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NEUROSIS AND PERVERSION: IL N'Y A PAS DE RAPPORT SEXUEL

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According to Lacan, sexual rapport does not exist, "Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel". In contrast to this rather depressing statement, let us start with the definition by Freud of a normal sexual life. In his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, we can read that, "a normal sexual life is only assured by an exact convergence of the affectionate current and the sexual current both being directed towards the sexual object and sexual aim. It is like the completion of a tunnel which has been drilled through a hill from both directions".¹ If we combine the two statements, the net result is that obviously the tunnel does not get completed and the two currents do not converge, so that rapport is not achieved. As a matter of fact, usually one ends with two tunnels, that is, two forms of rapport, one for the affectionate current, and another for the sexual one.

Moreover, as a further illustration of the problem, there seems to be a gender-specific divergence in the choice of channel. Women are said to have a preference for the affectionate one, that is, for love, while men are supposed to be more interested in sex *an sich*. As the saying goes, "In order to have sex, women need a reason, men only a place".

My question for today is twofold. First of all, how can we understand this difference between men and women? Secondly, what are the consequences in terms of neurosis and perversion? As there appears to be a difference between Freud and Lacan in this respect, the answers could be quite important for clinical practice.

The major Freudian works of reference will of course be the *Drei Abhandlungen*, but also his *Jenseits des Lustprinzips*, and his last papers on femininity. The *Three essays* are the starting-point. In the first essay, it is quite obvious that Freud is continuously using an implicit norm for sexual rapport, without ever giving an explicit definition of it, but we can deduce it rather easily, and it sounds very like Masters and Johnson, that is, coitus between man and woman, resulting in mutual, although not necessarily simultaneous, orgasm, all this preferably in the missionary position. The irony of course is that the rest of the *Three essays* gives ample evidence to refute this whole idea, because the book concludes with the universality of the polymorphously perverse disposition of every human being. The

¹ S.E VII, p. 207.

most important concept in this respect is something Freud discovers in studying both sexual aberrations and infantile sexuality, i.e. the so-called *Partialtrieb*, translated in the Standard Edition as component instinct. I would prefer partial drive; drive because, once beyond the *Anlehnung* (anaclisis, in English: leaning to or on) on the vital somatic functions, it has nothing to do with instincts whatsoever; and partial because it concerns a component of a totality that is never there, that never reaches a conclusion.

In order to understand the importance of this idea, we have to go back to the concept of drive, *Trieb*. As you probably know, Freud defined the drive as a concept on the border between the psyche and the body, containing four basic components: source and pressure, aim and object. The first two belong to the somatic side, the other two to the psyche. Defined as such, the drive concept seems very easy to understand. It has a somatic source, probably something within the genital organs and the hormones, resulting in a pressure which aims at a relief, that is, coitus, with the other sex as appropriate object. In this respect, the drive is indeed nothing more than an instinct, directed by reflex actions and eventually functioning on the basis of childhood-conditioned fixations.

This view is as easy to understand as it is wrong. It is wrong because it leaves out the two most fundamental characteristics of the drive. First of all, each drive is a partial one; secondly, each drive is essentially auto-erotic.

The aspect of being partial shows up in two ways. First of all, the drive is partial in relation to the idea of procreation, even in relation to the idea of coitus. Man may have an oral drive, an anal drive, and so on, but he does not have a totalised sexual drive. Freud will be very critical about the existence of a "ganze Sexualstrebung", a total sexual urge. Secondly, each drive is partial in relationship to the body, in that respect that a drive never encompasses the whole of it. On the contrary, each drive seems to specialise in one part of the body or one bodily activity, either in an active or in a passive manner. Psychosexual development results in an attempt to gather all these partial drives under the banner of genital or 'mature' sexuality, but this attempt is never a very convincing one. In spite of so-called genital maturity, it is quite obvious that everyone has his own favoured "pre-genital" predilections, which make it all the more difficult to construct the right tunnel.

This psychosexual development also shows the second characteristic very clearly, namely that these fragmented drives are directed to one's own body. They are essentially autoerotic. It is only later on that the object becomes an external one, and even then, it will never have the same importance as the original. From the point of view of the partial drive, the other always remains a means, never an end. The trajectory of the partial drive is a curved one, going around the other and returning to oneself, thereby creating a self-sufficient enclosure. So the aim of the partial drive is not the other as object, no, the aim is a certain jouissance. In view of this aim, the importance of the other has nothing to do with him or her as another human being. He or she has instrumental value only, and is indeed reduced to an object, even a partial one for that matter.

