

## FEMININE POSITIONS OF BEING

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### ***Freud and the clinic of perversions***

*A Child is Being Beaten*<sup>1</sup> is a date in the psychoanalytic clinic of perversions, being the article in which Freud for the first time demonstrates that the perversions are not deducible from drive functioning but are organised by Oedipal structure. Until then, including the 1915 additions to *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, Freud had followed the famous classifiers of the clinic of perversion — and firstly Krafft-Ebing who in ten years, from 1890 to 1900, had classified the perversions in a nosography that is still used and which inspired Freud when writing his *Three Essays*. The notions of voyeurism, of exhibitionism, of sadism, of masochism are collected and organised by Krafft-Ebing who finishes off his nosographical project within the space of time in which the clinic of psychosis is produced. The person who occupied the chair in Vienna at the same time as Kraepelin did in Munich applied himself to produce this exhaustive description. The thesis was that the pervert is a subject who cannot master his drives, who is dominated by his drives, who very quickly deviates from good sense — which is originally what ‘perversion’ means. There is correct meaning, then the inversions when one makes the opposite object-choice, the perversions when the aim goes astray. The sexual instinct is classified: the asthenics who no longer have a sexual instinct, they are lost to science, as it were, there being nothing left to extract; there are the genital types, too asthenic, they have to be calmed, which gives rise to all the projects which have in any case always animated psychiatric teaching, projects of castration: see all the inquiries about chemical and surgical castration, etc. in order to calm the perverse criminal. All this classifying effort based on the idea of sexual drive, of sexual instinct, landed up in the grand project, the grand classification of Krafft-Ebing.

Freud follows in his own way the psychiatric trend in at first deriving perversions from different partial drives. When I say that he follows the psychiatric trend, it’s in his own way because for him there was never a unified sexual instinct — the famous term Lacan appropriated in *The Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* where Freud insists that the particularity of man, in the sense of human subject, indicates that there is in him no representation of a unified sexual tendency — ‘*die ganze Sexualstrebung*’; *ganze*, that is, unique: the sexual tendency has no unique representation, it’s scattered. It’s on this point that he is in opposition to the entire psychiatric trend of his time. Whilst in the unifying project of Krafft-Ebing, who is the most systematic exponent of it, there is one sexual instinct and deviations in relation to the instinct which allows for a regrouping, for a definition of a complete nosographic system. For Freud we have at least four instincts, at least four fragments of the sexual instinct impossible to unify, there being an oral, anal, and Freud does not add the scopophilic, the voice, but he does add voyeurism, exhibitionism, masochism and sadism. It will fall to Lacan to unify these four fragments of the sexual instinct under the single rubric of object, a particular object, since one has to recognise the gaze as having the status of drive-object, and on this point to complete the Freudian doctrine, by recognising in the crucial function of the order the particularity of the function of the object voice in perversion, whether sadistic or masochistic; the sadistic order is in opposition to the masochistic contract which is what is left over from the voice when one suppresses speech and when the voice is registered in a system of letters.

### ***Genesis of perversions and the Oedipus Complex***

So in the very moment in which Krafft-Ebing is constructing his classificatory work, Freud is subverting its order by presenting the impossibility of a unique instinct. Nevertheless, he maintains until 1915 that these drive stages, this infantile drive organisation, is not elaborated around a constructed object-choice and therefore not articulated within the Oedipus complex as he established it as the drama of the structure of object-choice. It will be the analysis of the ‘Wolf Man’ that is going to convince Freud of the existence of infantile stages of drive organisation, on being astonished that the Wolf Man’s disorders of appetite are linked to an oral stage of sexual organisation.

Freud adds something to it. He is not satisfied to say that everything comes back to the oral stage. What is a novelty for him is that this stage, this oral drive, concerns the father, the little boy does not think about the father with his penis, he thinks about the father with the oral drive. Until then in the Oedipus one thinks about the father because one wants to use his prick like the little lizard. One thinks about the father in making devouring use of him. For Freud one thinks about the oral drive like Lacan said: one thinks with one’s soul, Aristotelian term. What’s new for Freud is the discovery that oral organisation concerns the father by way of devouring and that there is from the beginning the cannibalistic

tic meal. In his text on identification it will lead Freud to establish a primordial, cannibalistic identification with the father. Here we are on the road which in the Wolf Man's analysis, in his preoccupations, led Freud to the discovery of the emerging infantile stages of the sexual organisation. In 1919, one year after the publication of the text on the Wolf Man he emphasised the novelty of his thought:

“Childhood perversion can, as one knows, serve as a ground for the formation of a perversion lasting one's entire life, which consumes the human being's entire sexual life, or it can be interrupted and equivalent, kept in the background of a normal, sexual development, from which it nevertheless continues to extract a certain quantum of energy.”

