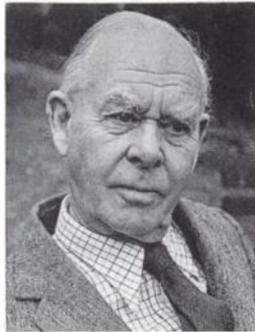


## Obituary

Editor: Henry R. Rollin

**EDWARD JOHN MOSTYN BOWLBY, Honorary Consultant, The Tavistock Clinic, London NW3**



Dr John Bowlby, who was born on 26 February 1907, died on his beloved Isle of Skye on 2 September 1990 at the age of 83. He was one of the most creative and influential psychiatrists to be produced by any nation in the 20th century. His lucid, eloquently written books were models of good

sense, shrewd observation and scientific fact. Their impact revolutionised psychoanalytic theory, transformed our understanding of psychopathology, provided a rational basis for the practice of psychotherapy, and improved the lot of children in hospitals and institutions throughout the world.

The son of a General, and originally intended for a naval career, Bowlby retained more than a trace of the officer and gentleman to the end of his life. Some, especially in America, found him formidable on first acquaintance, but his kindness, integrity and unfailing good nature won him friends and loyal adherents wherever he went to lecture or to teach.

Educated at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, he escaped becoming a midshipman to read psychology and natural sciences at Trinity College, Cambridge. From there, convinced that the most fruitful area for human progress lay in psychiatry and psychoanalysis, he went to University College Hospital, London, to study medicine.

While still a medical student he entered analysis with Joan Riviere, a colleague of Melanie Klein. After qualifying in 1933 he worked at the Maudsley Hospital under Sir Aubrey Lewis and trained as a psychoanalyst under the supervision of Melanie Klein and Ella Freeman Sharpe. He joined the staff of the London Child Guidance Clinic in 1937.

From the outset Bowlby was critical of the state of psychoanalysis. There were, he observed, too many theories and not enough facts: "it was regarded as almost outside the proper interest of an analyst to give systematic attention to a person's real experiences", he wrote. "Almost by definition it was assumed that anyone interested in the external world could not be interested in the internal world, indeed was almost certainly running away from it."

Bowlby most decidedly was interested in the external world and particularly focused his attention on the psychiatric consequences of bereavement in childhood. In 1940 he published *Forty-four Juvenile Thieves: Their Characters and Home Life* based on his study of a series of children in whom stealing was a serious problem. He found that a significantly large number of them had suffered maternal loss or separation.

During World War II he served as an Army psychiatrist, achieving the rank of Lieut-Colonel. On demobilisation he became a consultant of the Tavistock Clinic, where he remained until his retirement in 1972, serving as chairman of the department of children and parents from 1946 to 1968.

In 1950 he was appointed as a consultant to the Mental Health Section of the World Health Organization. This gave him time to read the literature on the ill effects of institutional care and maternal deprivation on personality development and to meet researchers on both sides of the Atlantic. On the strength of this he published in 1951 his widely influential WHO monograph *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, in which he called attention to the distress of young children when they are separated from those whom they love, and he made clear recommendations of how best to mitigate the consequences of such separations. *Maternal Care* was translated into 12 different languages.

The experience of preparing his monograph convinced Bowlby that the mother-child bond is a *primary* phenomenon irreducible to any other source, such as feeding or the reduction of physiological drives. "It is as if", he wrote in a vividly memorable phrase, "maternal care were as necessary for the proper development of personality as vitamin D for the proper development of bones".

Over the next six years, Bowlby, together with James Robertson and Christopher Heinicke, continued to collect data on children separated from their mothers and, in 1958, Bowlby published his classic paper on 'The nature of the child's tie to his mother' in which he drew on ethological as well as psychological sources to support his view that the mother-infant attachment bond was based, not on "operant conditioning" as the learning theorists insisted and as the psychoanalysts agreed, but on *instinct*. Infants became bonded to their mothers because they are innately programmed to do so from birth. Learning plays an important role in the process but it proceeds on an instinctual basis.

This proposal called for a radical revision of psychoanalytic theory. Attachment behaviour is conceived as operating through a separate system from eating or sexual behaviour and proceeds on similar lines to attachment behaviour in other mammals. In place of Freud's theory of development based on libidinal phases and on the fixation and regression of libido, Bowlby proposed a theory of developmental pathways akin to C. H. Waddington's theory of epigenesis.