These are the characteristics described by Freud for infantile sexuality. He stresses the fact that there is no difference between female or male children in this respect, both share the same polymorphously perverse disposition. These partial drives form the core of the sexual current, and are the main providers of

Lust, pleasure. Nevertheless, Freud had a problem with pleasure, as early as the *Three Essays*. In his opinion, the only real pleasure possible is the one that ends in total discharge, the one that can be "abreacted". The inspiration for this idea goes back to the theory of psycho-physics by Theodor Fechner, in which he had formulated the so-called unpleasure principle. Freud had already applied this theory in his *Studies on hysteria*, where the goal of the therapeutic process was to bring together the right "Vorstellung", the signifier, with its original quantum of affect, so that a catharsis could take place which would result in the reduction of tension to degree zero. The problem with hysterical patients was that he never succeeded in finding the last signifier in the associative chains, so that the final "Abreaction" was never achieved. In the *Three Essays*, the pleasure principle doesn't work either. Children as well as perverts prefer another kind of pleasure, although each for a different reason. In infantile sexuality, there is no orgasm, no final discharge, and children remain at the level of foreplay, due to their somatic immaturity. This foreplay is the name given by Freud to the pleasure yielded by the partial drives, in contrast to an orgasm. The qualitative difference between the two is that, while orgasm discharges tension, foreplay builds it up, which is completely incomprehensible from the point of view of the pleasure principle. The same goes for the pervert, this time by choice. Freud will eventually use this characteristic as one of the differential-diagnostical features for perversion, there where the choice is an exclusive one. Anyhow, already at this stage of his career, Freud was confronted with the impossibility of the pleasure principle, and this when studying what Michel Foucault called the three most important figures of sexuality, that is the hysterical woman, the masturbating child and the perverse man. This confrontation does not alter Freud's belief in the pleasure principle, although he declared in the *Three Essays* that: "Everything related to the problem of pleasure and unpleasure touches upon one of the sorest spots of present-day psychology".²

The whole idea of partial drives and the eventual combinations of them was rephrased by Lacan with the idea of "montage", i.e. an assembly. He summarised it, in his inimitable style, as follows: "The montage of the drive is a montage which, first, is presented as having neither head nor tail in the sense in which one speaks of montage in a surrealist collage. If we bring together the paradoxes that we just defined at the level of *Drang*, at that of the object, at that of the aim of the drive, I think that the resulting image would show the working of a dynamo connected up to a gas-tap, a peacock's feather emerges, and tickles the belly of a pretty woman, who is just lying there looking beautiful."³

So far for the sexual current. Let us have a look now at the other side of the tunnel, there where love starts digging its own way.

It is quite obvious that love doesn't enter the picture, as long as one sticks to the drive. One of the reasons why Freud's theory was attacked, resides in the assumption that psychoanalysis reduced love to this partial drive, thus debasing

² S.E. VII, p. 209.

³ Seminar XI, Sheridan translation, p. 169.

the highest human emotion. Of course this proves that one hasn't read Freud at all, especially as he is one of the few scientists who has effectively developed a theory on love, even at the time of the *Three Essays*. His most famous papers in this respect are his *Contributions to the Psychology of Love*. Each of these three papers treats the same topic from a different point of view, namely how do the two currents come together, how does the rather unimportant object of the partial drive changes into the overwhelming object of love ?

In order to understand this, we have to look at the original love-object, which is the same for both sexes: the mother. Indeed, it is this primary love, as it has been called, that will determine all later love relationships, and therefore we have to study the original one. There seem to be three important features: first of all, this relationship is an all-embracing and exclusive one, there is no room for intruders; secondly, it has to come to an end, for structural reasons it can't last beyond a certain point; thirdly, the relationship is about power.

The first characteristic seems easy to understand, nowadays everybody is talking about the mother and child unit, the importance of early maternal care and so on. With this, one enters psychology and risks losing the basic psychoanalytic point of view, which concerns a far more fundamental feature. The original mother-child relationship is not a relationship at all, it is a fusion in which there is no place for individual difference; the relationship itself can only start once the fusion has been broken through. Moreover, the resulting relationship also has to come to an end in its turn, and that is of course the major point in Freudian theory on the oedipal complex with the prohibition of incest and the injunction to exogamy. As long as the relationships lasts, one of the major issues is power. Any subsequent neurotic omnipotence of thought dates from this period, and goes back to the child's perception of the mother as an omnipotent figure, that is, one that can give or refuse at leisure. The resulting dialectic is very important and was developed by Lacan in his fourth seminar, focusing on frustration, privation and castration, but we won't go into that. So, due to the oedipal development, the original object becomes a forbidden one, and everybody has to look for a love-object outside the oedipal nucleus.

If we return now to our first Freudian definition of normal sexuality, it seems rather easy to understand why the object of sexual desire and the object of love are difficult to combine. The object of love is originally an incestuous one, that is, a forbidden one. Nevertheless, in later object-choice, the original object keeps on returning. This idea was framed by Freud in what is probably the most quoted saying of the *Three Essays*: "The finding of an object is in fact a refinding of it".⁴ At the same time, this object is a forbidden one, because the shadow of incest falls over it. The classical solution is, then, that one loves one's incest-laden partner and desires someone else. It is this solution that Freud describes in two of his papers on the psychology of love, with the classical division between the revered wife with whom one is impotent, and the debased but desired whore.

