

The Introjective Basis of Polymorphous Tendencies in Adult Sexuality¹

This chapter is an attempt to bring some greater order into the area of sexual theory by helping to differentiate the basis of adult polymorphous sexual tendencies from the imperious incursions, of pathological significance, which contaminate the adult sexual life. They come from areas of polymorphous and perverse infantile sexuality. In order to do this in a way that will have immediate validity for the consulting room, I plan to discuss both the technical and theoretical problems separately and then relate them one to the other.

Technical Problems

It would be a plausible deduction from the psycho-analytic theory of personality development that sexual behaviour does not need to be taught, but derives its form from instinctual drives modified by identification processes. Sexual education, therefore, has no precise place in the psycho-analytical method, which aims to bring about integration and differentiation in psychic structure in order that learning by experience may take place. In all our patients, regardless of age, the clinical material presents us with the task of assisting in the differentiation of levels in psychic life. Our business is the analysis of the infantile transference with the co-operation of the more advanced and most mature mental structures.

In the realm of sexuality this becomes a pressing problem immediately puberty commences and the urgency of genital desire makes itself felt in the transference. The experience of carrying a latency child in analysis into puberty highlights the terrible chaos of levels, zones, and identifications that the pubertal process produces. But in grown patients, whether the genital life has progressed no further than masturbation, or has settled into a stable heterosexual mating, the problem of differentiating analytically between the adult sexual life and the intrusive infantile substructures must go on even though our attitude toward the content of the adult activities is simply one of putting them aside as not in themselves the concern of

¹ Read to the British Psycho-analytical Society, published in the Scientific Bulletin, No. 10, 1967.

psycho-analytic investigation. In a sense this is a simple function of tact and respect for privacy. Fortunately we have a perfect method for making this differentiation, namely the primary rule, which imposes no task of selection on the patient but rests on the assumption that anything he observes going on in his mind in the consulting room has arisen because it has some relevance to the infantile transferences, however slight or obscure. If this is well understood by the patient, he is in a position to know when he is withholding material. The analyst, on the other hand, cannot know this, he can only deduce it from behaviour, gaps in the data, or indications in the patient's dreams.

This clarification by primary rule leaves the analyst merely the task of separating adult and infantile aspects of the material, with the tacit acknowledgment to his patient that what is adult and private is of no analytic concern. However, this process of differentiation seems to be difficult for a particular reason with which this paper is chiefly concerned, namely, that analytic theory has not as yet made clear the parameters of adult sexuality so that its richly polymorphous nature can be surely distinguished from the proliferating polymorphism and perversity of infantile sexuality.

When I say that the adult sexual life is private I do not mean that I have any illusion that it is conflict-free. Psycho-analysis has no aspiration to free people of conflict but rather to equip them for resolving current conflicts. This it does by freeing them from the compulsion to repeat conflicts of the past (transference) and, eventually, by strengthening the structure of the personality so that learning from experience can take place (Bion). This is extremely important for an analyst to appreciate in order to avoid being drawn as mentor, mediator or judge into the patient's external relations. In no area is the pressure more severe than in connection with sexual life.

Theoretical Problems

Freud's differentiation of source, aim and object in infantile sexuality seems stark, if not moralistic. He elevates heterosexual genitality to a unique position, as if it were the only aspect of infantile sexuality fit to survive into adult life. Abraham's clarification of the distinction between part- and whole-object relations enriched the conception of genital sexuality, but did nothing to alter the quantitative and normative attitude implied. Instead of clearly defining the state of mind involved in the adult love relationship, it tended to exalt an act of genital coitus, rampant on a field of pregenital foreplay, a sort of coat of arms of the sexual aristocracy.