Bowlby pointed out how much of Freud's thinking had been formulated under the influence of the discredited theories of Lamarck and that the basic assumptions of psychoanalysis required urgent revision if the discipline were to fulfil Freud's intention of remaining consistent with developments in biology. For Bowlby, psychoanalysis could never be a mere branch of hermeneutics (the art of interpretation) for it had to be rooted in science. When analysts abandoned science they deprived themselves of all objective means of settling theoretical conflicts between them. It is to Bowlby's eternal credit that in framing his hypotheses he was always careful to put them in scientifically testable form.

Although he devoted a third of his time to clinical practice it is as an author and teacher that he will be best remembered. Taken together, *Maternal Care* and his monumental trilogy *Attachment and Loss*, published between 1969 and 1980, have had more impact on the study of psychopathology than any writers since Freud or Jung. Right at the end of his life Bowlby published a biography of his hero Charles Darwin, tracing the great biologist's ill-health and hypochondria to repressed grief and chronic anxiety associated with the death of his mother when he was eight.

Bowlby was much honoured in his lifetime. He was, among other things, an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Psychiatrists and of the Royal Society of Medicine and of its Psychiatric Section. He was made a CBE in 1972.

He is survived by his wife, Ursula, two sons and two daughters.

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**KONRAD LORENZ, Professor, Forschungsstelle für Ethologie, Konrad-Lorenz-Institut der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, A-3422 Altenberg, Austria**

Konrad Lorenz, who died on 27 February 1989, at the age of 85, was described by Julian Huxley as the "father of modern ethology". Together with his close friend Niko Tinbergen he developed an evolutionary approach to the comparative biological study of behaviour that has had a profound impact not only

on zoology but also on psychology, philosophy and psychiatry.

Following the lead of Darwin, Heinroth and Whitman, Lorenz treated certain movement patterns as immutable, that is, as genetically determined characteristics of organisms and so they act as indicators of generic relatedness that are as reliable as physical characteristics. From here he developed a new concept of instinctive behaviour, based on the fixed action pattern; the innate instinctive motor act proper, and the species-specific 'releasers' (sign stimuli), which selectively trigger distinct fixed action patterns provided that the organism is in a certain internal (motivational) state. This led to the concept of the Innate Releasing Mechanism, or the Innate Releasing Schema which, acting as a stimulus filter, releases the species-typical movements. A foremost class of releasers are the social signals, which evolved in the process of phyletic ritualisation and became a forceful means of social communication in animals and man. Lorenz developed this challenging ethological concept in the thirties, at a time when the theories of behaviourism dominated the field of animal and human psychology and would continue to do so for many years to come. Controversies over Lorenz's ideas (sometimes with a political twist), especially over the biological foundations of aggression as put forward in his book *On Aggression* (1966), went on for decades and fertilised scientific reasoning within and across disciplines in the life sciences and in epistemology. When in 1973 the Nobel Prize for Physiology/Medicine, was awarded jointly to Lorenz, Karl von Frisch and Nikolaas Tinbergen, the new discipline of ethology, which had been conceived at the turn of the century, finally received international blessing.

In recognition of his contributions Lorenz also received honorary degrees in the United Kingdom and elsewhere, for example from the University of Leeds in 1963 and Oxford in 1965. He was elected a Foreign Member of the Royal Society in 1964 and an Honorary Fellow of the College in 1975.

Lorenz became known to a broader readership through his popular book *King Solomon's Ring* (1952) which, as with several of his other popular works, he skillfully illustrated himself. From these drawings alone it is clear that he was a superb observer; in fact, most of his discoveries, for instance that of 'vacuum activity' and the phenomenon of 'imprinting', were based on keen observation. He had an extraordinary gift for creating order out of seemingly chaotic phenomena.

Konrad Lorenz was born in Vienna on 7 November 1903 and grew up in his father's magnificent mansion in Altenberg just outside the city. It was here that he reared the gosling 'Martina', the jackdaw 'Tschock' and the famous starling 'Hansi' who caught invisible prey. It was here that he lived until his death after his retirement (1973) as the Director of the Department of