So, the Freudian conclusion would be the idea that a normal sexual relationship, with a satisfying combination between love and desire can be achieved on

⁴ S.E. VII, p. 222.

condition that one gets beyond the prohibitive effect of incest. Freud is quite clear on this point: one has to overcome one's "Inzestscheu", horror of incest, with the new object, and he adds that, in his experience, this usually succeeds only in a second marriage, the first one having received all the weight of the oedipal heritage.⁵ Anyhow, in principle a normal relationship between man and woman is possible. These ideas will be highlighted in the later theory on object relations with its differentiation between pre-genital and genital object, the necessity to reach the mature genital stage, and so on.

The only trouble is that in reality, one doesn't seem to succeed as well as in theory. And even the theory is not fully convincing, especially as it seems to focus almost exclusively on the masculine side. Freud stated several times that, until puberty, psychosexual development was identical in both sexes, but he remained silent about the differences beyond puberty. There is definitely something lacking. Moreover, what is lacking must be about pleasure, because the point which mankind complains is always about pleasure, one only has to think of the immemorial "post coitum omne animal triste".

In order to gain a better understanding of the psychosexual development, we have to turn to the famous *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, where Freud pays much more attention to the mother-child relationship before there is any relationship at all. You will find this in the section on primary satisfaction, *die primäre Befriedigungserlebnis*. There, Freud talks about the period before the relationship as such, that is, the condition in which the child is not yet a child, but a mere being which is submerged in a primary form of pleasure, that is, *jouissance*.

This experience comes to an end de facto, due to the process of birth, but the infant keeps it going for a while in a hallucinatory way. As this doesn't work, it begins to experience displeasure, and that is *die primäre Schmerzerlebnis*, the primary experience of displeasure, the point at which it has to call on the other. At that point, it becomes a demanding subject, demanding something which the other, the *Nebenmensch*, has to procure. From a structural point of view, this is a very important moment, because it concerns the moment of division in which something is lost, precisely the original situation of *jouissance* before division, and in which something is achieved, namely the possibility of a separate identity. This doesn't keep the infantile subject from demanding a return to the original situation in which it did not exist as a subject; as this situation is irrevocably lost, the demand will never receive a fully satisfying answer, and that is why it gives birth to desire.

The central theme that is lacking in the theory on object relations and in Freud's *Drei Abhandlungen*, is the very idea of lack itself. Once the relationship between mother and child is installed, it implies an earlier loss which insists in this primary love as such, as this is precisely the necessary condition to make this relationship possible. This implies that even the original object, that is the mother, and the original relationship, is not fully satisfying at all, and the child keeps on demanding, expressing a desire that goes beyond the actual scope of the relationship. Freud notes that: "it is as though our children had remained for ever unsatisfied".⁶ The eventual adult dissatisfaction or lack of satisfaction, even in a

⁵ S.E. XXI, p. 234.

⁶ S.E. XXI, p. 234.

second marriage in which the "horror of incest" is conquered, goes back to this original lack. That's why Lacan puts at the centre of his theory on object relations in his fourth seminar the lack-of-object, later to be conceptualised with the object small *a*.

The possibility of a fully satisfying sexual rapport is therefore amended from the very first in two ways. To put it bluntly, everyone of us is looking for an original object that was never there. First of all, as a result of the oedipal complex, one has to look for a forbidden object, so that one has to come to terms with one's own oedipal particularities; secondly, even beyond that, one encounters a degree of dissatisfaction that was already there in the primary relationship, because this very relationship marked the end of a previous state of jouissance. The combination of these two characteristics explains the central feature of human sexuality, indeed, of man in general: its driven nature, so aptly rendered by Freud with his concept of *Trieb*. Man is driven, always looking for the missing part, the ultimate experience, the last word, and so on. The *Leitmotiv* of human sexuality is without any doubt: "Français, encore un effort !".

With this idea, we can turn our attention now to another central theme that is already mentioned in *The Three Essays*, namely the infantile sexual researches of childhood, which can only be understood from the point of view of this original lack and the subsequent development. Freud noted from the beginning that every child is looking for answers to very definite questions in the field of sexuality. The importance of these researches lies in the fact that the home-grown answers, the so-called infantile sexual theories, are the material on which later psychoneurotic symptoms will be based. That's why Freud promoted sexual enlightenment, convinced as he was that providing correct sexual knowledge during childhood would prevent the development of a neurosis. This, as we will see, is not the case.

So, every child is a little researcher, looking for an answer to at least three related questions. The first problem concerns the difference between boys and girls: what makes boys boys, and what makes girls girls? The second question concerns the origin of babies: where does my little brother or sister come from, where do I come from? The last question is about the father and the mother: what is the relationship between those two, why did they choose each other, and especially, what do they do together in the bedroom? The child proceeds as a scientist and will forge genuine explanatory theories, that's why Freud calls them "infantile sexual *researches*", and "infantile sexual *theories*".⁷ As is always the case, even in adult science, a theory is constructed where we don't understand something. If we had understood it, we would not have had any need for a theory in the first place. The point of arrest of the first question concerns the absence of the penis, especially the penis of the mother. The explanatory theory talks about punishment and castration. The obstacle in the second question, the one about the origin of babies, concerns the role of the father. The theory talks about seduction. The last stumbling block concerns the sexual rapport as such, and the theory brings only pre-genital answers, usually within a violent context.

