

New Views on the Psychodynamics of Phobias*

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After having differentiated phobias from pseudophobias, the author describes the three stages in the psychodynamics of this psychoneurotic condition. A case is reported in detail and interpretations offered. The new hypothesis is advanced that the unconscious motivation and the defenses go beyond the individual protection of the patient. Psychotherapy is discussed.

PHOBIAS AND PSEUDOPHOBIAS

I hope I am permitted to begin this article with a personal note. In my youth I knew a leader whom I greatly respected and admired, and who suffered from phobias. The whole town knew that he was afraid of animals, especially of dogs. It was actually the interest I had in him, the striking contrast between his unusually endowed personality and the ridiculous predicament in which his condition would at times put him that pointed out to me the mystery of mental illness and inspired me to become a psychiatrist. I plan to write elsewhere about the life of this man.¹ I wish to add also that because of my interest in this leader, the first studies I pursued in psychiatry were on phobias, and my very first patient—whom I treated when I was still a student in the department of psychiatry, where I was preparing the thesis required by European medical schools to graduate—was a person suffering from agoraphobia.

Although the subsequent course of my life led me to focus my research on other areas of psychiatry, the study of the phobic condition has always remained among my most vivid interests, and in the course of over thirty-five years I have accumulated quite a number of unusual cases.

I have seen many patients purely on a consultation basis, for the purpose of making a differential diagnosis between phobias and other conditions similar to phobias, which I shall call pseudophobias. I shall devote the first and shorter part of my presentation to these pseudophobias, which are interesting not merely from the point of diagnosis, but because they will help us to understand better what are the

*Presented at the Eighteenth Annual Fall Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy, New York City, October 23, 1977.

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