It's the perverse trait that's preserved. A little further on: “It would of course be important to know if it is correct to consider in quite a general way whether the origin of infantile perversions is based on the Oedipus complex.”

Freud doesn't think that it is established, he thinks that it has to be demonstrated: “If the perversions can universally be derived from the Oedipus complex, our appreciation of this complex acquires a new confirmation.”

Briefly, he considers that the universality of the Oedipus would be thereby confirmed, let's say the clinical span of the Oedipus, once again. One begins to understand towards the fifth part of *A Child is Being Beaten* why Freud so gently begins his text with proposals that smack of those of a stunned, empirical researcher:

“The fantasy representation of ‘a child is being beaten’ is avowed with an astonishing frequency by persons who have demanded a psychoanalytic treatment, hysterical or obsessional. It is very likely it is present still more frequently amongst other persons who are not constrained by a manifest illness from taking this decision.”

One asks oneself why he only noticed this in 1919. He could have noticed it a lot earlier. It's really the art of Freud to take the reader by the hand, to put him to sleep a little at the beginning of his articles with empirical considerations: ‘It happens that...’, ‘One frequently says...’, then to demonstrate the universality of the Oedipus in any perversion. He has just discovered it, and he wants to consider it as a change in a fundamental thesis that he is in the process of operating. From this point of view, it's rather from this nucleus of his demonstration that one is taken back to the reading he makes of the whipping fantasy which is very 19th century: it's in the 19th century that the theme of happiness in evil appeared in literature, a post-romantic theme. In this category a worldly author had a great success, Sacher-Masoch, for his considerations of flagellation.

### ***A Child is Being Beaten — a story of disorientation***

Freud insisted that in an analysis he realised that any quest for the trauma was useless and that a point is reached at which it is lost. The origin of the fantasy, the whipping fantasy, is lost, without a date, in a zone where it is impossible to mark precisely a discontinuity, which the trauma marks. This fantasy is presented with a mythical flavour of having always been there. Freud shows ‘the child entangled in the excitations of its parental complex’, not, in effect, a traumatic history but one of disorientation, of entanglement in a structure. For that reason he can describe three extremely logical phases, three permutative phases, a thousand miles away from the anecdotal description. Freud from a distance constructs a permutation:

“The first phase of the whipping fantasy in the girl must belong to the early period of childhood. There is something in these fantasies which quite remarkably remains impossible to determine, as if the thing were indifferent. The lean reply that one gets from these patients at the time of the first communication, ‘a child is being beaten’, appears justified for this fantasy.”

In other words, in the first phase one has ‘a child is being beaten’ and what remains, the agent, remains undetermined. On the other hand, the object, one is sure that it is not the one who is speaking, the subject.

I would like to draw your attention to a detail of the Freudian method, that attention to what is not there, to consider as a positive, remarkable fact something which remains impossible to determine, not to consider that it's a fault, that it's an incapacity to determine, but that this impossibility to be determined is in itself a fact. And there it is a question of a central method in the very delicate Freudian clinical examination, a question of all the modes of negation. Freud is a clinician of negation as there have been few in history. He is an Aristotle of negation.

“... But something else is surely determinable, each time in the same sense. The child being beaten is never the same as the author of the fantasy, but regularly another child... The fantasy is certainly then not masochistic; one would be tempted to qualify it as sadistic, only one must not neglect the fact that the author of the fantasy is also never the one doing the beating. One doesn't see clearly at first who in reality the person is doing the beating... It's an undetermined grown up person who can subsequently be recognised clearly as being the father...”

***What has never existed does not cease to be written***

Then comes the second phase: “the person who is doing the beating stays the same..., but the child who is being beaten has become an other child, which is the very child who is the author of the fantasy...”

The agent is the same, but there has been a change of object, which this time is the subject. The phrase is formulated as follows:

“I am being beaten by my father. It has without a doubt a masochistic character. This second phrase is the most important of all and the most laden with consequences. But one might say of it that it has never had in a certain sense a real existence. It is not in any way remembered, its contents have never become conscious. It's a construction of the analysis but is nonetheless a necessity.”