We can put this in a schema:

⁷ S.E. VII, p. 194-197.

question of origin	inf.sex.theory	failure
<i>gender</i>	<i>castration</i>	<i>phallic mother</i>
<i>subject</i>	<i>seduction</i>	<i>role of the father</i>
<i>sexual rapport</i>	<i>primal scene</i>	<i>combination</i>

Each one of these three theories shares the same characteristic: they are all unsatisfactory and according to Freud, they all end in a renunciation. This is not exactly true: they may disappear as a theory, but none disappears completely. Rather, they make their reappearance within the so-called primal fantasies about castration and the phallic mother, seduction and the primal father, and of course the primal scene. It is precisely in these primal fantasies that Freud recognised the base for later, adult neurotic symptoms.

Now, with Lacanian theory, we can elevate Freud's clinical findings to a general, that is, structural level.⁸ Indeed, each of these three theories can be understood as an attempt to answer the unanswerable, what Lacan captured in his well-known formulations. First of all, *La Femme n'existe pas*, the Woman does not exist; secondly, *L'Autre de l'Autre n'existe pas*, the Other of the Other does not exist, which summarises the result of the second theory; thirdly, *Il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*, there is no sexual rapport, as a combined result of the two previous ones. From a Lacanian point of view, the three questions are an elaboration a posteriori of the central lack that resulted from the splitting of subject and Other. Every subject has to produce his answers to this unbearable lightness of not-being, usually in terms of castration, primal father and primal scene. And every subject will elaborate and refine his particular answers within his primary fantasies, which will form the basic matrix – a word which comes from mater – the basic matrix on which he will construct his whole life. That's why mere technical sexual enlightenment is just not enough, which is of course no excuse to keep your children ignorant on this point.

With this new piece of theory, we can now formulate another answer to our introductory question concerning the how and why of the necessary, but oh so difficult, combination between love and drive. The object of the partial drive becomes an object of love through the construction of primary fantasies, with which the subject tries to deceive himself as well as the other. If you want a brilliant illustration of this, just think of a certain fragment in Robert Altman's brilliant movie *Short Cuts*. A man at the counter of a snackbar is once again in love with his middle aged and worn out girlfriend who works as a waitress in that particular joint, and he's boasting to the man next to him: "Wouldn't ya just luv to be married to a woman like that, eh ?", whereupon the other gives her a dry look and replies coldly, "I am", thereby refusing to be deceived and exposing the fantasy of the husband. In his seminar *Encore*, Lacan formulated the function of fantasy quite clearly: "Ce sujet barré n'a jamais affaire, en tant que partenaire, qu'à l'objet a

⁸ I have developed this more exhaustively in another paper, *Psychotherapy, psychoanalysis and hysteria*, published by *The Letter, Lacanian Perspectives on Psychoanalysis*, n° 2, Autumn, pp. 47-68.

inscrit de l'autre côté de la barre. Il ne lui est donné d'atteindre son partenaire sexuel, qui est l'Autre, que par l'intermédiaire de ceci qu'il est la cause de son désir. A ce titre (...) ce n'est rien d'autre que fantasme."⁹ "This divided subject relates only, as partner, to the *object a* inscribed on the other side of the bar. It can never reach its sexual partner which is the Other, except by way of the particular mediation as the cause of its desire. On this light it is nothing other than the fantasy." Indeed, with his fantasies, the subject tries to bridge the gap, but inevitably he fails in doing so. He fails because the answer is always at the wrong level, that is, the level of the relationship between subject and Other, the installation of which precisely caused the original loss of *jouissance*. One of the paradoxical effects of this failure is that it keeps the attempt going, without ever reaching an end. That is what Lacan coined with his saying about "ce qui ne cesse pas de ne pas s'écrire", that which never closes not to write itself.

Freud had already discovered this function of the fantasy during his correspondence with Fliess; at that time, he was convinced that there was a real trauma behind the fantasmatic screen. In Lacanian terms, the primary fantasies are the defensive screen against the traumatic Real. One of the most important figures in these primal fantasies who keeps on returning, is the primal father. He is very important because he forms the cornerstone of the whole imaginary edifice, guaranteeing by his mere existence that there is a definite answer to the Real. Freud will hear this craving for a superfather with his patients, but instead of analysing the necessary function in that, he will consolidate the imaginary figure by elevating him to supernatural proportions, thereby confirming the fantasmatic answer. This can very well be illustrated with the construction he presented to little Hans. It runs as follows: "Long before you came into the world, I had known that a little Hans would come who would be so fond of his mother that he would be bound to feel afraid of his father because of it".¹⁰ If there is one person little Hans is not afraid of, it is certainly his father, but the same cannot be said about his mother. Freud does not so much present the boy with an interpretation as with an imaginary solution to his confrontation with those basic questions, which are all the more difficult for Hans due to the particular constellation of his family. The official consolidation of this solution can be found in the myth of the primal father in *Totem und Tabu*, which is essentially a confirmation of the neurotic solution; the resulting theory on the oedipal complex is not so much a theory as a consolidation of these defensive imaginary constructs. It is only much later on, with his *Moses und die monotheistische Religion* that Freud will deconstruct the myth and discover that it is the subject itself who installs the father as a defence against the threatening Real that he fears from the mother.¹¹

So the oedipal complex in its imaginary version is nothing but the common shape in which the basic fantasies appear, thereby determining the typical way in which the combination between object of drive and object of love takes place.

