

# Kant *with* Sade



**NLS Seminar  
2003-2004**

London Society of  
The New Lacanian School

## NLS-Seminar 03-04

### 'Kant with Sade':

### Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment

The London Society's NLS seminar of 2003-2004 centred around Jacques Lacan's 'Kant avec Sade' from the French 'Écrits' (Seuil, 1966). Unfortunately it is not included in the Selection that forms the English version of the 'Écrits' (Routledge, 1977).

A translation, 'Kant with Sade' by J.B. Swenson, is however available in a publication entitled 'October' (MIT Press, Mass., 1989). The page numbers in the following articles correspond to this translation.

The texts in this collection were transcribed from the spoken NLS seminar in London. The subsequent editing sought to retain the style of an informal seminar.

The first five seminars that dealt with Lacan's text in greater detail and used a closer reading of it, best elucidated the difficult premise of his very profound and original thesis of the fantasy. With this collection we now have an expansive commentary to this demanding text that will help to navigate through its logic and clarify some of the intricacy of its notions.

Special thanks go to the speakers involved: **Jean-Louis Gault** (Nantes), **Alexandre Stevens** (Brussels), **Vicente Palomera** (Barcelona), **Pierre-Gilles Guéguen** (Paris) and **Pierre Naveau** (Paris). As members of the Ecole de la Cause Freudienne, they all have been coming to London for many years; formerly under the aegis of the Freudian Field, and now the New Lacanian School. I thank them for accepting our invitation, their inspiring talk and their support in this collection.

I would like to thank Phil Dravers and Roger Litten for their proof reading and their general suggestions and comments as well as practical help regarding the editing of the seminars at hand.

The cover image was conceived and executed by Phil Dravers!

NATALIE WULFING

**NLS**  
**SEMINAR ON 'KANT WITH SADE'**

**Fantasy and the Limits of Enjoyment**

**1**

**JEAN-LOUIS GAULT**

**'THE 'TRUTH' OF KANT'S MORAL LAW'**

I am very glad to be back here in London and want to thank you for being here with me, on this lovely afternoon, for the first of this year's seminar of the London Society of the New Lacanian School. As programme you have chosen the text 'Kant avec Sade', by Lacan, and I'd like to say a few words of introduction after which I'll give a more detailed commentary on the first 3 or 4 pages of the text.

About the title, 'Kant with Sade': to throw together Kant and Sade is very surprising. It is unusual, although maybe less so now that we know Lacan's work and have forgotten how strange it is to link Kant with Sade. But in 1962/63 - the text was written in '62, and published in '63, in a review called 'Critique' - the publication of Sade in France was still forbidden and the editor, Jacques Pauvert, was persecuted and taken to court for it, whereas Kant was the main pillar of French university education.

From a distance, Kant is the philosopher of morality and duty. He teaches us what we must do in life and which duty to respect. We are all familiar with Kant's more general maxim of morality, the Categorical Imperative. I think in English it is something like this - there are about 4 or 5 versions of this maxim - 'Act...', it is something which is told to a person, 'Act only on that maxim for which you can at the same time will that it should become universal law'. You have to act, you, in particular, in a way which could be taken as a law by everyone in their life. For Kant this is a duty, a respect for others, that what you do must be valid for others. Kant was the philosopher of respect, the respect of the law.

In his Critique of Practical Reason we find two things. Abbott renders this sentence: "*Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and the more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heaven*

*above and the moral law within.*" (p.191) Here we have in one sentence, the admiration and respect for the heavens, and for the moral law inside me.

In contrast, with Sade we have a person who was not very respectable not very commendable. He was a debauched man, a rake, who had a desolate life, from the moment he was 20, when he was put into jail and so it went on for all his life. It was a life of debauchery, including prison, perversion, and above all the things he wrote - what kind of things! Unreadable things, forbidden to be published, for which he was imprisoned. Even though debauchery was quite common at the time of the revolution in France, it was intolerable to circulate these writings.

So, on the one hand we have a professor, a teacher, who lead the life of a bachelor, who stayed all his life in one city, Königsberg, where he lived a rigorous and timed life of daily routines – let's say from 5 o'clock to 9: reading and preparing lectures; from 9 to 11: lectures; from 11 to 12: a small meal and then a little sleep and then conversation, and then back to bed, etc...

On the other hand we have Sade, who lived his life in misery, ending up as a homeless person, and above all, in a psychiatric hospital, Charenton, and who gave a display of horrible things in his writing.

Thus, before Lacan, nobody brought Kant together with Sade. It is provocative, and it seems like a scandal! Even if in the 60s, when Lacan wrote this paper for 'Critique', people, at least in France, were interested in Sade, it was not to the point of mixing Sade with Kant. If they were interested in Sade they were interested in perversion, in sexuality. But what does this man's writing have to do with morality, with the Kantian moral law? Nothing! It is the genius of Lacan to bring these two works together. Why does he do this? What was he looking for?