What does Freud mean when he says that it is laden with consequences and that it has never had any existence? It's this phenomenal contrast which is that whatever has never been realised does not cease to be realised. Moreover, he will say that in the psychoanalytical clinic there are violent fathers. There is even a clinic of beaten children, of abandoned children, which has grown up in the last ten years, a social scourge. But what is happening is of another order than that which Freud describes. The catastrophic maltreatment of children is something else than what Freud designated by this fantasy associated with a high degree of pleasure in the formulation 'I am being beaten by my father' which has never existed and which nevertheless does not cease to be written.

The third phase, says Freud rediscovers a certain resemblance with the first one:

“The person doing the beating is never that of the father, it is either left undetermined like in the first phase or invested in a typical way with a substitute for the father (professor). The child who is the author of the fantasy does not appear in the beating fantasy. Plied with questions the women patients only reply: the likelihood is that I am looking. Instead of one child being beaten, one now has to do for the most part with several children.”

	<b>Agent</b>	<b>Object</b>
A child is being beaten	Agent?	Subject
1 My father is beating a child	My father	Subject
2 I am being beaten by my father	My father	The Subject
3 Children are being beaten by a substitute father	Father	Subject

What's identical with the first phase is what joins up with it: It's not the father and it's not the subject. There is a fantasy where it's not him or her. It's constructed like the story of Alphonse Allais "The masked ball where the Canoe and the Mask have to meet, and it's not him, not her". It's the deployment of the fantasy; the story of Alphonse Allais is the writing of the fantasy with this type of fantastic logic which has its charms. It's not the subject but a mob and that explosion which is characteristic of a narcissistic mechanism in Freudian logic: everywhere the mob collects there are eruptions of the subject's ego.

It's rather like Irma's injection, for instance. There's Irma who enters the room; Freud goes up to her and examines her throat; then there's the crowd which fills up the room and Freud analyses that this entry — what Lacan calls the entry of the clowns — this entry of all the vacillating identifications of various grandees who are populating that room, eruptions of his own ego which are dispersed like light by a Newtonian prism through Irma's throat. It's really the entry of clowns, for in the little girl's fantasy there are always, says Freud, boys, there are lots of boys. In the great majority of cases in the fantasies of girls there are boys who are beaten without being known individually.

### ***The mysteries of the second phase of the fantasy***

Freud guides us through a perfectly common fantasy, nevertheless connected to a perversion, but which, as fantasy, goes across hysterical and obsessional neuroses, transstructural, as it were. It is not necessarily realised as a perversion, and little girls also have a right to the use of fantasy, which is Freud's way of disabusing his readers from the idea that only boys have access to masochism. There is a little surprise for us in this text which is to explain how between the first and this second phase there are formidable mysteries because in the second phase which doesn't exist, the pleasure is intense. There where the pleasure is intense, there is no representation, if one closely follows the consequences, because this phase must be reconstructed, the phase of intense pleasure, and from there to the third this pleasure disappears.

"The fantasy of the phase of incestuous love indicated: he (the father) only loves me and not the other child since he is beating the latter. The sense of guilt cannot find a worse punishment than the reversal of this triumph: 'No, he doesn't love you, he is beating you'. The fantasy of the second phase — to be beaten oneself by the father — becomes the direct expression of the sense of guilt..."

Freud backs off from the idea that one could find this phase of the fantasy. This phase would be the pure voice of conscience and guilt, and one would have put his finger on the genealogy of morality, finally. There would be a direct expression of the universal foundation of morality which Nietzsche was seeking through the philosophical representations of that morality; a pure voice which would arise: "my father is beating me, and I am enjoying it", which would be the scandalous foundation of morality, those points that Nietzsche tried to approach or Kafka with his punishment machine: the machine wrote the sentence on the skin of the condemned man, when at the last moment of the sentence the condemned man dies; an inspired invention in that atrocious conjunction of the text, of the law and of mortal action of the law. Freud says that the second phase does not exist in so far as conscience and guilt are always disguised, not seen except by their effects. Freud does not suppose any direct expression. For that reason he backs off, saying, the second time:

"would become a direct expression... It has become masochistic; to my knowledge it's always like that, each time conscience and guilt are the factors that transform sadism into masochism. But that is certainly not the entire content of masochism. Conscience and guilt cannot remain of the terrain all alone; love must play its part as well."

That's as far as structure goes. Beyond clinical arguments of the type: "we can find subjects who recall very well being beaten by their father and experiencing pleasure", and one comes across them — the point that is never found is the pure expression of that conscience and guilt and its link with the death drive, although one has that bit between Eros, love of the father and its link with the other dimension which is conscience and guilt.