⁹ Le Séminaire XX, p. 75

¹⁰ S.E. X, p. 42.

¹¹ I have elaborated this idea in *Tussen hysteric en vrouw*, Leuven, Acco, 2nd. edition 1995, pp. 1-258. The English translation by Marc Du Ry (From Freud's Hysteric to Lacan's Woman) is due out in the Summer of 1996.

Moreover, it is this complex that will be the cause of gender-specific solutions. We will now focus on these differences between the two sexes.

In Freud's first version of the oedipal complex, the all-important figure is the father, heir to the primal father. The two sexes differ in the way they relate to this primal father, especially concerning the first important question that we have already mentioned, that is, what is the difference between boys and girls. For the female child, the primal father will be the man who could **give** her what she needs in order to be **The Woman**. On the contrary, for the boy, the primal father is the one who could take away what he already has in order to be a man. These two ways of relating have received their classical denominations ever since: penis envy for the woman, castration anxiety for the man. They form without any doubt the most controversial part of Freudian theory, and, to my opinion, the least understood. It gave birth to an epic discussion in the 1930 within the analytic group itself, and it became "gefundenes Fressen" and the insult par excellence for the women's liberation movement in the 1960's, etc. One of the major reasons for the misunderstanding lies in the fact that Freud reduced the psychosexual difference to the real masculine genital organ, the penis, and that he never made the step to the idea of the penis as a signifier, that is, the phallus. Lacan bridged this gap by stating that the phallus is a signifier given by nature, "c'est un signifiant donné par la nature". As a signifier in the register of the Symbolic, the phallus is perfectly empty. It only gets consistency when it is reduced to a meaning which is always imaginary, and that is precisely what happened, not only during those discussions, but even in Freudian theory itself.

This is probably the most important difference between Freud and Lacan, because it determined a different theory about the aims and ends of the psychoanalytic treatment. Indeed, masculine castration anxiety and feminine penis envy are, in Freudian terms, the biological bedrock on which every analysis must necessarily run aground. We will see later on how Lacan changed this. First of all, we'll pay attention to the typical gender-specific distribution of feminine penis envy and masculine castration anxiety. In my opinion, it is exactly the opposite. Penis envy is a typical male preoccupation, while anxiety is to be found on the side of the woman. Moreover, as these two characteristics form the core of the basic fantasies that determine the combination of love and sex, they will determine the gender-specific perversions.

In order to understand this reversal, we can typify each sexual position in relation to the phallus by one verb. On the masculine side, the appropriate verb is **to have**, on the feminine side the verb **to be**.

"To have and to have not", with its echo of Hemingway. As an answer to the desire of the other, the man indeed has his phallus, no doubt about that. The only trouble is: he never has it enough, his secret fear is that it won't be convincing, that other men will be better endowed than he is, that he will have to compete with them. The ever present envy resulting from this situation gives rise to the typical masculine competition, starting with the micturition contest in little boys and ending with star wars. I have termed this in a previous paper the "Guinness Book of Records hysteria" in men.

On the feminine side, the appropriate Shakespearean question is about to be or not to be. Instead of having the phallus, she will present herself as an incarnati-

on of the phallus. Indeed, as an answer to the desire of the other, woman presents herself. Otto Fenichel was the first to discover this incarnation with his classical paper on the girl as phallus. She **is** the phallus man needs. The consequence of this situation is that a woman becomes extremely dependent on the judgment of man, it is only through his recognition that she can effectively be the object of his desire, that is, the imaginary phallus. Hence, the typical feminine masquerade and seduction. The implication of this dependence is that the typical feminine affect in this respect is the anxiety for the loss of this recognition, the anxiety not to be desired any more.

From this oedipal development on, man and woman are indeed different. At the end of his career, Freud will note that "One gets the impression that a man's love and a woman's are a phase apart psychologically".¹² Lacan states it more bluntly: *il n'y a pas de rapport sexuel*. For the man, all the whole weight is put on phallic performance; as he expects his partner to have the same preoccupation, he works himself to the phallic bone in order to satisfy her. It is this situation that is commonly depicted in the banal hard-core porno movie: women who just don't get enough of it, and men who exhaust themselves time and again. Great is his surprise when he discovers that in everyday reality her desire is not so much directed to his revered phallus, but towards something completely different. Hence, his desperate "Was will das Weib", what does woman want? On the other hand, woman invests in the lasting relationship, because that is the only way for her to receive the recognition that she is the most important object of desire for her partner – that is, his phallus – and not a mere sexual playmate, one of the many possible ones. Hence, her disappointment faced with the phallic masculine performer and hence her typical complaint: "He doesn't love me, he just wants to use me".

