

contacts immensely difficult and will tend to cling desperately to old ones.

When we take a closer look at the more extreme cases of social withdrawal, we can witness anti-exploratory behaviour in its most extreme and characteristic form. Severely withdrawn individuals may become socially inactive, but they are far from physically inactive. They become preoccupied with repetitive stereotypes. For hour after hour they rock or sway, nod or shake, twirl or twitch, or clasp and unclasp themselves. They may suck their thumbs, or other parts of their bodies,

fold or pinch themselves, make strange and repetitive facial expressions, or tap or roll small objects rhythmically. We all exhibit 'tics' of this sort occasionally, but for them it becomes a major and prolonged form of physical expression. What happens is that they find the environment so threatening, social contacts so frightening and impossible, that they seek comfort and reassurance by super-familiarising their behaviour. The rhythmic repetition of an act renders it increasingly familiar and 'safe'. Instead of performing a wide variety of heterogeneous activities, the withdrawn individual sticks to the few he knows best. For him the old saying: 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained' has been re-written: 'Nothing ventured, nothing lost.'

I have already mentioned the comforting regressive qualities of the heart-beat rhythm, and this applies here, too. Many of the patterns seem to operate at about heart-beat speed, but even those that do not, still act as 'comforters' by virtue of their superfamiliarity achieved from constant repetition. It has been noticed that socially retarded individuals increase their stereotypes when put into a strange room. This fits in with the ideas expressed here. The increased novelty of the environment heightens the neophobic fears, and heavier demands are made on the comforting devices to counteract this.

The more a stereotype is repeated, the more it becomes like an artificially produced, maternal heartbeat. Its 'friendliness' increases and increases until it becomes virtually irreversible. Even if the extreme neophobia causing it can be removed (which is difficult enough), the stereotype may go twitching on.