### ***Perverse metaphor***

By means of which the following transformation is given: in the place where normally prohibition dominates *jouissance*, the perverse metaphor is situated consisting in giving *jouissance* free range over prohibition:

prohibition	<i>jouissance</i>
<i>jouissance</i>	prohibition

At the point at which prohibition resists something that jouit, the perverse manoeuvre consists in restoring *jouissance* there where there was prohibition. That makes the pervert, according to Lacan, a crusader, a soldier, who has a mission. The mission of the pervert is based on a desolate world, a waste land, to use the title of T. S. Eliot's poem. He takes up the theme of desert earth of the myth of Parsifal or of *Matiere de Bretagne* reorganised by Chrétien de Troyes, the myth of the fisherman king, where the earth is desolate; it has to be regenerated, and if the earth is a dead desert, it's because of the king's sin. But if the pervert is a crusader, a soldier, his mission is, despite an earth made desolate by prohibition, to make everyone jouir, hence the relentless, proselyte character of the perverse subject who wants to convince everyone that one does not jouir enough on this earth, that one has to jouir more. To jouir more does not mean more pleasure, one very quickly leaves the terrain of pleasure to enter into the most horrible terrains but which are part of the relentlessness of his mission. He is a soldier working for that metaphor [*jouissance* over prohibition], and it is what makes Lacan qualify him as a soldier who is working for an obscure god to whom he sacrifices all his interests in order to restore to the world the remainder of *jouissance* which it lacks. When Freud qualifies this restoration as the essence of masochism and speaks of it in terms of regression, we can utilise our minimal bit of writing in order to see the structure which is in play and reestablished. What's very odd is that Freud in this text which is truly a surprising one, admirable, says:

“The fantasy of the second phase — to be beaten oneself by the father — remains generally unconscious, apparently due to the intensity of the repression. I am not able to say why in one of my six cases (a man) it was nevertheless consciously remembered. This man who is now an adult has retained a very clear memory of the fact that he used to use the representation ‘being beaten by the mother’ for masturbatory purposes.”

The inadvertent reader would think that everything turned around the father. But, he says: ‘being beaten by the mother’. Does Freud mean by that there is a symmetry between little girls, ‘being beaten by the father’, and little boys, ‘being beaten by the mother’? That's basically what seems to emerge there. In this matter one sees that Freud has not yet established, which he will do in two phases, 1923 and 1932, the total dissymmetry between the boy and the girl, he has not yet established the change of objects for the girl: first the mother then the famous difficult passage to the father. Freud is not walking along this route with any certainty yet. He introduces, as if it were normal, as if it went without saying, this symmetry between the sexes: ‘I found the phase of the fantasy ‘being beaten by the mother’; then one wants to say to him that he would have found it in more than one case. It's found in lots of neuroses. Everything depends on what one calls pleasure experienced with the beating fantasy, but in any case I can state that in a series of cases, several dozen, to have refound the expression ‘being beaten by the mother’ for a little boy, using it consciously as the argument for a masturbatory fantasy — it's very common. And Freud inscribes it on saying ‘curiously’; it seems to me that this also goes with Freud's difficulty at that time of asking himself whether the relations between the sexes have to be thought with respect to *jouissance* and to these metaphors of prohibition and *jouissance* in a symmetrical or dissymmetrical way.

***The extension of the fantasy into the subject's life***

He notes very quickly that there is nevertheless a substitution:

“In two of my four cases of women a smart superstructure of day dreams developed out of the masochistic fantasy of whipping which were very important for the life of the persons in ques-

tion, and to this superstructure devolved the function of making the feeling of satisfied excitation possible, even after the renunciation of the masturbatory act. In one of these cases the content 'being beaten by the father' was allowed to take a risk anew with the conscience if the ego was rendered unrecognisable in a slight disguise. The hero of these stories was regularly beaten by the father, punished later, humiliated, etc."

There the story begins to touch on the extension of the fantasy to the subject's life. He describes two women who not only had such fantasies supposed to have been declared — unconscious fantasies — in the analysis, but what Freud calls a smart superstructure, a deployment of the fantasy in life, in a constant day dream, day dream in which the subject insures its own sexual satisfaction, "makes possible (the term is very delicate in Freud), makes possible the feeling of satisfied excitation."

What does it mean? One understands better when Freud says: "In one of these cases the content 'being beaten by the father' was allowed to take a risk anew with the conscience if the ego was rendered unrecognisable in a slight disguise. The hero of these stories was regularly beaten by the father, punished later, humiliated, etc."