It is this typical difference in questions of sex and love that gave rise to the conviction expressed in the saying already quoted: "In order to have sex, woman needs a reason, man only a place". Indeed, as a result of his oedipal development, phallic performance is for the man an aim in itself, in order to convince himself that he has 'it'. That's why prostitution is almost exclusively called upon by males: he can have a merely instrumental relation with a woman, in order to get his phallic reassurance. With a woman, it is just the other way around: she can have instrumental sex in order to maintain a lasting relationship, or to set one up for that matter.¹³

This difference in oedipal outcome is not without effect on the typical distribution of perversion. It is commonly said that perversion is strictly masculine, that there are no female perverts. If one looks at the criminal records, this is surely right, but on the whole, this idea is just another illustration of masculine expectation. He expects – not to mention that sometimes he even hopes – that woman will be just as perverse as he thinks himself to be. That is, he expects a perversion in women that is strictly focused on the phallic performance system, and that is of course never the case. The difference in oedipal outcome between the sexes is indeed reflected in the difference in perverse traits. If one wants to have a clinical

¹² S.E. XXII, p. 134.

¹³ It is well known that many woman are most active sexually during the courting period.

illustration of this difference, it is enough to go to the nearest railway station and its bookstall. There one will find the two different perversions neatly distributed in different corners, on the masculine side the porn magazines which are nothing but monotonous variations on the phallic scoring system; on the feminine side, one will find an equal monotony in the form of so-called romantic or thrashy literature, staging each time the heroine who with great difficulty conquers with great difficulty her hero for an ever-lasting love relationship, etc. Usually, men are not interested at all in this kind of literature, and beyond a certain curiosity, vice versa for women. The difference is even so defined that the same can be said about homosexual couples, where we find the opposition between lesbian nesting and homosexual scoring.

These perversions are of course only so-called perverse traits within the context of common neurosis, and not perversion as one of the three possible positions of the subject in relationship to the big Other, besides the neurotic and the psychotic one. I hasten to add that in my opinion the difference between these three positions only becomes possible with Lacanian theory; as long as one stays with Freud, the accent is solely put on perverse traits within the realm of neurosis. Even his paper on *A child is being beaten*, explicitly announced as a contribution to the theory of perversion, is exclusively based on the study of neurotic patients.

Anyhow, if there is a masculine paradigm for perversion, it is without any doubt fetishism, with its narrow focus on the phallus. It is even so paradigmatic that it is rather normal, in the sense of the French homonym *norme mâle*, which means both "normal" and "male norm". It could be turned into a motherly advice to the daughter: "As long as your lover is fetishistic, don't worry, he's normal. It's only beyond that that they become really dangerous." Indeed, when Freud wrote his very last paper on the generality of the splitting of the ego, that is, in our language, the divided subject, the clinical material from which he started was a case of fetishism. The feminine paradigm on the other hand would be erotomania, with its stress on the imaginary relationship with the revered Object who is secretly loved and who will discover one day that the only possible lasting relationship is with her. Besides this erotomania as a virtual, but nevertheless structural consequence of the female oedipal development, there is also a practical consequence which is far more risky. It is commonly said that man is so preoccupied with his need for phallic reassurance, that he is prepared to go very far and to pay a heavy price for it, eventually the price of a prostitute. The same is true for a woman, with this difference that, due to the fact that she wants to get recognition from the man, she is far more dependent on him. While man has to pay a price, she has to pay with herself. This is without any doubt one of the factors explaining so-called "feminine masochism", meaning that a woman is eventually prepared to prefer a bad relationship to no relationship at all. At the same time, it explains the typical feminine depression after the loss of an object, that is, the loss of a possible recognition.

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These differences between men and women have everything to do with the oedipal outcome as described by Freud. Beyond these differences, there is nevertheless one common denominator, that is: anxiety. Both sexes are driven by

an anxiety which, although it finds different expression, can be traced back to the same origin. Freud had a certain premonition of this point of resemblance beyond sexual difference, there where he stated in his *Analysis Terminable and Interminable* that both sexes turn away from the passive position, as being the most dreaded of all. In his opinion, this passive position was essentially a feminine one, although he could never state clearly why. Anyhow, his official idea remained that the anxiety at the base of human sexuality was nothing else but castration anxiety. Now, it is possible for us to look at this theory from a completely different point of view, that is, not from the outcome but from the point of origin. This concerns what Freud called the pre-oedipus, but which he never really worked out. From our point of view, what Freud called the oedipal development or the oedipus complex, is nothing but a defensive imaginary organisation against something beyond that organisation, something he tried to formulate with his theory on the pre-oedipus. This means that castration anxiety is not the original, primary form of anxiety, but already an elaboration, and, for that matter, a defensive organisation, of something that is logically anterior. In spite of his official position, we can find hints of these ideas in several places of Freud's work, for example, where he stated in *Inhibition, Symptoms and Anxiety* that even castration anxiety goes back to a more fundamental anxiety in the face of death.¹⁴ In order to elaborate these ideas, we have to go back once again to Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology* in combination with his *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