The fact that Kant and Sade were read together by Lacan, has to be understood in the context of Lacan's teaching. I will say a few words about these first years of Lacan's seminars. Beginning in 1953, he gave six seminars in the six first years. They were seminars about technique, about the ego, about psychosis, about the relation to the object, about the formations of the unconscious and about desire. These are things that are crucial for practitioners to act in their work as analysts. The first seminars are thus guides for action, action in psychoanalysis. They are seminars about what we could call the signifying structure of the experience, where the analytical experience is taken as something rational and logical, something organised by the structure of speech and language.

In these first six years, Lacan explores the mechanics of the experience of building up the graph of desire, which is the exposition of that mechanics that is operating between the person that is speaking and the Other.

And then, in 1959, came the 7th seminar, The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, which is a rupture in Lacan's teaching. It is a rupture in relation to the first six seminars, because in this seminar on Ethics, Lacan stresses the fact that all this

mechanical and logical experience, the structure of which he explored, in short all this experience of the signifier, is now sunk into an ethical element. It is not only a fact of mechanics, it is not only a fact of logic, it is not only the fact of the logic of the signifier. All that happens in that experience has an ethical significance or a moral meaning. It is not only at a mechanical level, as when we consider the biological structure of the organism. There we can look at it, study it from a mechanical point of view, even when we include that organism in its Umwelt, in its context. But at the level of the experience of the speaking person, everything we do has another meaning, has a moral meaning. All things that appear at the level of the phenomenon have another meaning, have at the same time a relation with something that is transcendent in relation to that first level of the experience.

This means that at the level of the speaking being's experience we have to introduce the notion of a will.

Will is a word we come across throughout the text of 'Kant with Sade'. We always have a will. Nothing appears merely mechanically. Behind any event there is always a will. Always. We cannot consider the individual at the level of a personal experience without considering that there is a will. It may be my will or the will of another, the will of my father, the will of my mother... but you cannot exclude the level of the will. This is what we call the ethical level. It is the level where there is a will, where any action is a result of the will and not the result of a mechanical process. It means that anything that I do includes that dimension of a will and is inscribed in an ethical element. It can be the will to do this, or the will to do the contrary. Even 'not to want to do' also includes a will.

This constitutes the rupture introduced by Lacan in the 7th seminar. However, there is also a continuity between the 7th and the previous seminars, simply because Lacan maintains the logical level, which is also the mathematical level, the level of the signifier, the structural level. Except that now, all these notions are submitted to an ethical exigency. This ethical exigency is translated, at the level of the experience, into the dimension of a will. That means that when Lacan speaks about ethics it is not about the ideal or about what happens in heaven. He is speaking about what happens in actual life, and how we reach the level of ethics in the life of the everyday person, and he says that we reach it by our will.

Why am I here this afternoon? Why are you here this afternoon? Because you wanted to be here and because I wanted to come to London. It was my will! This is the level of the ethics. The level of the ethics is the level of the will.

Thus, in the 7th seminar, introducing the dimension of ethics in analytical experience, Lacan refers to the most ancient tradition in philosophy, which is, to begin with, Aristotle's ethics. This leads him to consider Kant's philosophy which is itself also referred to by Freud. So, it is in relation to that dimension of ethics, and the dimension of the will, that Kant takes his place in Lacan's teaching. That is easy to understand.

In the seminar on Ethics, Lacan tells us that when you consider the ethical element, when you consider the question 'What do you want?', 'What is your will?' the answer is that I will and I act always in the name of the Good. What I am doing is always done in the name of something that I consider more important than anything else, and this is what I call 'Good'. That is Aristotle's definition of ethics. The individual acts in his life in the name of a sovereign Good, which is the Good that is above all kinds of common goods. What is the sovereign Good in the Freudian experience? If we take the point of view of Kant, of Aristotle's ethics, what is the Good in Freudian experience? What did the Freudian discovery of the unconscious change in the Good, which was always the sovereign Good as considered in philosophy?

The discovery that Freud made is in relation to a new dimension of the Good. On the one hand we have philosophy that tries to define what the sovereign Good is, and on the other hand we have the individual experience of psychoanalysis. At the level of the individual experience Freud discovers a good, not a universal or common or sovereign Good, not something which is true for everyone, but a good that is true for only one person. Lacan, in the Ethics seminar, gives a name to that kind of Good, he calls it 'desire'. Desire as Good, means that in analysis there is something that is good, and it is desire. But in analysis there is also something that is neither good nor bad, but something we have to deal with, called enjoyment. From the point of view of Freud, enjoyment or satisfaction, in German *Befriedigung*, is not something bad or good, but it is a problem. Satisfaction, what Lacan called in French 'Jouissance', is neither good nor bad, but something the individual has to deal with.