For the women — two out of four — it's going to be the essential turning point of what will be for Freud masochism, the obvious or manifest forms of feminine masochism, for the girls, it's possible that they experience in a conscious way in day dreams the satisfaction of being beaten by the father on condition that it is disguised. The sex is constant of the persons in the fantasy. In the third phase what is manifest, 'a child is being beaten', it's always 'a boy who is beaten', and Freud notes:

"This trait is not explained in an intelligible way by any rivalry between the sexes, for in boys' fantasies there ought to be many more girls beaten; it has nothing to do with the sex of the hated child of the first phase [that is to say, nothing to do with the fact there it was a brother or a sister], but he refers to a process which introduces complications in girls. When they turn away from incestuous genital love for the father, the girls break with the greatest of ease with their feminine role and bring their 'masculinity complex' to life... and thereafter only want to be boys."

This paragraph is crucial for the notion of feminine masochism. It's the first time that Freud presents an alternative for girls; it's enough that they give up expecting a child from the father in order to transform themselves into boys:

"That's why the whipping boys they set up as substitutes are also boys. In two cases in the day dreams — one of them almost reaching the level of poetry — the heroes were always exclusively young men, that is, in these creations the women absolutely do not intervene and are not admitted until after many years in a secondary role."

It's a magnificent description of these day dreams which adolescents embrace, in which the subject for many years, unbeknownst to all, lives her life in these dreams; an all the more beautiful description since very probably the person of whom Freud is speaking is his daughter. In the biography of Anna Freud, edited by E. Young-Bruehl, there is an entire passage on the analysis of Anna Freud.

Elisabeth Young-Bruehl emphasises that the fifth patient whom Freud is speaking about who 'entered analysis because of an indecision in life' who could not be precisely diagnostically classified or could be considered as psychasthenic was probably Anna Freud herself. In her article on Punishment Fantasies and Day Dreams, Anna Freud refers to the psychasthenic patient that she accepts into analysis, she brings out her own case there:

"Anna Freud presents a little girl who adored her father, and whose incestuous relation was transformed according to a regressive process into an anal-sadistic scene which was realised as a conscious masturbatory fantasy of punishment. These fantasies appeared before the little girl returned to school, between the fifth and sixth year, then to be replaced by more agreeable stories, in English, 'nice stories'. These agreeable stories had apparently no more relation to the punishment stories, although she admits, admits to her analyst as well, that the punishment fantasies suddenly break off these nice stories, and that she was punishing herself by refusing to take refuge in these nice stories for a certain time. The analyst notes for the patient that her punishment fantasies and the nice stories have a very similar structure. The nice stories always open up with a weak young man who was doing something stupid and found himself at the mercy of an older man. And in scenes of increasing tension the young man is

threatened with punishment until he is finally pardoned in a scene of harmony and reconciliation. The patient understood the similar structure between the two and ended by recognising that these stories were interchangeable.

In difficult periods, that is when the patient had to face up to difficult external demands, or felt himself reduced in his capacities, the nice stories were no longer fulfilling their function, and he came to a conclusion at the height of his fantasies when pleasure was replaced by the old situation of punishment which emerged and which alone led to the effective discharge of excitation. But these incidents were quickly forgotten... Enabling for several years the patient of whom Anna Freud is speaking to pass on from these dreams about writing short stories. They didn't have the same structure, they were not constructed around episodes as isolated as punishment and reconciliation, probably it was an attempt to sharpen up a strong poetic production, to sharpen up a novel.

We have to note that we have a letter from Anna Freud to her father a little while after he finished editing 'a child is being beaten', a letter from Anna Freud to her father in which she says that she is in the course of writing the grand history of childhood.

In this grand history of childhood, it's about history which is modelled on the story of a medieval knight..."

We are at the beginning of the 20th century and there are symbolist stories which must be contemporary with *Pelleas and Melisande*, *grosso modo*. The history of the middle ages excited Anna Freud, and she threw herself into these stories; one knows they were about a cavalier, a boy. This meets up with the girl of whom Freud speaks that she turns away from her feminine role to be a boy and equally in the case of the woman where the phenomenon of feminine masochism is deployed, it's his daughter, concerning the transformation of the paternal bond. What surprises him is the ease with which she renounces her position of daughter in order to become that wise virgin which will be the characteristic of Anna Freud. What is also astonishing is that the end of analysis is the moment in which Anna Freud was going to speak in public.