But it is necessary to remember that this conception arose before the investigation of psychic structure had even begun, and before the psycho-analytic method of investigation of psychic events had been developed into a reliable tool. In many ways the "Three Essays on Sexuality" is more descriptive than metapsychological. Today, some 40 years after the publication of "The Ego and the Id", our knowledge of psychic structure and the nature of internal and external object relations is considerably advanced, certainly far enough for a renewed effort in the area of sexual theory. To begin with, knowledge of splitting processes makes it feasible to draw a structural, rather than descriptive, line between narcissistic organisation and object relations. Further, the distinction between "horizontal" and "vertical" splitting gives a clearer significance on the one hand to the topographic viewpoint of the different levels of psychic life, as well as adding structural firmness to the conception of bisexuality. While we may still agree with Freud that oral and anal phases of development contain only a prelude to sexual differentiation, our understanding of introjective and projective identification gives substance to the terms masculine and feminine as related to parts of the infantile self to a degree that mere reference to Id-constituents could not give. Thus the Oedipus complex may be seen to rise to a crescendo of whole-object and bisexually differentiated drama at four years of age, say, but its significance in babyhood need no longer be doubted. Our language also can now move forward from the descriptive psychiatric basis. A term like "homosexual" can now be given a clear metapsychological significance, if desired, to distinguish it from the manifestations of infantile bisexuality, although there is much to be said in favour of throwing it out as a waste-basket term, as I hope to show, in favour of a more definitive elucidation of the terms *polymorphous* and *perverse* in psycho-analytic theory.

These many improved possibilities of formulation arise from the clearer view we are able to have now, thanks to the light shed by the concept of projective identification as distinct from introjective, on the workings of destructive forces, particularly those connected with envy, which create confusional states, related in particular to the difference between good and bad. By applying this differentiation correctly to the sexual life, internal and external, narcissistic and object-related, part- and whole-object, at all levels of the mental life, we can establish the terms *polymorphous* and *perverse* as having definitive reference to good and bad sexuality respectively. In this sense they refer to the libidinal and destructive drives but also to the splitting process (splitting-and-idealisation) by which good and bad parts of self and objects are established and differentiated in unconscious phantasy.

By means of these three dimensional differentiations, libidinal and destructive impulses, adult and infantile sexuality, good and bad parts of self and objects, the way is made clearer in analytic work for resolving the terrible confusions which erupt in puberty and are seldom satisfactorily clarified outside analysis.

alienated from himself

By means of these three dimensional differentiations, libidinal and destructive impulses, adult and infantile sexuality, good and bad parts of self and objects, the way is made clearer in analytic work for resolving the terrible confusions which erupt in puberty and are seldom satisfactorily clarified outside analysis. Although it is not the purpose of this paper to classify the disturbances of sexual life met with in analytic practice, I offer the following as a restatement of these theoretical views in clinical terms as a guide.

Perversions

- (a) Expressions of narcissistic organisation (sado-masochistic)
- (b) Defences against depressive anxieties (inverted object choice and zonal confusions)

Polymorphisms

Inhibitions

- (a) Due to excesses of persecutory anxiety, almost always coupled with some form of narcissistic masturbatory perversion
- (b) Due to excesses of depressive anxiety, usually connected with intense splitting of the bisexuality (obsessional)

Immaturities

- (a) Poor differentiation of adult and infantile polymorphous tendencies
- (b) Intensified polymorphous tendencies due to infantile zonal confusions
- (c) Inadequate genital responsiveness due to defective introjective identification (identification with defective objects—closely related to obsessional type of inhibition)

It is important to note that any one of the above may give rise to a sexual pattern deserving the descriptive term "homosexual", which illustrates its virtual uselessness in psycho-analytic nosology.

This brings us to the real substance of this paper, a description of the unconscious basis in introjective identification for the polymorphous tendencies in adult sexuality. While I do not plan to substantiate the description here, it is hoped that the conception will immediately make links for readers with their own clinical material. It has been built up over a period of years from my own adult and child cases, neurotic and psychotic, as well as from supervisory work with other analysts and students.

