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This book is dedicated to

ERNEST JONES, M.D.

Honorary President of the International Psychoanalytical Association, of whom Freud said: "Not only is he unquestionably the leading man among English-speaking analysts, but his knowledge is among the foremost of all representatives of psychoanalysis."

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Introduction

THE NEED for such a symposium had occurred to me some time ago as the indirect result of a discussion with Dr. Sandor Feldman concerning the difficulties our younger colleagues encounter when treating patients for perverse sexual practices. These difficulties are due mainly to the younger analysts' lack of proper experience; many of them have not had the opportunity, during the years of their psychoanalytic training, to analyze such patients under the supervision of teachers more experienced in dealing with perversions. They have had to rely on their reading of the literature, which gives some hints about therapeutic techniques but which deals mainly with theories of the psychodynamics, classification and formulation of perversions.

The result of this situation has been that the younger analyst does not accept patients whose difficulties are of a perverse nature, or that, very soon after these patients start analysis, they are dismissed, or that they change from one analyst to another.

Indeed, such patients offer a great challenge to the therapist's skill. Throughout the years of indulging in perverse practices, they have built up so many obstacles to their deep desire for heterosexual gratification that their unconscious and even, in some cases, partly conscious longing for heterosexuality is fought with many conscious and many more unconscious defenses.

This volume offers the reader a summary of current views on

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perversion. Although the individual papers in it are, in each case, the free expression of the opinions of their contributors, an attempt has been made to bring some unity into the expression and emphasis of the theoretical, genetic, and therapeutic approaches of the writers.

All the contributors to this volume accept as valid Freud's formulations on perversions. Many of them, however, point out additional factors which play major roles in the etiology of perversions. In addition to the mechanisms of identification, narcissism and penis-envy, which were described by the earlier writers, studies of the pre-Oedipal phases of development—aggression, early anxieties, guilt—make possible a widened and enriched understanding of the psychopathology and etiology of perversions and offer valuable hints about problems of therapy.

I believe the reader will find in this volume many stimulating and helpful ideas about the highly complex problem of perversions.

SANDOR LORAND

Contents

INTRODUCTION	ix
I. GENERAL PROBLEMS	
A Note to the Theory of Perversions FRANZ ALEXANDER, M.D.	3
Perversions and Genitality MICHAEL BALINT, M.D.	16
The Structure and Aetiology of Sexual Perversion WILLIAM H. GILLESPIE, M.D.	28
Elimination of Guilt as a Function of Perversions RITSKE LE COULTRE, M.D.	42
Perversion, Cultural Norm and Normality WARNER MUENSTERBERGER, PH.D.	55
II. HOMOSEXUALITY	
On Homosexuality SANDOR S. FELDMAN, M.D.	71
Homosexuality and Psychosis GUSTAV BYCHOWSKI, M.D.	97
A Developmental Theory of Female Homosexuality CATHERINE LILLIE BACON, M.D.	131
The Relation Between Submission and Aggression in Male Homosexuality MILTON L. MILLER, M.D.	160
	xi

III. SADO-MASOCHISM

- Psychodynamic Theory of Masochism 183
 BELA GRUNBERGER, DR. EN MED.
- The Analysis of a Sado-Masochist 209
 GERHARD RUFFLER, DR.MED.
- Aggression and Perversion 231
 ROBERT C. BAK, M.D.

IV. OTHER FORMS OF PERVERSIONS

- Male Genital Exhibitionism 243
 HANS CHRISTOFFEL, M.D.
- Fetishism: The Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real 265
 JACQUES LACAN, M.D., AND WLADIMIR GRANOFF, M.D.

V. THERAPY

- Analysis of a Case of a Male Homosexual 279
 LUDWIG EIDELBERG, M.D.
- The Therapy of Perversions 290
 SANDOR LORAND, M.D.

I

General Problems

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Fetishism: The Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real

JACQUES LACAN AND
WLADIMIR GRANOFF

Fetishism has suffered, in psychoanalytical studies, a singular fate.

At the beginning of the century, in the first edition of *Three Essays on Sexuality*, Freud assigned to this practice a particular position in the study of neurosis and perversion.¹ This special place was re-emphasized in the second edition, where Freud further noted that the distinction—the contrast—which appeared to exist between fetishism and neurosis disappeared when fetishism itself was subjected to close study. Certainly, fetishism is classed as a perversion and a perversion is in turn—according to the well-known formula—the negative of a neurosis. Nonetheless, fetishism is one form of perversion where no contrast can be found with a neurosis.

Freud himself recommends the study of fetishism to all who wish to understand the fear of castration and the Oedipus complex. To the disciples of psychoanalysis as to its detractors, the importance given to the Oedipus complex has always been the touchstone of one's overall attitude toward analysis.