The person whom Freud shows us in his daughter Anna is in a fantasy of being punished before being able to enter into competition with others. Freud had the idea, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl recounts in an amusing way, of making her visit Lou Andreas Salome frequently in order to learn about life so that she might speak amongst women, that she relax a little in order to surmount her inhibitions — a sort of treatment which is presented very briefly. Freud invites Lou Andreas Salome to spend her holidays with the family in saying: "It will do Anna a lot of good". That's not wrong. It certainly helps her. You know that when Freud wrote *The Economic Problem of Masochism*,<sup>2</sup> he was suffering horribly from his jaw and kept the whole house awake because he did not sleep at night. He had to have someone to overcome his pain. He worked a little in the morning, and at night demanded that Anna look after him. She herself is exhausted from the care she has to give her father and writes to Lou Andreas Salome:

"I am currently very busy, but stupidly last week my nice stories surfaced and invaded my days like they haven't for a long time. They're a bit calmer now, but I was impressed by their force and the unchanged character of this day dream, although they have been analysed, torn apart, published, badly treated in all sorts of ways. I know that it's really shameful when I give myself up to them between patients, but it was in any case very nice and this gave me a lot of pleasure."

One sees here demands weighing down on Anna again — she had a lot to do, especially to busy herself with her ill father — and, facing her father's death, the fantasy took up again its entire vigour and she set out again in her day dreams which were the heart of her life.

### ***The question of feminine masochism***

Between 1919 and 1924 Freud radicalises his point of view, making of masochism not only one fantasy amongst others, but all the privileged access to a real which is the death drive. He notes:

"... we have to realise that the principle of Nirvana which comes under the jurisdiction of the death drive undergoes in the human being a modification which transforms it into the pleasure principle... We obtain an interesting series of relations: the Nirvana principle expresses the tendency of the death drive, the pleasure principle represents the claims of libido, the modification of the latter, the reality principle, represents the influence of the external world. None of

these three principles are knocked out of action by the other... The conclusion of these considerations is that one cannot do without designating the pleasure principle as the guardian of life."

As the guardian of sleep does not stop awakening at the moment of anxiety dreams, the guardian of life does not stop masochism although it has a privileged relation to striving towards the Nirvana principle. Masochism is shared amongst the component drives which shows that in one aspect every drive is a death drive.

How should we consider feminine masochism once the death drive is introduced?

"... If one has the chance to study cases in which masochistic fantasies are particularly richly developed, one easily discovers that they place the person in a characteristic feminine position and signify being castrated, undergoing coitus or delivery. It's for that reason that I named a *potiori* feminine masochism that form of masochism of which so many elements go back to infantile life."

Freud calls feminine masochism what goes back to childhood which is not necessarily feminine, but because it has a meaning: being castrated, undergoing coitus or delivery. He adds: "feminine masochism rests entirely on what we have described as primary erogenous masochism, pleasure in pain".

This detail of 1924 is also a way of replying to the question raised for him by his daughter, that is, from where does the force of these day dreams, of these fantasies come from, since they were analysed?

It's their erogenous side that accounts for Freud for the difficulty of ridding his daughter of her relations to her fantasies.

We rediscover there the script of the position of feminine sexuality that Lacan gives: the subject's division between, on the one hand, the relation to drive, on the feminine side, a direct relation to drive, and on the other hand a direct relation with what in the Other is a privileged signifier. Firstly, Lacan names this signifier the Name-of-the-Father in so far as it has to do with a consistent Other, there was in any case in the Other the guarantee of the Other, this particular name in the name of which everything signified. Then, Lacan emptied the Name-of-the-Father of its function of guaranteeing the signifying order in order to isolate underneath the Name-of-the-Father the place of the signifier which lacks in the Other — a signifier which is written S (A), the signifier of lack, distinct from what is in the Other, which is written outside and in which there is for Lacan the script of an entire series of logical paradoxes which are germinal in the idea of writing a signifier outside the Other.

That's what Freud added between 1919 and 1924. In *A Child is Being Beaten* (1919) everything turns around the place that Lacan will call the Name-of-the-Father. From 1924 the place of the death drive will be extricated. And it's also how Freud explains to himself why, despite the analysis of her fantasies, the analysis of the place of the Father — in these diurnal fantasies, this veil that descended over the life of Anna — there is a remainder which indicates that she never completely separated from that position and from her use of day dreams.

Lacan takes up again in 1969 in the course of *Seminar XVII, L'Envers de la psychanalyse*,<sup>3</sup> the commentary of *A Child is Being Beaten*, and he notes that the central moment, the second moment of the father, the one who is doing the beating is not named, and that the proposition of the fantasy, the 'you are beating me', has to be distinguished from its referent.

Lacan has this phrase: "the 'you are beating me' is that half of the subject whose formula makes his link to *jouissance*. He receives, certainly, his own message in an inverse form — that means here his own *jouissance* in the form of the *jouissance* of the Other".