Thus, at the level of the individual, in the Freudian experience, there is a will. This will is related to the Good, which is represented by desire, which is what we consider as the good in individual experience. Despite the fact that we are now a little far removed from Kant and we are not usually considering a universal moral law, we have to consider that every one has to acknowledge their desire and their relation to desire. At the end of the 7th Seminar on Ethics, Lacan's response to the Kantian maxim is 'Do not give up on your desire'. This maxim defines a duty. From the unconscious point of view, your duty is not to give up on your desire. This answer is rigorously related to the problem of duty, traditionally stated in philosophy. But with the discovery of the unconscious we have to approach a new dimension, which was ignored in traditional ethics, and which is the dimension of desire. Desire creates a new duty. In relation to desire the answer is easy, you must not give up on it. Desire is a Good. But in relation to satisfaction there is a small problem isolated by Lacan, because there is a more complicated relation involved that is neither a good, nor a bad. This means that you have to find a way to establish a relation with satisfaction, keeping in mind that at a certain level desire and satisfaction go hand in hand, whereas at another level, they are opposites. Desire opposed to satisfaction underlines a tension between desire and satisfaction, which is present in every personal life.

This is where Sade comes in. Lacan, in 'Kant avec Sade', referred to only one book of Sade. It is the 'Philosophy in the Boudoir'. I believe that 'Boudoir' is now an English word. A Boudoir is not a bedroom. A Boudoir is between the bedroom and the lounge. 'Boudoir' was invented in France around the 1760s, by Bougainville, a French sailor who made a long trip around the world. He had a frigate he called 'La Boudeuse', from the French verb 'bouder', 'to sulk'. La Boudeuse means the one who sulks. One day, on the 2nd of April 1768, while he was sailing through an archipelago, he came across a high and craggy mountain which he named after the name of his ship, 'La Boudeuse Peak', or 'Le Boudoir'. Starting from his own name 'Bougainville', he went to 'Boudeuse', and 'Boudoir'.

The word 'Boudoir' then made its way to France to designate a new room in everyday life. Located between the living room, where conversation takes place, and the bedroom, where love reigns, the boudoir is the place where philosophy meets love. The 'salons', around the 17th and 18th century, were places where mainly women used to come together, every week, with philosophers and scientists for philosophical conversation. Thus, 'le salon' was a room where philosophy took place. It constituted a new room in the house. It was 'Le salon de Madame la Marquise de Pompadour' for example. The bedroom, on the other hand, was not for conversation, the bedroom was for love, without conversation. It was Sade who invented a new place, between lounge and bedroom, where a conversation, about love, Eros, satisfaction, or sexual satisfaction, could take place. Previously, the bedroom was for sexual satisfaction, whereas with Sade we have in 'La Philosophie dans le Boudoir' the meeting of philosophical conversation and sexual satisfaction. A philosophical conversation about sexual satisfaction would take place in the Sadean Boudoir.

You can imagine now the angle from which Sade comes into Lacan's consideration of ethics. Because, for Lacan, and according to Freud, we have stated the new maxim of the Freudian experience, namely the duty of not giving up on one's desire, and at the same time the problem with relation to satisfaction. Those two things, the question of desire and the relation to satisfaction, are submitted to a will. You have to will what you desire or not to will what you desire. You can will to go in the direction of satisfaction or not. There is a necessary dimension of the will in relation to desire and in relation to satisfaction.

With Sade, in 'Philosophy in the Boudoir', we have something very strange, we have the application of the will to satisfaction, because for Sade satisfaction is a duty. Sexual satisfaction cannot be repressed or prohibited. It would be wrong to prohibit any kind of sexual satisfaction. In this way we are introduced to a new right, the right to satisfaction. This is how we should understand the nature of the problem that is at the basis of Sade's thinking, namely: what must I do with satisfaction? What kind of relation should I establish with satisfaction? The Sadean answer is: your duty is to obey any kind of satisfaction. That is a new right, just like human rights, a right that would be defined by a law. The law gives you the right to come here, for example, at least for the moment, it is not forbidden to have meetings such as this. In some

countries it is forbidden to have meetings in which you talk about psychoanalysis, or sexuality, or Kant, or Sade.

With Sade we are introduced to the dimension of satisfaction as a right. And now we understand how Sade occupies his place in the Lacanian reflection on ethics, which means Lacan's consideration of the relation the individual has with satisfaction.

Thus, we ought to consider what Sade's philosophy wants to establish because the 'Philosophy in the Boudoir' is not only a novel or a play. (Even if Sade, the playwright he mainly was, wanted it to be a play to be performed at the Comédie Française where some of his works were indeed performed.)