No effort, then, has been spared to call attention to the

importance of fetishism. With what result? The span between 1910 and the past few years was not overrich in studies on this theme; only half a dozen major contributions can be counted.

Freud returned twice to the subject at eleven-year intervals and, each time, in a very special way.^{10,11} Reading his articles, one senses that Freud himself wondered whether people would really grasp what he was talking about.¹¹

It is useful, in this connection, to remember that one of Freud's last unfinished fragments deals with fetishism. As during his lifetime he invariably set the new courses for analysis, it is not far-fetched to see in this article a prescience of the direction in which psychoanalytical thought was inevitably to turn in the period after the war.

To wit—the study of the ego. For in the psychoanalytical studies of the past ten years—however they may differ in accordance with varying traditions, tastes, predilections, styles and psychoanalytical schools in each country—the study of the ego is certainly the primary preoccupation.^{6,24}

During the same period, works on fetishism have reappeared. For, as Freud recommended, the study of fetishism is and remains most illuminating for anyone who would concentrate upon the Oedipean dynamic in order more fully to understand what the ego is.

To clarify our ideas as well as to indicate the main orientation of our paper, we must first recall that psychoanalysis, which permits us to see farther into the psyche of children than any other science, was discovered by Freud through the observation of adults—more precisely, by listening to them or, rather, to their speech. Indeed, psychoanalysis is a “talking cure.”

To recall such generally accepted truths may at first seem an imposition; upon reflection, it is not. It is only a reminder of an essential methodological point of reference. For, unless we are to deny the very essence of psychoanalysis, we must make

use of language as our guide through the study of the so-called pre-verbal structures.²⁰

Freud has shown us and taught that symptoms speak in words, that, like dreams, they are constructed in phrases and sentences.

In his article of 1927, Freud introduced us to the study of the fetish by indicating that it has to be deciphered, and deciphered like a symptom or a message.¹⁰ He tells us even in what language it has to be deciphered. This way of presenting the problem is not without significance. From the beginning, such an approach places the problem explicitly in the realm of the search for meaning in language rather than in that of vague analogies in the visual field. (Such as, for example, hollow forms recalling the vagina, furs the pubic hairs, etc.) From “Glanz auf der Nase” to the female penis, passing through “Glance on the Nose,” the passage is strictly incomprehensible unless one has stuck to the path which Freud indicated. At the entrance of this path stands an inscription which reads, “What is its *meaning*?”

The problem is not one of repressed affects; the affect in itself tells us nothing. The problem concerns the denegation of an idea. With this denegation, we find ourselves in the realm of significance, the only area where the key word “displacement” has significance. A fundamental province of human reality, the realm of the imaginary.¹⁰

It is here that little Harry takes his stand, from the moment his famous visitor enters, when he cuts off the hands of children—so they will not scratch—their noses, or when he gives this appendage to the caterpillars to devour.²²

It is thus that Freud classifies this behavior when, dealing with “transformations during puberty” in the *Three Essays*, he tells us that the choice of the object takes place in the form of creatures of the imagination. He is speaking of a metabolism of

images when he explains the return to pathological characteristics, under the influence of ill-fated love, by the return of the libido to the image of the person beloved during childhood.

Such is the profound meaning of the remark about the psychic contribution to perversions. The more repellent the perversion, the more clearly this participation is revealed. "No matter how horrifying the result, an element of psychological activity can always be found which corresponds to the *idealization* of the sexual tendency."

Where, then, is the break in this line? What occurs at the moment when—ceasing to imagine, to speak, to draw—Harry, without knowing why, cuts off a lock of hair? At the moment when, without explanation, he runs away screaming in order not to see the crippled friend?

At first glance, we would say that he no longer *knows* what he is *doing*. We are now in a dimension where meaning seems lost, the dimension where is to be found, apparently, the fetishist perversion, the taste for shiny noses. And, if there were no elaboration upon the nose or the amputated lock of hair, this would be as impossible to analyze as a true perverse fixation. Indeed, if a slipper were, strictly speaking, the displacement of the female organ and no other elements were present to elaborate primary data, we would consider ourselves faced with a primitive perversion completely beyond the reach of analysis.¹⁹

It follows that the imaginary does not, in any sense, represent the whole of what can be analyzed. The clinical observation of Harry may well help us to resolve the question we have set ourselves. For this is the only time that Harry's behavior displays what, in clinical psychiatry, we would call reticence, opposition, mutism. He no longer tries to express himself in words; he screams. He has thus twice given up the attempt to make himself understood by others.

And it is here that the break occurs.