It's one of the clearest reformulations undertaken by Lacan of meaning that becomes 'enjoy-meant' [*jouis-sens*]. What he called in the semantic years the meaning that the subject received from the Other — he received his own message in inverse form — in the '*jouissance*' years he notes that the structure functions, but what the phrase 'you are beating me' means is I enjoy [*jouis*], I am receiving my *jouissance* from you who are beating me. And it is supposed that the father has to be enjoying [*jouir*] this, that he is guaranteeing it, ensuring its function, the place of *jouissance*.

That strange function of the father appears to be the place of a ravaging *jouissance*, as it were, to be the one who beats, but at the same time, for the second operation, to be the guarantee that some



*jouissance* is reserved for the subject. The father, especially in the feminine version of the fantasy, 'a child is being beaten', ensures the just distribution of *jouissance* for the one he evokes. He protects the subject from an unevacuated relation, not marked by a seal, by a signifier, by a name, from a deleterious relation with the death drive. In summary, 'a child is being beaten' protects the subject from an erogenous masochism. That's why in what concerns feminine sexuality the stakes that the Seminar *Encore4* plays for are to separate S(A) and a, these two algebraic letters in their function on the feminine side.

### ***The being of the woman***

One has to restore Lacan's criticism of Freud's conception of masochism. Lacan's reproach concerns this masochism that would be the expression of the woman's being. It's around the notion of the being of the woman that the essential of the debate centres. It's not about the phenomenology of these fantasies, they are not deniable and even rather common. It's not the particular relation of pleasure and pain that Lacan is going to criticise, but that permanent assignment of pain rather than pleasure to the being of the woman. It will be the force of the concept of privation, when Lacan introduces it, to account for the woman's particular *jouissance* in divesting herself of the register of having without it being marked by the least masochism.

Lacan introduced the concept of privation at the end of the 50's, first to distract the analysts who were stuck in the Anglo-Saxon concept, having bet everything on frustration. In the Anglo-Saxon world especially, the presuppositions of the subject conceived by John Locke, supported the Lockean subject in watching out for its interests. This subject of liberalism is a subject that watches over its 'having', and every time it can't have something, it suffers, is frustrated. It's around this that the Anglo-Saxon concept turned, not around what language refuses, *Versagung*, — in Freud the concept *Versagung* corresponds to the translation given as 'frustration' — but what in the telling [*dire*], *Sagung*, is avoided. Lacan tried to translate it as 'what is refused': language's refusal to tell, validating relations to demand; there is something in demand which does not manage to get said. What is fundamentally frustrating, to use the English term, is that one does not manage to speak the desire in demand. Whatever the sexual games are in which a person tries to lead his partner to say to him what makes him *jouir* — and there is a whole range of erotic games which consists in using words which shouldn't be used, forbidden words, in twisting language in order to say what makes him *jouir* — in whichever way, that escapes us, because it's always between the lines and it will always be the point which will escape being formulated. This point is really frustrating.

### ***The concept of privation: from having to being***

The idea of privation was made to get psychoanalysts to think in another register than that of having and of demand. There is a register in which one does not demand which is that of being. In the course of his development the question of being in Lacan is complicated. Lacan's development in the 1950s attracted the attention of psychoanalysts regarding boys and girls and the fact that both lack being, and because they lack being, for instance, they lack being a boy or a girl in a total identity, they desire, and this desire is not to have. There are phrases which we must give their full weight: 'desire is the metonymy of the want-to-be'. Those of you who have read Lacan fifty times know this phrase across everything, and one has to consider it from a new angle because in any case one might say, if one is a psychoanalyst obsessed by frustration, by desire which is a metonymy of the want-to-have: it's enough to have what is frustrating you and then, you will be delighted.

The entire problem is what causes the relation to that object in having, what is transformed or not in the register of being? And on the basis of the introduction of the theme of being, Lacan challenges the idea of a feminine masochism which would explain that women found their being on that point by consenting to pain. They are also fundamentally deprived, but, on the other hand, boys and girls separate themselves in their relation to being.