The very title of the book already shows the distance from all of his previous theory: there is something beyond what he assumed to be the basic principle, something that keeps on insisting in a very strange manner, strange because it precisely goes against his ideas on what pleasure is. In this book, Freud found again certain ideas from his *Studies on Hysteria*, as well as some never published material from the *Project*. The main clinical reference concerns war neuroses with their traumatic origin. They can be compared to the trauma that Freud had always supposed to be at the base of hysteria, in this respect, that both of them, the real war trauma and the supposed hysterical trauma, can never be verbalised, words seem to be lacking for ever. With the war neuroses, this results in a very strange effect: the compulsion to repeat, which is understood by Freud as an attempt to verbalise the original experience. Due to the circumstances, this attempt comes always too late. The reason why this verbalisation is necessary has everything to do with the pleasure principle: the combination between affect and "Vorstellung", i.e. signifier, is the necessary precondition in order to be able to discharge affect, and reach the bliss of zero degree tension. In both cases, hysteria and traumatic neurosis, the verbalisation is originally lacking, although for different reasons. In both cases, what is insisting, is very unpleasurable from the point of view of the pleasure principle, yet it does not cease to insist. Freud had to conclude that there is something at work that goes far beyond his original pleasure principle, something which is at the same time looked for and feared.

This implies that Freud was confronted again with the same question that

¹⁴ G.W. XIV, p. 160.

haunted him at the time of his preoccupation with hysteria: what is this trauma all about? The horror of war seems to be a sufficient explanation as far as the war neuroses are concerned, but even there, not everyone exposed to these horrors ends up with a traumatic neurosis. The way in which Freud analyses the differential-diagnostic criteria of these war neurosis is very subtle; indeed, in the excellent recent work on post-traumatic stress disorders by Judith Lewis Herman, the two main references are still Sigmund Freud and Pierre Janet. Throughout his analysis, it becomes clear that the typical feature of a trauma does not reside solely in its content, but rather in the impossibility for the psyche to process it, either because it happened completely unexpectedly or too quickly, or because the psyche itself was not ready or not able to cope with it. This can always be traced back in one way or another as long as one is working with post-traumatic stress disorders, but, as Freud had already experienced, it is quite another piece matter if one is working with hysterical patients.

The difference between those two is not, as has sometimes been said, the difference between a real trauma and an imagined one, and so, between real patients and impostors. No, we are here confronted with what I would term an accidental trauma versus a structural trauma. Hysteria is concerned with the structural trauma, as is everyone of us. We could venture the opinion that psychopathology leaves the realm of everyday life, there where the structural trauma meets with an accidental one, but we won't go into that. The thing that interests us right now is the structural trauma in itself. With Lacanian theory, we can reverse Freud's original idea about a sexual trauma and put forward the idea of a traumatic sexuality. Indeed, Lacan considered the encounter with sexuality as always missed, "une rencontre toujours manquée", always missed due to the fact that it concerns an encounter between two totally different levels. Mind you, are not talking about traumatic sexuality in the sense of an unhappy marriage, or rape incidents, or the crippling effects of an aberrant sexual education on adult sexual life, or what have you. No, we are talking about something that is inherent in the very core of it. Again, Freud had a premonition about this internal contradiction, there where he stated in 1896 in a draft sent to Fliess: "In my opinion, there must be an independent source for the release of unpleasure in sexual life".¹⁵ It took him another twenty years to work this out, and when he finally did, nobody took him seriously. This concerns his last theory about the drive, with the internal antagonism between Eros and the Death drive, that is, the antagonism between two totally different kinds of pleasure. They are even so different that they oppose each other, so that each kind of pleasure is displeasure from the other point of view.

It is only with Lacanian theory that this Freudian innovation can be fully understood. The loss of the original situation of *jouissance*, as described by Freud in his *Project*, implies the radical differentiation between child and mother and what is lost. This originally real division, the process of birth and the loss of the placenta, is effected again and again through language, resulting in the splitting of the subject as well as of the Other, and the irrevocable loss of object small *a*. Lacan has described this with his witty metaphor about the ultra-thin "lamella" which flies away at the process of birth, even more wittily commented on

¹⁵ S.E. I, p. 222.

by Žižek in his remarks on the movie *Alien*.