The foundation, in the unconscious, of the sexual life of the mature person is the highly complicated sexual relation of the internal parents, with whom he is capable of a rich introjective identification in both masculine and feminine roles. A well-

metapsychological rather than descriptive term. increased role as a waste basket term

integrated bisexuality makes possible a doubly intense intimacy with the sexual partner by both introjection as well as a modulated projective identification which finds its place in the partner's mentality without controlling or dominating. It is akin to the normal use of projective identification as a primal mode of communication, as described by Bion (1963), and differs greatly, therefore, from the violent splitting and projective identification of the infantile bisexuality which is so prevalent in puberty and adolescence, epitomised in "the crush".

In order, therefore, to understand the complex structure of affects, impulses, phantasies and anxieties which make up the adult sex life, we must turn our attention to the nature of the coital relation of internal parents, as we are able to construct it from psycho-analytical data. The first principle that must be understood is that the coital relation of internal objects has an overwhelming relation to that dependence of infantile parts of the self on the internal mother which is the foundation of all stable and healthy psychic structure. This dependence we know to be of two sorts: in the first instance, on the mother's capacity to receive the projection of infantile states of mental and physical distress, experienced as persecution by bodily contents, especially the faeces and urine. In psychic reality all persecutions coming from outside the infant's body are experienced as secondary to the expulsion of those contents. The baby depends on the mother's capacity to return to it parts of the self, which have been then divested of all persecutory qualities, by means of the feeding relation to the breast. In connection with these two primal functions of the internal mother, her dependent relation, in turn, to the internal father and his penis and testicles is experienced as essential for her survival, and for the survival of the babies inside-the-internal-mother whose welfare is felt to be a prerequisite for her generosity and benevolence. Although in its earlier form, at a part-object level, the breast is felt to have both toilet and feeding functions, at whole-object levels the division of top and bottom of the mother's body expresses the need in the infant to feel certain that its excreta can be kept well separated inside the mother from her breast and milk. Her body therefore comes, in unconscious phantasy, to have three delimited spaces, top, front-bottom and back-bottom, corresponding to breast, genital and rectum.

The inside of the mother's body is felt furthermore to acquire penis-like structures from coitus with the father which subsequently, by forming part of her own equipment, perform various functions in these three spaces. These functions are of two types, keeping order and protecting. Thus the flow of milk is felt to be regulated by a nipple-penis. The separation of the three spaces is carried on by

policing functions of inside-penises. The expulsion of intruders is a well-known sub-type of these protective functions seen in the claustrophobic anxieties. The sphincter of each space, mouth, introitus and anus, is experienced as an inside-penis of the mother.

In contrast to these inside-penises, without testes, the penis of the father, with testes, is felt to have a reparative role in which the semen is the essential factor. Furthermore, the three spaces are felt to have each a specific relation to the father's penis-and-testicles (genital) by way of one of the three orifices of the mother's body, the introitus, the anus and the mouth. Thus the semen is felt to feed the babies in the genital, to flush out and purify the rectum and to supply raw materials for the production of milk.

During the analytic process, after the relation to the breast has been more firmly established, while the Oedipus complex at its various levels is being worked over and resolved, this relationship between the internal parents can be studied in detail. During the analytical working-through one form of infantile attack and intrusion after another is relinquished under the pressure of the depressive concern for the welfare of the object. But even after all the facets mentioned above have been allowed to find their correct place, the last-ditch stand of envy and jealousy entrenches itself against the blossoming of pleasure in the midst of utility; for at infantile levels pain and pleasure are insistently held to be affects appropriate to work and play respectively.¹

Clinical Material

A man of intelligence and some distinction in his academic field, married and with three children, sought analysis for hypochondriacal complaints of acute onset. The only boy, youngest of three, having lost his father in puberty, he had assumed a distant, administrative and trustee relation to his mother as he progressed through adolescence. His character from an early time had had the "pseudo-mature" structure,² genteel, snobbish, dilettantish, a great seducer of married women at the level of dinner table conversation, but fundamentally impotent. A stony paranoid attitude toward men and a dread of homosexual temptation was eased socially by a placating demeanor, but a deep contempt for masculinity gave force to a persistent masturbatory phantasy of finding two policemen together in a police car, handling or sucking one another's genitals. We recognised only in the third year of analysis, when the policemen-nipple turned up in dreams, that this persistent voyeurist phantasy represented the nipples, together in the brassiere, feeding and delighting one another.