The book, 'Philosophy in the Boudoir', has two parts, one of which is presented as a play, with a dialogue between six people. This is the instruction and education of a young girl of 15 with the name of Eugenie. The complete title of the book is: 'La Philosophie dans le Boudoir, ou Les Instituteurs Immoraux'. 'Philosophy in the Boudoir or The Immoral Schoolmasters'. The schoolmaster is Dolmancé, who is aided by Madame de Saint Ange, Saint Angel, in the project to educate Eugenie. If you assemble these initials you can configure the name of SADE.

It doesn't take long to educate the girl, only 3 hours, from 4 o'clock to 7. She gets all her education from 4 o'clock to 7, just before dinner, and the play ends with the last sentence which is: "And now, good friends, let's to dinner..."

Throughout the main part of the play we have the dialogue that is nothing other than the education of a young girl in the field of enjoyment. Any kind of means will do to obtain satisfaction. With a man, with a woman, in any way. It is very simple, merely a question of combination. Eugenie learns very fast and enjoys her teaching very much. Then, in the middle of the play, there is the other part of the book that is a reading of a pamphlet, which was actually edited in Paris in 1795, a few years after the revolution in the first years of the New Republic therefore after 1792. The title of the pamphlet is 'Frenchmen, one more effort to be Republican', where, in the name of the republic, the new rights introduced through the French Revolution are listed. The republic must reject all ancient religion, all the old prohibitions, everything that was forbidden before, because now the path is open to all kinds of satisfaction.

It is a philosophical text which reinforces what we have been shown in the first part, in the practical education of the young girl. Eugenie is experiencing what satisfaction is, starting from knowing nothing about satisfaction as a virgin and having had no sexual relations before, she is experiencing those relations now and in every way. Then, in the middle, we have this text, this pamphlet that constitutes the theory of that education in which satisfaction is emphasized. You can do what you want, whatever might give you satisfaction. To obtain sexual satisfaction it is allowed to be with a man, with a woman or with a child. That is not a problem. Nor is it a problem to be with your father, brother, mother, sister.

There is no prohibition.



Satisfaction is the will that has every right. For example: Sade examines the question of robbery. Is it right to rob another person? Yes, because it is natural. Sade explains that nature admits robbery and rejects any kind of property. Murder? Of course, murder is possible, it is natural. Nature gives us examples of murder everyday. Can you murder your mother? 'Of course', answers Eugenie. 'Yes, that is what I want to do'.

'I want to kill my mother', says Eugenie, who only just left her house, at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, where, being 15, she lives with her mother. When Eugenie is not yet home at 6 o'clock, the mother goes out to try and find her, and she finds her in the house of Madame de Saint Ange. The mother falls into the trap, and the three main protagonists, helped by two others, do what they wanted to do, which is to kill the mother. But before they do this, they subject her to all kinds of satisfactions, whatever they want, which they enjoy, but which the mother all rejects. In the end, there is no solution for her, they don't stop until the murder. But as Dolmancé is more perverted than the others, he says that murder is too short and that when you are still alive the suffering is better. So he invents something more sophisticated to give death to that woman. He calls a man who is sick with, it was not AIDS, but small pox, a kind of syphilis. The mother is taken by that guy so that she will get this disease. The suffering will be immense and over a long period of time before she dies. After this they let her go and say: 'Now lets have dinner'. It all took 3 hours, a 3 hour play, like in classical theatre.

What do we come across in Sade's philosophy? In Sade we come across the exploration of satisfaction without any kind of prohibition, a satisfaction by right, a duty to be always heading for satisfaction. This is announced with a maxim, which is not the Lacanian maxim of desire, but the Sadean maxim, on page 58 in the English translation of 'Kant with Sade': "*I have the right of enjoyment over your body, anyone can say to me.*" Note that Lacan does not put any part of this maxim in quotation marks. The way Sade puts his maxim is not so simple.

In the Kantian maxim you have 'Act...' etc, an imperative told to a person. 'Act in this way!' In the Lacanian maxim we also have an imperative. 'Do not give up on your desire', it is a kind of imperative. In the case of Sade it is not an imperative, it is more a declaration, but a declaration of a right. It is very precise. The subject says "I have the right of enjoyment over your body, anyone can say to me". Which means that the person who is saying the whole sentence is not identical with the person who is saying the first part of the sentence. The first part of the sentence: 'I have the right of enjoyment over your body' is a quote. It is a declaration of enjoyment, made by someone else to the person who speaks, and reports what could be said to her. The person who reports that first sentence, adds his own statement: 'Anyone can say to me'. The declaration of the right of enjoyment can be made by everyone. The person who speaks and says 'I', reports a quote, so 'I' does not refer to her, but to someone else. 'I' is a pronoun for the Other. I articulate, through my mouth, a declaration that is said by someone else, and this 'someone else' can be anybody. This is the way that

Sade presents his maxim. It is to be understood in this way, that if I go out into the world I could meet anyone who can say to me: 'Stop, I have the right of enjoyment over your body'.