The effect of this structurally defined situation is that we are left with a divided subject in front of a divided Other; each one of them has a fundamental lack, fundamental because it goes back to the situation before the division, that is, before the acquisition of language. The net result of this is that it can never be put into words, it remains outside language for ever. This lack is first of all a lack of symbolisation, but it concerns something real, far too real even. It is this characteristic which it shares with the accidental trauma, being the source of automatic anxiety. From that point on, human desire starts, with its eternal longing for that preverbal symbiotic situation that is lost for ever. Henceforward, we could easily start a psychoanalytic-existential philosophy of language in which we would combine Heidegger with Wittgenstein returning thereafter to Spinoza, but I'm afraid that this would completely miss the point, that is the psychoanalytic point. Lacan brings us back to reality when he states that the reality of the unconscious is a sexual one, "La réalité de l'inconscient est sexuelle".¹⁶

So, our last question for today is, how can we explain that this loss of an original state of fusion becomes entangled with the sexual life of adults and gives it a definite basis in anxiety? This brings us to Freud's last papers in which he developed the idea of the pre-oedipal period, that is, his ideas on the importance of the mother-child relationship. Instead of painstakingly retracing these ideas and combining them with the later Lacanian conceptualisation, I will immediately jump to the conclusion. Due to structural reasons, the archetype of a woman will be identified with a dangerous and devouring big Other, the original primal mother who can recapture what was originally hers, thereby recreating the original state of pure *jouissance*. That's the reason why sexuality is always a mixture of *fascinans et tremendum*, that is, a mixture of Eros and death drive. This is the explanation for the essential conflict within sexuality itself: every subject longs for what he fears, namely the return to that original condition of *jouissance*. The primary defense against this fear is the grafting of the idea of castration onto this threatening figure: instead of a nameless and therefore complete desire, she can be satisfied with a particular object.¹⁷ It is the same defensive movement that gives rise to the idea of a superfather as original holder of this object. Lacan expresses this in a well known metaphor: "The mother is a big crocodile in whose mouth you are; one doesn't know what she's going to do, eventually to close her jaws. That is the desire of the mother. (...) But there is a stone between the jaws, keeping them apart. That is what has been named the phallus. It is that what keeps you safe, if suddenly the jaws were to close."¹⁸ This reminds us of the situation where one is confronted with the sphinx and her riddle, the sphinx that will devour you if you don't produce the right answer, that is, the right signifier. Indeed, we are no longer talking about a concrete woman, on the contrary, every

¹⁶ Le Séminaire XI, p. 137.

¹⁷ We introduced this idea at a congress of the Ecole de la Cause freudienne. It was published as: "L'angoisse de la castration on la castration de l'angoisse", in Actes de l'Ecole de la Cause freudienne – Les affects et l'angoisse dans l'expérience psychanalytique, Paris, Navarin, 1986, 10, pp. 25-27.

¹⁸ Le Séminaire XVII, p. 129.

woman falls victim to this figure in a twofold way: as a subject, she is confronted with this threatening figure; moreover, as a woman, she is invested with the fear for this figure. If you want to have a description of this threatening female figure, just read the introduction chapter on sex and violence in Camilla Paglia's book on *Sexual Personae*, where she correctly identifies this figure with nature itself. If you want to read a clinical description of male anxiety in confrontation with this figure, just read Otto Weiningers' *Geschlecht und Charakter*, in combination with Žižek's comments on it. Both of them are unintentional clinical illustrations of the fact that this threatening female figure is a construction a posteriori with a clearly defensive function. If you want to read an intentional clinical illustration, just try to get hold of the beautiful *Männer Phantasien* by Klaus Theweleit.¹⁹

We have to come to our conclusion. We started with the difference between Freud and Lacan concerning their theory about the relationship between the two sexes. Freud was convinced that a normal relationship could be established. Nevertheless, at the end of his career, he is very pessimistic, both concerning this relationship and about the outcome of an analysis. Both seem to stumble at the same place, called castration, or penis envy or passivity, depending on your point of view. In his idea, this stumbling block is a biological one. Lacan, on the contrary, was to state explicitly that there is no sexual rapport as such, that The woman does not exist. This may sound very pessimistic indeed, a kind of confirmation of Freud's last theory. It is not. In his development, Lacan was to abandon completely the idea of an opposition between the biological and the psychological, and elaborate the ever-present field of tension between the Symbolic and the Real, with the Imaginary in between. What Freud called a biological bedrock is for Lacan nothing but a defensive system within the Imaginary, directed against an ever lacking signifier. This opens up new alternatives. Freud saw no possibility of going beyond what he believed to be a biological fact, while the Lacanian conceptualisation gives rise to the dimensions of ethics and creation. Indeed, The Woman does not exist, neither does The Man. Both of them can deconstruct and reconstruct their identity during an analysis, in which they share the same experience, namely that their identity or lack of identity, is nothing but a defensive imaginary construction against the feared desire of the big Other. The working through of this – *la traversée du fantasme* – opens up ethics, which position do I consciously want in view of the desire of the other; it opens up creation, in which direction will I develop my own answers in view of the lack in the symbolic system, answers that will constitute my identity ?

Sexual rapport does not exist. This means that there is a choice beyond neurosis, which is essentially the refusal of a choice. This means that every subject has the possibility of *creating* one.

That is the challenge beyond analysis.

¹⁹ Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, Frankfurt am Main, Roter Stern, 1977/78, two volumes.