felt to be endangered or destroyed by destructive impulses.

Although the fundamental steps in counteracting the depressive position are made during the first year of life, persecutory and depressive feelings recur throughout childhood. These anxieties are worked through and largely overcome in the course of the infantile neurosis, and normally by the onset of the latency period adequate defences have developed and some measure of stabilization has come about. This implies that genital primacy and satisfactory object relations have been achieved and that the Oedipus Complex has been reduced in power.

I shall now draw a conclusion from the definition already given, namely that persecutory anxiety relates to dangers felt to threaten the ego and depressive anxiety to dangers felt to threaten the loved object. I wish to suggest that these two forms of anxiety comprise all anxiety situations the child goes through. Thus, the fear of being devoured, of being poisoned, of being castrated, the fear of attacks on the 'inside' of the body, come under the heading of persecutory anxiety, whereas all anxieties relating to loved objects are depressive in nature. However, persecutory and depressive anxieties, although conceptually distinct from one another, are clinically often mixed. For instance, I have defined castration fear, the leading anxiety in the male, as persecutory. This fear is mixed with depressive anxiety in so far as it gives rise to the feeling that he cannot fertilize a woman, at bottom that he cannot fertilize the loved mother and is therefore unable to make reparation for the harm done to her by his sadistic impulses. I need hardly remind you that impotence often leads to severe depression in men. To take now the leading anxiety in women. The girl's fear lest the dreaded mother will attack her body and the babies it contains, which is in my view the fundamental female anxiety situation, is by definition persecutory. Yet, as this fear implies the destruction of her loved objects—the babies she feels to be inside her—it contains a strong element of depressive anxiety.

In keeping with my thesis, it is a precondition for normal development that persecutory and depressive anxieties should have been largely reduced and modified. Therefore, as I hope has become clear in the foregoing exposition, my approach to the problem of terminating both child and adult analyses can be defined as follows: persecutory and depressive anxiety should be sufficiently reduced, and this—in my view—presupposes the analysis of the first experiences of mourning.

In passing I should say that even if the analysis goes back to the earliest stages of development, which is the basis for my new criterion, the results will still vary according to the severity and structure of the case. In other words, notwithstanding progress made in our theory and technique, we have to keep in mind the limitations of psycho-analytic therapy.

The question arises how far the approach I am suggesting is related to some of the well-known criteria, such as an established potency and heterosexuality, capacity for love, object relations and work, and certain characteristics of the ego which make for mental stability and are bound up with adequate defences. All these aspects of development are inter-related with the modification of persecutory and depressive anxiety. Concerning the capacity for love and object relations, it can easily be seen that these develop freely only if persecutory and depressive anxiety are not excessive. The issue is more complex as regards the development of the ego. Two features are usually emphasized in this connection, growth in stability and in the sense of reality, but I hold that expansion in the depth of the ego is essential as well. An intrinsic element of a deep and full personality is wealth of phantasy life and the capacity for experiencing emotions freely. These characteristics, I think, presuppose that the infantile depressive position has been worked through, that is to say, that the whole gamut of love and hatred, anxiety, grief and guilt in relation to the primary objects has been experienced again and again. This emotional development is bound up with the nature of defences. Failure in working through the depressive position is inextricably linked with a predominance of

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defences which entail a stifling of emotions and of phantasy life and hinder insight. Such defences, which I termed 'manic defences', although not incompatible with a measure of stability and strength of the ego, go with shallowness. If during an analysis we succeed in reducing persecutory and depressive anxieties and, accordingly, in diminishing manic defences, one of the results will be an increase in *strength* as well as in *depth of the ego*.

Even if satisfactory results have been achieved, the termination of an analysis is bound to stir up painful feelings and revive early anxieties; it amounts to a state of mourning. When the loss represented by the end of the analysis has occurred, the patient still has to carry out by himself part of the work of mourning. This, I think, explains the fact that

often after the termination of an analysis further progress is achieved; how far this is likely to happen can be foreseen more easily if we apply the criterion suggested by me. For only if persecutory and depressive anxieties have been largely modified, can the patient carry out by himself the final part of the work of mourning, which again implies a testing of reality. Moreover, when we decide that an analysis can be brought to an end, I think it is very helpful to let the patient know the date of the termination several months ahead. This helps him to work through and diminish the unavoidable pain of parting while he is still in analysis and prepares the way for him to finish the work of mourning successfully on his own.

I have made it clear throughout this paper that the criterion I suggest presupposes that the analysis has been carried back to the early stages of development and to deep layers of the mind and has included the working through of persecutory and depressive anxieties.

This leads me to a conclusion regarding technique. During an analysis the psycho-analyst often appears as an idealized figure. Idealization is used as a defence against persecutory anxiety and is its corollary. If the analyst allows excessive idealization to persist—that is to say, if he relies mostly on the positive transference—he may, it is true, be able to bring about some improvement. The same, however, could be said of any successful psycho-therapy. It is only *by analysing the negative as well as the positive transference* that anxiety is reduced at the root. In the course of the treatment, the psycho-analyst comes to represent in the transference situation a variety of figures corresponding to those which were introjected in early development.<sup>3</sup> He is, therefore, at times introjected as a persecutor, at other times as an ideal figure, with all shades and degrees in between.

As persecutory and depressive anxieties are experienced and ultimately reduced during the analysis, a greater synthesis between the various aspects of the analyst comes about together with a greater synthesis between the various aspects of the super-ego. In other words, the earliest frightening figures undergo an essential alternation in the patient's mind—one might say that they basically improve. Good objects—as distinct from idealized ones—can be securely established in the mind only if the strong split between persecutory and ideal figures has diminished, if aggressive and libidinal impulses have come closer together and hatred has become mitigated by love. Such advance in the capacity to synthesize is proof that the splitting processes, which, in my view, originate in earliest infancy, have diminished and that integration of the ego in depth has come about. When these positive features are sufficiently established we are justified in thinking that the termination of an analysis is not premature, although it may revive even acute anxiety.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Klein: 'Personification in the Play of Children', *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1929, also contained in *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis*, 1921–45; and 'The Nature of the Therapeutic Action of Psycho-Analysis', by James Strachey, *Int. J. Psycho-Anal.*, 1934.

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