¹ See Chapter 17 for further elaboration of this theme.

² See my paper on Anal Masturbation (1966).

This understanding relieved a perverse tendency which had dogged him since the latency period, in one form or another.

However, no relief came to the impotence which had become manifest when his wife's loss of desire after the third child released him from the demands he had been only able to meet by the device of pseudo-potency based on secret employment during coitus of the phantasies of his perversion.

From early in the analysis the internal mother's body had always appeared as houses, churches and gardens, to which he had a proprietary, executive or custodial relation. The first two years of analytic work added the field of psycho-analysis to this list and gave rise to the acting out of psycho-therapeutic demeanour in his external relations and a Boswell-to-Johnson relation in the transference to the analyst-daddy, while in dreams his own father's grave, separated by some miles from his mother's house, became a frequent representation. It was clear that he functioned in a state of projective identification with a father's penis, alive but detached as a part-object from the rest of the dead father.

As his projective identification, and the pseudo-maturity attending it, yielded to the analysis of the numerous anal-masturbatory habits which reinforced it, the dependent relationship at a toilet-breast level was strengthened and the many areas of zonal confusion came under fruitful investigation. His mother began regularly to appear in his dreams, generally old and ill, while his wife became a regular representative, in dream and acting out, of the little-girl aspect of his infantile bisexuality. His father began at rare intervals to appear in his dreams, to his great relief and pleasure, and the pain of his father's death, put off so abruptly after an hour's crying at the news in puberty, was little by little accepted, with dreadful pain at moments—and with associated fears of his analyst dying.

But his objects were still held in rigid obsessional control and kept well-separated internally, so that hypochondriacal rumination, as distinct from the hypochondriacal crises which brought him to analysis, became a persistent feature. At this time the voyeuristic phantasies and masturbatory practices tended to reappear at times of separation in the transference, and the narcissistic organisation underlying it could be studied.

Once the narcissistic organisation could be abandoned as a defensive position and replaced by dependence on the analytic breast as a reparative object in relation to his internal world, a process was set in train which illustrates the subject of this paper. With the surrender of this area of narcissism and of the attendant omnipotent (manic) reparative projective identification with the split-off father's penis as a part object, the internal father, and the

analytic father in the transference, began to take on qualities of genital potency which, for the first time in the patient's life since the age of four, produced an introjective identificatory stimulus to his genital heterosexuality. The relatively vigorous oedipal period in childhood had been traumatically crushed by a prolonged separation from his mother due to illness, placing an excessive strain on a genital development which was not adequately founded, since his oral and anal pregenitality had been unsound, as manifest by feeding difficulties, tantrums, and intolerance to contamination.

The fifth year of analysis was particularly marked by a series of dreams in which the figure of paternal potency appeared in numerous reparative, regulatory and vitalising roles, while his mother became steadily less ill, younger, more beautiful and more warm in his dreams. His adult character could be seen to alter correspondingly, as the snobbery was replaced by humility, the loathing and contempt for work by industry, the custodial relation to his mother by one of warm concern, the doll-house marriage by a struggle to find a manly emotional relation to his wife and the need to be idealised by his children changed to closer paternal contact with their emotionality.

This lengthy preamble has been necessary to set off the significance, germane to this paper, of the dream representations of the manifold functions of the paternal genitals, penis and testicles, as they were gradually allowed to establish themselves in psychic reality.

DREAM—At a dinner party given by an unmarried woman analyst, a bachelor clergyman appears. As the patient goes to fetch a chair for him, he pauses to admire a plant, a "potentilla", but accidentally knocks off some of its blossoms.