The main point is that the person who says that sentence is not the person who assumes the declaration. The declaration is assumed by everyone in the world. We are at a level where the person, the individual, is in relation to an Other. It means that that sentence makes an Other exist. An 'anyone' whom I can meet anytime, an Other who can say to me 'I have the right...'. That is the Sadean fiction in which there is a new law, a new right, the right that is not for the person, but for the Other, because the law is the law of the Other. In the Sadean fiction I cannot oppose the law of the Other. There exists no objection to the Sadean maxim - no objection to the will of the Other. For Sade the will is at the level of the Other, and, what is even more interesting in Sade's 'Philosophy', is that the will is the will of the Other.

This is not so evident in Kant. In Lacan it is evident, in the sense that it is present at the level of desire. For Lacan, desire is the desire of the Other, which means that desire is not a property, it is not an individual property. Desire is always in relation to an Other, because I don't know what my desire is. I cannot know my desire. Lacan tells this anecdote in Seminar XI in which he goes to a Chinese restaurant and, well, now we know more about Chinese restaurants, but at that time Lacan finds that he cannot read the menu. In those days you had no idea what was written in the menu, so you needed the help of the Other to tell you what was written in the menu. So he asked the waitress, 'la patronne', to translate to him the Chinese of the menu, but, in the same way, to translate his own desire, which was also Chinese for him. I don't know what I could eat, because I can't read the Chinese of the menu, but also because I don't know what I want to eat, because my desire is written in a language I can't read, which is Chinese for me, so I need a translator to know my desire.

And this is how it is with desire. It is Chinese to us. The language of my desire is like Chinese, the Other has to help me learn the Chinese of my desire. This is what was so interesting for Lacan, in reading Sade, to perceive that dimension of the will of the Other at the level of satisfaction.

With Sade's philosophy we have the erecting of a supreme Other in 'Evil'. Years before that, Lacan built up his theory of the name of the father, who is the 'supreme Other in Good', of course, because he makes the law, makes things go well in the world. But with Sade we have a new dimension of the Other. An Other who only wants evil. The seminar on Ethics, and 'Kant with Sade' are the main texts of Lacan on Freud's approach to that dimension of the Other as the supreme Other in 'Evil', namely the superego. These texts constitute Lacan's comment on the superego, which is Freud's superego, which does not appear as the Other who wants good, but the Other who wants evil.

What Sade highlights is that, at the level of satisfaction we come across a will. It is not only a question of sensation, or a question of feeling, good, or well, or bad. It is not only an individual experience, because at the level of satisfaction

appears the dimension of the will of an Other. In 'Philosophy in the Boudoir', the purpose of the play is to make the person free in relation to satisfaction, to reject any kind of prohibition in relation to satisfaction. When you begin with satisfaction, it first seems very peaceful, like peace and love. When you take a bath you feel very satisfied because it is very pleasant to be in a warm bath, or indeed a cold bath, as last summer, when it was necessary to read and work in a cold bath, it was so hot. This is an experience of satisfaction, and it seems very simple, at least at the beginning, but after a while more satisfaction is wanted, just like in the Sadean play, where the protagonists include everything in the quest for satisfaction, be it with children, with your mother, whatever.

What you perceive at that level is that when you go in that direction of satisfaction you come across a will, a will that leads you to the extreme, the supreme 'Evil'. It is exactly like this in Sade. Nothing can happen without Dolmancé, the schoolmaster. Nothing happens without the master. It is the schoolmaster who wants to educate the young Eugenie, and who, step by step, wants to get over every obstacle. 'Can I do this, and transgress it?' 'Yes you can.' 'Is it allowed to use children? To rob?' 'Yes, it is allowed.' There is a process at work, it goes step by step, as in any kind of education, in which you always make progress step by step. The education of Eugenie also goes step by step. But to go all the way you need a will. Why can't you stop? You can't stop because there is always a will that pushes you to go further. That dimension of will is very interesting.

We come across the dimension of will in Kant as well, where his definition of the moral law is related to a will. You find this in Chapter 2 of the 'Critique of Practical Reason'.

*"By a concept of the object of practical reason I understand the idea of an object as an effect possible to be produced through freedom. To be an object of practical knowledge, as such, signifies, therefore, only the relation of the will to the action by which the object or its opposite would be realised;"* (Abbott, p.76)

To consider an object of practical knowledge is to consider the relation between a will and an action. This is where the reflection of Kant takes us. The relation between a will and an action, is the very level at which you can have an ethical reflection. And further: *"And to decide whether something is an object of pure practical reason or not, is only to discern the possibility or impossibility of willing the action by which, if we had the required power (about which experience must decide), a certain object would be realised."* (p.76)

This is the definition of the ethical level: the possibility or impossibility of willing the action by which a certain object would be realised. The law is considered a priori as the determining principle of the action. So we have the action and we have the will, but behind my will there is a law, and that is the principle that determines my action. The question is only whether we should will an action. This is the ethical problem. I either will or I do not will that action. It is at the level of willing an action that the ethical problem takes place, which makes it the question of the moral possibility of an action. It is not the practical possibility

but the moral possibility of the action. The law of the will is the determining principle of the action.