### ***Confront castration or unload oneself of having***

Boys manufacture being on being threatened to lose what they have: masculine castration, more precisely, castration involving the masculine genitals, creates a threat. They make their being out of confrontation with the castration threat, but they never confront it totally, it's a kind of Hegelian struggle between master and slave. In Freud in the genesis of being from the boy's side, it's a battle in which the boy must confront — and would not even have any being without a confrontation with castration. He will have no being in trying to obtain from a more or less cuddly mama the item he needs not to be frustrated. It's a way especially amongst men which creates a profound weakness: to try and obtain

from women the little extra item they need. The path that Freud proposes for the boy is to confront castration. That doesn't mean to behave like a psychopath knocking everyone about as sole objective in existence, it doesn't mean having no God and no master, it means: to choose those for whom one reserves an affect of admiration and that this admiration is not an obstacle to what it concerns, to confront the threat of castration in a certain kind of battle. Women adore pushing men into this: as soon as two men admire each other, a little game starts up: "Oh, Oh, you're not a man, you're always giving in..." It's a push to crime.

On the other hand, there is the feminine being. Here, Lacan takes over or makes use of what Freud had established: castration cannot be a threat since it has already happened. Therefore, the woman fears nothing, and she creates her being by unloading herself of having. A very decided subject, a feminine subject, who in her relation to having has difficulties, refound a memory of the playground in nursery school, before primary school, before her sixth year, there was at the back of her school a court yard and a vertical drop, a kind of little ditch, and she spent her time — which gave her an enormous satisfaction — throwing over the fence into the ditch everything she was given to take to school with her. From her pencil case she used to throw away the rubber that she loved, the pencil that she also loved, she threw them away and never understood why. She only noticed one thing that she acquired a lot of prestige amongst her little school mates doing what she did. The subject in her life followed this path, suffered in love, and that's exactly the point that was established: she enjoyed [*jouir*] being deprived of having and of whatever she might love, her objects. She manufactured being for herself, and her little, school mates recognised very well that she was manufacturing some prestige, some being, in that kind of potlatch, to take over the term that native Americans use to designate those ceremonies of struggle for recognition in which everyone sacrifices more than the next: instead of offering gifts to the other because it's vulgar, one simply burns them. In honour of the other one destroys things, and each one destroys more than the other. Well, this little girl very early on got the idea that by sacrificing that to one does not know what obscure God, she made some being for herself.

As for *jouissance* of privation, on this point, one manufactures for oneself this plus on the basis of a subtraction in having because she is not threatened by castration. On this basis Lacan holds that women who before him were situated in the register of masochism, like those mystical persons who withstand so much pain, that to strip themselves of everything they had, their worldly goods, she forces the apparition of a being which justifies itself through this strange dialectic, justifies itself all the more in being, exists all the more in being, given this loss in having. Here the notion of ex-sistence gets its meaning in being written the way it is. This being is a being on the outside, not a being in the register of having, it cannot be 'in', it cannot be possessed. It's really the intuition that Lacan had, no doubt through the catholic readings of his intellectual formation, no doubt through debates with his brother, although he did everything, as he says, to keep him from joining an order. It was evident that mysticism and the relations of women to God could be treated by scientific denial or by primary anti-clericalism. It is indeed evident, he said to the joy of mystics, that there are no doubt women who cannot have a relation to the man except by way of the names of the father such as the mystic allows it.

### ***Feminine madness and masculine fetishism: two styles of love***

Lacan made privation the instrument for rethinking the being of women after the heritage of masochism. Retrospectively he denounced the masochistic illusion as a biological illusion. If the links with this biological condition are broken, which happens to women who consent to the man's fantasy in subjective positions in which pain and humiliation are linked, it is because they are sheltered from the threat of castration. For that reason they can go further than men along the paths of devotion in love, and it's the reason why Lacan prefers to the term 'masochism' the term 'ravage' that a man can on occasion inflict on a woman. It's not that women are masochistic but because there is no limit, no barrier placed by the threat of castration. They can be much more decided in giving themselves and their body in order to reach the point at which the *jouissance* of the Other is assured, at which they ensure that the 'you are beating me' returns to them in an inverse form. And the examples carefully collected by psychoanalysts of the generation of Joan Riviere, Helen Deutsch and Anna Freud must be considered again on the basis of feminine decision, of the 'unstoppable' feminine, of the fact that it is always a surprise for the man when having thought he had to do with the most reasonable of women, he now has to take into account that the most reasonable has become the most unreasonable of them all. What is that *jouissance* which alone guarantees the feminine position of the subject? Lacan formulated it in the register of 'feminine madness', what amongst women is the erotomaniacal style of love and not fetishistic; amongst men the fetish is the limit. Basically men are satisfied with little, it's well known, in contrast to the feminine pole that does not have that limit.

For your consideration I'll emphasise in conclusion the effectiveness of the concept of privation in allowing all the known facts under the name of feminine masochism to be swept away and placed in an entirely different perspective which also allows the phenomena to be saved.

Translated by Richard Klein

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