DREAM—He feels resentful of a fiftieth Australian man who insists on standing watch behind him while the patient is defecating into a toilet in the middle of a tea room.

DREAM—He is in the cabin of a paddle-wheel boat with his mother, who is looking young and well. He feels that a storm has torn the ship from its moorings, captainless, but when he rushes on deck he finds no storm. The ship is still firmly tied to the quay.

DREAM—A BBC woman tells him that in Senegal everything is in threes—Senegal, Senegal, Senegum (associations—"All Gaul is divided into three parts"; a storybook of childhood about a little steam engine who tried very hard, always puffing, "I think I can, I think I can").

DREAM—The analyst's carpenter is making a grille for the French door of the patient's home, but shows them how a sponge cake has three layers of jam in one part. The patient wonders how he put it there.

DREAM—He wants to show his wife on a map of Ireland the island his mother visited with a girl friend when young, but that part is

missing and he can only find a peninsula with the village of "Disto" on it.

Such examples from the year's work could be multiplied but the point is, I believe, sufficiently illustrated. We see clergyman-daddies with potentilla penises and blossom testicles; fiftyish Australian-daddies to supervise his "down-under" relation to the toilet-mummy; captain-daddies who keep boat-mummies firmly tied to reality; communicating analyst-BBC-mummies who encourage little boys to grow up to be proper Caesar-daddies with relation to all three orifices of a woman's body with all three parts, penis and testes; carpenter daddies who know how to protect mummy's French door-vagina and still fill her sponge-breast with jam-semen; of analytic maps which show that mummy's island-breasts don't go on holiday with one another but with daddy's Disto-penis; etc., etc.

Clinical Reference

When this aspect of psychic reality, the complexity of the coital relationship of internal objects, is clearly before us, we are in a position to understand the polymorphous nature of adult sexuality and to sort it out from infantile and perverse elements in our patient's material. Identification with the internal parents gives rise to strong fellatio impulses, which need to be distinguished from infantile turning-to-the-penis-as-an-oral-object or confusion of nipple and penis. The intimate link between father's mind, tongue, language, penis and semen gives strong erotic significance to language and the tongue, which must be distinguished from infantile confusion of tongue and penis as the tool of oral satisfaction. Bodily juxtapositions such as coitus a tergo, derive from the identification with the internal father cleaning the mother's rectum, and must be distinguished from anal-sadistic perverse impulses which produce the faecal-penis and assaults on the anus. The importance of the testicles and the ejaculation of the semen becomes understandable in terms of identification, so that it can more surely be distinguished from those infantile preoccupations with the semen which accompany the denigration of the breast and milk. The place of the testicles in adult sexuality can be better comprehended, distinguished from the more phallic preoccupation at infantile levels. Disturbances in attitude toward menstruation, including sado-masochistic excitement, come clearly to light when juxtaposed to the relative increase in sexual desire at this time, based on identification with a soiled and disappointed internal mother. The invigorating effect of adult coitus can be sharply differentiated from the inevitable deterioration of the mental state ensuing from the acting out of infantile masturbatory phantasies during sex relations. When circumstances

deprive a healthy person of a love partner, the bisexuality generates a masturbatory pressure which is easily distinguishable, in dream and phantasy, from the infantile autoerotisms.

One final word might be said about the implication of these discoveries about psychic reality to distinguish them from morality. Introjective identification with the combined object induces a bond of mutuality and shared responsibility for the children, of a character that favours monogamy.

Summary

In this chapter I have tried to pull together recent accumulation of knowledge about the relationship of the internal father and mother to one another, as it emerges in the process of integration within the depressive position in the later phases of successful analysis, in order to construct a coherent picture of the introjective basis of the polymorphous aspects of adult sexuality. It is the theme of this chapter that such a scheme makes for surer and more tactful work in the analysis of the areas of sexual disturbance in all our patients, even the children. It should also enable us to construct a truly metapsychological nosology of sexual pathology to replace the descriptive one inherited from neuropsychiatry.