This relation between law, will and action is exactly the same in Sade. Sade's 'Philosophy in the Boudoir', published in 1795, eight years after the publication of the 'Critique of Practical Reason' in 1787, is a kind of parody of the 'Critique'. There is the Law, there is the Will, and we have the Action, except that now Sade gives priority to a very peculiar law, which is not based on a universal moral law, but on the reign of individual satisfaction.

For Kant, 'Act only if your maxim could be taken by others as the principle of their action' implies a relation between my action and the Other. My freedom, in acting, is limited by the Other. The selected maxim is acceptable only if the action it determines in me is welcomed by the Other, and conversely, only if the same maxim taken by the Other as a guide of his action determines an action which I agree with. This is how the problem is stated in Kant.

In Sade we have exactly the same formula. We have the will and we have the law, which is a new moral law: satisfaction has every right. The relation with the Other is put in a very different way. The Other, not me, takes a certain maxim. The Other can tell me: 'I have the right of enjoyment over your body'. This aspect is new. The structure, at the beginning, is the same, but then we find Sade introduces a completely new consideration. With Sade we come across the consideration of satisfaction and across an Other who wants to reach that satisfaction at any price. That Other does not want anything good for me, because he is only looking for his satisfaction, and he finds it in evil, so he wants my Evil.

While in Kant we have the consideration of the Good whereby his maxim is put under the principle of a certain Good, with Sade we have the same structure, but with an inversion. What was 'Good' for Kant is now rejected, and what was 'Evil' in traditional ethics, is good for Sade. It is an insight into satisfaction never encountered before, never before Sade was there such a raw light thrown on satisfaction. A will of satisfaction, 'une volonté de jouissance' in French, which is not limited by anything, a satisfaction without any kind of repression. We have here the dimension of satisfaction based on the existence of an Other who wants 'Evil' for me, and this is very instructive at the clinical level.

Concerning the truth of Kant's moral law, Lacan writes on the first page of Kant with Sade:

*"That the work of Sade anticipates Freud, be it in respect of the catalogue of perversions, is a stupid thing to say, which gets repeated endlessly among literary types; the fault, as always belongs to the specialists.*

*Against this we hold that the Sadean bedroom is equal to those places from which the schools of ancient philosophy took their name: Academy, Lyceum, Stoa. Here as there, the way for science is prepared by rectifying the position of ethics."* (p.55)

So, the Sadean Boudoir is like the Platonic Academy, like the Aristotelian Lyceum, like the Stoa of the Stoics, which means that we have to add another

school to the list of the classical philosophical Schools, and the place that goes with it. That new philosophical place is the Sadean Boudoir. Lacan stresses the point that the 'Philosophy in the Boudoir' rectifies traditional ethics. We can see this now, keeping in mind that with Sade, we have a reversal of the Kantian ethics. Through Sade's references to the new law of the French Revolution, the human rights, we have an introduction to a new dimension of satisfaction, in relation with law. Today we see a claim to the right to enjoyment. In English law there is a legal right to enjoyment of one's property. In France too, the law gives the right to enjoy one's own possessions. In France, in 1968, the student's revolt's motto was taken from the Sadean maxim: 'The right to enjoyment'. The right to satisfaction has come as a new right in our societies and we harvest the effects of this. The reference to satisfaction is something new in our societies, since the middle of the 20th century.

In contrast, the Kantian moral rejects any kind of satisfaction. To exclude that dimension of satisfaction in the consideration of ethics, Kant underlines the difference that exists between the two words 'Good' and 'Well'. Kant stresses the difference that exists between the two German words 'Gute' and 'Wohl', and we can do it in English, where there are also two equivalent words. To feel well is not necessarily acting for a 'Good', which means that pleasure is no reason for action. Similarly, to feel pain could be the right way to act in the direction of 'Good', which means that pain is not a reason not to act.

These are the disjunctions between the two considerations of 'Good'. In French we do not have this distinction, we only have 'bien', like in Latin, where there is only 'bonum'. As Lacan says, on the second page of the text, all of Kant's considerations begin with a remark on the philology of the German language. He says that the German language has the good fortune to possess expressions that do not allow this difference to be overlooked, the difference between 'das Gute' and 'das Wohl'.