What is the register in which, for a moment, this child refuses to place himself? We would say, with E. Jones, the register of the symbol—a register essential to human reality.⁹

If Harry no longer makes himself understood by others, he has by the same token become incomprehensible to them. This may seem a remarkably banal observation but it is so only if we forget that, when we say, "You are my wife," we are also saying, "I am your husband," and are thus ourselves no longer the same as we were before speaking these words. Speech is subtle stuff, yes; but, in this case, it is an offering. In this giving, analysis finds its *raison d'être* and its effectiveness.²⁰

And if we consider mankind's first words, we note that the password, for instance, has the function—as a sign of recognition—of saving its speaker from death.²¹

The word is a gift of language and language is not immaterial. It is subtle matter, but matter nonetheless. It can fecundate the hysterical woman, it can stand for the flow of urine or for excrement withheld.⁶ Words can also suffer symbolic wounds. We recall the "Wespe" with a castrated W, when the wolf man realized the symbolic punishment which was inflicted upon him by Grouscha.¹³

Language is thus the symbolic activity *par excellence*; all theories of languages based on a confusion between the word and its referent overlook this essential dimension. Does not Humpty Dumpty remind Alice that he is master of the word, if not of its referent?

The imaginary is decipherable only if it is rendered into symbols. Harry's behavior at this moment is not; rather, he is himself drawn in by the image. Harry does not imagine the symbol; he gives reality to the image. This imaginary captation (*captation of and by the image*) is the essential constituent of

any imaginary "reality," to the extent that we consider the latter as instinctive. Thus the same colors captivate the male and the female stickleback and draw them into the nuptial dance.

It is when, in analysis, the patient places himself in a narcissistic posture that we recognize we have struck the resistance. And what experience in analysis proves (and meets) is precisely that, instead of giving reality to the symbol, the patient attempts to constitute *hic et nunc*, in the experience of the treatment, that imaginary point of reference which we call bringing the analyst into his game.²⁰ This can be seen in the case of the rat man's attempt to create, *hic et nunc* with Freud, this imaginary anal-sadistic relationship; Freud clearly observes that this is something which betrays and reveals itself on the patient's face by what he refers to as "the horror of pleasure unknown."¹²

Such are the spheres in which we move in analysis. But are we in the same sphere when, in everyday life, we meet our fellow man and render psychological judgments about him? Are we in the same sphere when we say that so-and-so has a strong personality? Certainly not. Freud does not speak in the register of analysis when he refers to "the personalities" of the rat man. It is not on this level that we find the kind of possibility of direct appreciation and measurement which enables us to establish a given relationship with a given person.

We must admit this direct judgment of the person is of little importance in the analytical experience. It is not the real relationship that constitutes the proper field of analysis. And if, in the course of analysis, the patient brings in the phantasy of the analyst's fellatio, we will not try, despite the incorporative character of this phantasy, to fit it into the archaic cycle of his biography—for example, by attributing it to undernourishment in childhood. The idea would probably not

occur to us. We would say, rather, that the patient is prey to phantasy. It may represent a fixation at a primitive oral stage of sexuality. But this would not induce us to say that the patient is a constitutional fellator. The imaginary element has only a symbolic value, which is to be appreciated and understood in the light of the particular moment of the analysis when it occurs. This phantasy is created to express itself, to be spoken, to symbolize something which may have an entirely different meaning at another moment in the dialogue.

It no longer surprises us when a man ejaculates at the sight of a shoe,¹ a corset, a mackintosh;⁶ yet we would be very surprised indeed if any one of these objects could appease the hunger of an individual, no matter how extreme. It is just because the economy of satisfactions implied in neurotic disturbances is less bound to fixed organic rhythms—though it may direct some of them—that neurotic disturbances are reversible.

It is easy to see that this order of imaginary satisfaction can only be found in the realm of sexuality. The term "libido" refers to a concept which expresses this notion of reversibility and implies that of equivalence. It is the dynamic term which makes it possible to conceive a transformation in the metabolism of images.

Therefore, in speaking of imaginary satisfaction, we are thinking of something highly complex. In the *Three Essays*, Freud explains that instinct is not simple data but is rather composed of diverse elements which are dissociated in cases of perversion.⁹ This conception of instinct is confirmed by the recent research of biologists studying the instinctual cycles, in particular, the sexual and reproductive cycles.

Aside from the more or less uncertain and improbable studies dealing with neurological relays of the sexual cycle—incidentally, the weakest point in these studies—it has been demon-

strated that, in animals, these cycles are subject to displacement. Biologists have been able to find no word other than displacement to designate the sexual mainspring of symptoms.