So, there is a time that Lacan calls a turning point in ethics, where you can feel 'well' in 'Evil' or feel 'bad' in 'Good'. Traditionally, before Kant, you felt 'well' in 'Good' and 'bad' in 'Evil'. But with this disjunction between the feeling and the moral level you have the possibility, stressed by Lacan, to feel 'well' in 'Evil'. You can know "Happiness in Evil".

On the side of Freud, the pleasure principle is the law that is on the side of the 'well', 'das Wohl' in German, the level of feeling pleasant or feeling unpleasant. The level of the 'Good', 'das Gute', is not at the level of the pleasure principle. Kant rejected that level of the sensations, the level of pleasure or unpleasure. Sensation and feeling, i.e. the pleasure principle, are not on the moral level, where we talk only about 'Good' and 'Evil'. Kant's project amounts to a rejection of the drive, the feeling or the sensation. With Sade, feeling is re-introduced as a new 'Good', so what you feel is now good.

This is not Lacan's position in Seminar VII. In this seminar he makes a difference between the pleasure principle, where you feel pleasant or unpleasant, and 'Good', which is the level of desire. Desire does not necessarily put you in a

pleasant situation. On the contrary, it can be unpleasant to desire. And it usually is disagreeable to desire. There is a contradiction between the pleasure principle and desire, or between well or pleasant and 'Good', which is desire. So, where do we put satisfaction? With 'Good' and desire, or with 'well' and the pleasure principle? It is a question, because satisfaction is at the level of the pleasure principle, and there is also a satisfaction that is beyond the pleasure principle.

Satisfaction was never rejected, neither by Lacan nor by Freud. Freud and Lacan do not reject satisfaction, but they consider a certain relation to satisfaction by the way of desire, or by the way of love. Desire and love have no place in Sade. There is no word for love in Sade.

But love, for Lacan, since the 4th Seminar, the seminar on the relation to the object, is put as the pivot of the experience, and it is not only the early Lacan. You find the same problem in Seminar XX, 'Encore', where, from the very beginning to the end, Lacan deals with the question of the relationship between love and satisfaction. Generally, there is a certain opposition between love and satisfaction, for instance many men cannot love and have satisfaction at the same time, with the same woman. It is very difficult because there is love and there is also satisfaction, and they are two different things, opposed most of the time. The problem for a man is his relation to love, and his relation to satisfaction, how to tie the two in his love life. For a woman it often looks easier, because a woman has satisfaction through love. For a woman, love is included in satisfaction, and satisfaction is woven into love. This is the problem we come across in the seminar 'Encore'. But here, in 'Kant avec Sade', we have the introduction to that new problematic of the relation of the subject to satisfaction. Is it a 'Good' or not a 'Good'? In the Sadean fiction it is a 'Good'.

The relation between Sade and Kant is the following. The dimension of satisfaction, that is to say the pathological level, which was rejected by Kant, is re-introduced by Sade. It is in this way that Lacan can say that "*Here Sade is the inaugural step of a subversion of which, however amusing it might seem with respect to the coldness of the man, Kant is the turning point...*" (p.55) By making a distinction between 'well' and 'Good' Kant took the first step, which makes possible the Sadean subversion. The subversion came with Sade because what was rejected by Kant is reintroduced by him as a 'Good'. This means that Sade completes Kant's reflection on ethics because there is no answer in Kant's ethics about the destiny of the pathological level he had first rejected. And Sade is the one who gave an answer concerning the level of satisfaction. For him it became the sovereign 'Good'. If you reject something, you have to think about what happens to it. Kant left the dimension of the pathological out as a remainder, and Sade came to consider that remainder. What was rejected from the symbolic of Kant's 'Critique' came back into the real of Sade's practice. Sade is in accordance with Kant, and completes him by considering what he had left aside, but, according to Lacan, he did more, he gave the truth of the 'Practical Critique'.

I will try to say in a few words why the Sadean Boudoir is the truth of Kant's Critique. This dimension of satisfaction rejected by Kant does not disappear miraculously. It does not disappear inside the Kantian 'Critique' either. You cannot just reject something, because the thing you reject always returns somewhere. The rejected satisfaction returns in the 'Critique' itself as the categorical imperative, the father of the superego. What was presented as a law, very peaceful, namely the maxim 'Act in such a way that the maxim can be taken by another...', is an imperative. And when you are under a certain imperative you are under a will.

The imperative is a will at the beginning, but you do not know where that will will go. Kant wants us to be educated, the schoolmasters are all Kantian, but while they are Kantian they ignore that they are Sadean. They are Sadean because the imperative always has a Sadean dimension. The Kantian imperative has the structure of the Freudian superego. The superego, which is presented at the beginning by Freud as a moral instance, appears actually as a will, but a will that does not want my 'Good'. A will has only to be satisfied at the level of the will, so what was rejected by Kant, namely satisfaction, returns in the satisfaction of the will of the imperative. This smuggled satisfaction is included in the implementation of the Kantian maxim. At that level there is a satisfaction that is the satisfaction to be obeyed, and there is also a satisfaction to see that the law is the law, meaning a satisfaction derived from the law itself, from there being a law. That satisfaction is the same kind of enjoyment as any other kind of satisfaction. At the level of the will, present in Kant, there is the satisfaction which was rejected, but which returns, hidden, under the will.