The cycle of sexual behavior can be initiated in the animal by a certain number of starters. And a certain number of displacements can occur in the interior of the cycle.* Lorenz's studies show the function of the image in the feeding cycle. In man, it is also principally on the sexual plane that the imaginary plays a role and that displacements occur.

We would say, then, that behavior can be called imaginary when its direction to an image, and its own value as an image for another person, renders it displaceable out of the cycle within which a natural need is satisfied.

Animals are capable, in those displaced segments, of sketching out the rough lines of symbolical behavior, as for example, in the wagging dance, the language of bees. Behavior is symbolic when one of these displaced segments takes on a socialized value. It serves the group as reference point for collective behavior.

This is what we mean when we say that language is symbolic behavior *par excellence*.

If Harry remains silent, it is because he is in no state to symbolize. Between imaginary and symbolic relationships there is the distance that separates anxiety and guilt.¹¹

And it is here, historically, that fetishism is born—on the line of demarcation between anxiety and guilt, between the two-sided relationship and the three-sided one. Freud does not fail to notice this when he recommends the study of fetishism to whoever may doubt the fear of castration; in the notes following the *Three Essays*, he says that perversions are the residue of development toward the Oedipus complex. For

* For example, in a struggle among birds, one of the fighters may suddenly begin to smooth his feathers; thus an aspect of parade behavior interrupts the cycle of combat.

it is here that the various elements of which instinct is composed may become dissociated.⁹

Anxiety, as we know, is always connected with a loss—i.e., a transformation of the ego—with a two-sided relation on the point of fading away to be superseded by something else, something which the patient cannot face without vertigo. This is the realm and the nature of anxiety.

As soon as a third person is introduced into the narcissistic relationship, there arises the possibility of real mediation, through the intermediary, of the transcendent personage, that is to say, of someone through whom one's desire and its accomplishment can be symbolically realized. At this moment, another register appears, that of law—in other words, of guilt.

The entire clinical history of Harry's case turns upon this point. Will the fear of castration thrust him into anxiety? Or will it be faced and symbolized as such in the Oedipal dialectic? Or will the movement rather be frozen in the permanent memorial which, as Freud puts it, fear will build for itself?¹⁰

To stress the point: if the *strength* of the *repression* (of the affect) is to be found in the *interest* for the successor of the feminine phallus, it is the denegation of its absence which will have constructed the memorial. The fetish will become the vehicle both of denying and asseverating the castration.

It is this oscillation which constitutes the very nature of the critical moment. To realize the difference of the sexes is to put an end to play, is to accept the three-sided relationship. Here, then, is Harry's vacillation between anxiety and guilt. His vacillation in his object-choice and, by the same token, later, in his identification.²²

He caresses the shoes of his mother and of Sandor Lorand. It is his oscillation between the treatment inflicted to caress or to cut. It is the search for a compromise between his desires and his guilt which provides his mother with a penis. For he

has explored her, and he knows she has none.^{3,4,23} It is to the extent that the evidence forces itself upon him that, in his drawings, penises become longer and stronger. The denial of the vagina is necessary, according to Sandor Lorand, for the conservation of the happy triangle. Happy, yes—but, as Lorand would probably agree, not true. The true triangle means conflict. And here is where Harry falters.

Every analyzable—that is to say symbolically interpretable—situation is always inserted in a three-sided relationship.⁵ Therefore, Freud had some reason to give this particular place to fetishism in his speculation. We have seen *it* in the structure of speech, which is mediation between individuals in libidinal realization.

What is shown in analysis is asserted by doctrines and demonstrated by experience—to wit—that nothing can be interpreted except through the intermediary of the Oedipal realization.⁵ That is why it appears vain to explain the horror of female genitalia by certain visual memories dating from the painful passage through the birth canal.

For it is reality in its accidental aspect which stops the gaze of a child just before it is too late. There would certainly be no reason for the child to believe the threat of his nurse had he not seen the vulva of his little friend.¹¹ Nor is there any reason for him to accept the absence of the maternal penis, especially since he has narcissistically evaluated his own and has seen the even greater penis of his father, if he is unaware of the danger of losing it.²²

This means that all two-sided relationships are always stamped with the style of the imaginary. For a relation to assume its symbolic value, there must be the mediation of a third person which provides the transcendent element through which one's relation to an object can be sustained at a given distance.^{5,19}

If we have attached so much importance to the case of little Harry, it is because we feel that this case of fetishism is extremely enlightening. It articulates, in a particularly striking manner, those three realms of human reality which we have called the symbolic, the imaginary and the real.

For our part, we find here a further justification for the particular place which, as we noted at the beginning, Freud accords to the study of fetishism.*

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V

Therapy