What do you want when you want the 'Good' for the Other? When you want the 'Good' for the Other, like a kind of Sadean schoolmaster you are always looking for a certain satisfaction for yourself. This is the truth, given by Sade, to the Kantian moral law, which cannot reject the dimension of the will. The Freudian superego presents itself as a moral authority, built on the same pattern as the Kantian categorical imperative. Freud discovered that the superego actually has a Sadean dimension. The superego recovers for itself the satisfaction it forbids the individual to have. So sadism is the truth of moral authority, and Sade is the truth of Kant's moral law.

### **Discussion:**

The ethics of psychoanalysis is not a Sadean ethics. It does not promote the right to satisfaction. Absolutely not. But nor is the ethics of psychoanalysis a Kantian ethics, because it does not reject the dimension of satisfaction. The ethics of psychoanalysis takes into account the dimension of satisfaction but also the dimension of desire and the dimension of love. Lacan never abandoned that. At the end of his teaching, when Lacan dissolved his school, I was in analysis with him, I received the news, like a thousand others did, through a letter from him that was addressed: "To those who still love me". That means that, for Lacan

in 1980, at the end of his teaching, at a critical and decisive moment of the history of his teaching, he dissolved his school and called for love. If we are here this afternoon, it is in the name of love, it is not in the name of a will of enjoyment.

*Q: What is the relation between desire, love and satisfaction?*

Lacan says that it is only through love that satisfaction can lead to desire. We have the dimension of satisfaction in the Sadean world, which is the realm of satisfaction, but in the Lacanian world, which is our world, the Schools respond to love. The School obeys only love. To be here, and to study in the Freudian Field, you have to love the School, you have to love Lacan, you have to love Freud, you have to love psychoanalysis, you have to love the unconscious, you have to love desire... And you have to love the NLS and the London Society. Love is not a Sadean solution, or a sceptic's solution, or a stoic solution, or an Aristotelian solution. It is not a Kantian solution either, which ignores the dimension of satisfaction. We do not ignore the dimension of satisfaction.

*Q: What about the ideal?*

Of course there is an ideal in Kant. Whether there is an ideal in Sade is not so sure, maybe it is a perverted ideal. Is there an ideal in psychoanalysis? Of course there is an ideal in psychoanalysis. The Freudian Cause is for us an ideal. What is the difference with the common relation to an ideal? The main difference in relation to the ideal in psychoanalysis, in the Lacanian way, is that we do not have a group relation to the ideal. We have an individual relation to the ideal. We do not have a mass relation to the ideal, which is the usual way. When you have an ideal in the common world it is always a group identification to the ideal, you make a set and you are in relation to the ideal.

Lacan, when he founded his school, said: "Alone as I have always been in my relation to the analytical cause, I found this School". He means that he was alone in his relation to that ideal. So in psychoanalysis we have that kind of relation to the ideal. We have ideals, of course, but we have a solitary relation to those ideals, which leaves us alone. We have relations with others, but we do not make a mass, or a group out of it.

*Q: The signifier of the father that creates lack at the level of satisfaction.*

The concept of the Name of the Father, in Lacan, and already in Freud, has at least two main faces. On the one hand it is an instance of peace, and on the other hand it is an instance of war. Lacan had to deal with those two faces of the father, both, at the level of the signifier, where it either serves a peaceful function, or is related to satisfaction, mostly in a kind of un-peaceful effect.

*Q: The relation between 'Kant with Sade' on the one hand and the Republic on the other. How to link 'Equality, Liberty, Fraternity' to 'Kant with Sade'?*

Fraternity is always based on segregation. If you want to be brothers, you have to exclude others. Fraternity is good, but not too much, because it implies segregation.



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Freedom, for Lacan, is totally delirious. There is no freedom at all for Lacan. The only free man is the madman. The real problem of freedom is in relation with the signifier that creates you. If you reject that dimension of the signifier that creates you, you are free, but you are completely mad. It is a very interesting possibility, because after that, you have to accept the consequences of that freedom, and that is very difficult, but could lead you to invent. It is more comfortable to choose the other way, but there is a loss in that way too, because you are less creative.

Thank you.

**Critique of Practical Reason** Immanuel Kant; translated by T.K. Abbott, Prometheus books, NY, 1996

**Kant with Sade** Jacques Lacan; translated by J.B. Swenson, October, MIT press, 1989

**Philosophy in the Bedroom** Marquis de Sade; translated by Seaver and Wainhouse, Arrow Books, 1965, London