

Psychoanalysis, sexuality, gender and perversions



***Paraphilic disorders or
perversions, sexual dysfunctions
and gender dysphory***

Oedipus

- **The oedipal myth is primarily about the separation from the mother and secondary about killing the father and marrying the mother.**
- **It is about loss, separation, identification and individuation and not about rivalry.**

Sexuality and psychoanalysis

- ❑ Repressed **sexual** trauma was seen as the origin of hysteria
- ❑ Psychoanalysis was in the beginning: making the unconscious conscious by remembering.
- ❑ Later Freud realized how difficult it was to differentiate between what happened in reality and what was a repressed wish or fantasy. → **false memories**
- ❑ After that he turned his attention to **the inner world** instead of focusing on the outer world
- ❑ The psychosexual development comes in Freud's view to an end during the **genital phase** in puberty. In that phase sexuality is integrated under the denominator of fallic functioning.

Sexuality and psychoanalysis

- ❑ **Within psychoanalysis sexuality and psychopathology are intensely related**
- ❑ **Sexuality is not an instinct but a mental representation, it is on the edge of biology and psychology**
- ❑ **Sexual arousal and mentalisation are negatively related**
- ❑ **Normally, sexuality takes part in a love relation**

- ❑ **Sexuality and aggression are interrelated**
- ❑ **In different sexual dysfunctions there is a problem in integrating aggression and sexuality. The problem is solved by transferring it into tenderness**
- ❑ **In the perversion sexuality is not related to love but to aggression or hate**

Sexuality: Kernberg

□ N.P.O.

- **Within a sexual relation the other is seen as a person with his own feelings and wishes**
- **Sexuality and aggression are mentalized**
- **In a way there is a place for behavior which is seen in other organizations as perverse**

□ B.P.O.

- **Splitting instead of repression**
- **The other is not seen in his own rights**
- **Idealization or devaluation**
- **Sexuality is more impulsive and used for make the unbearable bearable**
- **Intense separation anxiety → passionate relations, intense but fragile, identity diffusion**

Sexuality: Kernberg

- **Perverse personality structure**
 - **At the psychotic border**
 - **No adequate self object differentiation**
 - **Not mentalized emotions**
 - **Sexuality is in function of aggression and not the other way around**
 - **About disavowal: provokes the process of splitting. The object of disavowal is known but not said. You know and at the same time you don't**

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

- It is about the development of sexuality in human beings
 - **The first chapter is about the deviations: homosexuality and perversion**
 - **The second chapter is about the roots of the adult sexuality**
 - **The Third chapter is about the meaning of puberty related to the going on of the psychosexual development**
- **Neurotic symptoms**
 - **Are manifestations of repressed sexual wishes**
 - **From anxiety (actual) to psychoneurose (signal)**
- **Perversions**
 - **Have something to do with “against the laws of Nature”.**
 - **Human sexuality should be related to the reproduction of the species → genital sexuality**

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

- ❑ **The neurotic patient is repressing his sexual wish, there is the wish and the defense against it. The neurotic symptom is the compromise based on the mechanism of repression, for expressing the wish in an acceptable way**
- ❑ **In the perversion the repressing activity is not there, there is a direct expression in the manifest behaviour.**
- ❑ **So the neurosis is the negative of the perversion**
- ❑ **What within the perversion is shown into the deviant sexual behaviour of the pervert, will be seen in the dreaming and fantasies of the neurotic patient .**
- ❑ **The Behaviour of the pervert is non-mentalized, in case of the neurotic patient the behaviour is mentalized**

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

□ Perversions:

- **Masturbation**
- **Homosexuality**
- **Fetisjism**
- **Sadomasochism**
- **Voyeurism**
- **Exhibitionism**

□ The infant sexuality:

- **The pervert is not focused upon the sexual satisfaction by the coitus but by the satisfaction of the component drives, as it was normal during infancy. So perversion is in a way connected with the normal development.**
- **The human infant is from the beginning bi-sexual. So Freud talks about the human infant as poly-pervers**

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

- It is about the development from the early infant (pregenital)sexuality to the **genital** (adult) **sexuality**
- Sexual excitement is connected to the erotogenic zones: those parts of the body on which the child can experience sexual pleasure
- So Freud describes the sexual development related to those **erotogenic zones**
 - Oral character
 - Anal character
 - Phallic character
 - Oedipal character
 - Genital character
- In the perversion it is about the **component drives** which are not (yet) integrated in the sexual drive. What was normal in infancy is not in adulthood.

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

- Sexual identity was seen as related to:
 - The oedipal constellation
 - The discovery of the differences between the sexes
 - Castration anxiety and Penis envy
- Nowadays it is about the quality:
 - Of the self esteem from beginning of life,
 - Of the exploration of the self and the other
 - The importance of oedipal constellation is relative as is the discovery of the differences between the sexes
 - It is more about the separation and in that sense about the loss of the mother. More about the helplessness of the child in relation to the overwhelming powerfull preoedipal mother
- Nowadays
 - Penis envy and castration anxiety are seen nowadays more as related to a pathological development than to the normal development

Three essays on the theory of sexuality (1905)

Classical view

- ❑ **The classical idea about perversions is related to the drive model, the reduction of drives and the dominance of the oedipal conflict.**
- ❑ **The development of (sexual) identity is in Freud's view related to the discovery of the differences between both sexes in the fallic/oedipal period.**
- ❑ **Female sexuality is traditionally seen as minus variation of the masculine sexuality.**
- ❑ **Masturbation and Homosexuality was seen as a perversion**

Sexuality: Nowadays

Nowadays

- ❑ **When we think about drives we think about our drive for objectrelations.**
- ❑ **The development of identity starts at the beginning of development. The discovery of the differences of both sexes is no longer seen as primarily but as secondary.**
- ❑ **It is about: body sensations, bodily ego and sexual(gender) identity (Lasky 2000)**
- ❑ **Male/Female sexuality are not discrete features, it is more a continuum**
- ❑ **The classical freudian view is seen as a defense act to avoid the helplessness of the child related to the separation of the mother (Horney 1926;Chasseguet-Smirgel 1970)**

Sexuality: Nowadays

Nowadays

- ❑ **It is more about the quality of the interpersonal functioning than on the primacy of heterosexuality**
- ❑ **Homosexuality and masturbation are not seen as perversions any longer**
- ❑ **Or as Blatt says there are two drives**
 - **the drive for relatedness/inter personal functioning**
 - **autonomy/self-agency**
- ❑ **When we think about pathological behaviour we think that over within the frame of the inter personal functioning and self agency. That makes our thinking about perversions nowadays completely different**

Sexuality: Nowadays

Object relations

- **Privilege the early active primacy of the mother in shaping the child's subjectivity**
- **Grounding gender in processes of attachment and identification with the mother**
- **And implicating gender in mechanisms of separation-individuation from the mother**
- **Oedipal relations are still considered as crucial to the psychic construction of masculinity and femininity but they are now regarded as superimposed on the earlier processes of gender formation, that Freud did not recognize**

Sexuality: Nowadays

Attachment, separation and individuation

- **The child's rudimentary sense of gender shapes the experience of genital awareness and the personal meaning of sexual difference and not that genital experience creates gender (Person & Ovesey 1983)**
 - **Core gender: self designation as male or female is cognitively and experiential constructed in conformity with sex assignment and rearing**
 - **Gender role identity: the self evaluation of one's maleness or femaleness is a psychological achievement: Iam masculine or feminine. It is not a pure proces of identification it is related to the proces of separation-individuation**

Sexuality: Nowadays

- **Femininity is prior to masculinity, so masculinity is the second more precarious sex (Stoller 1968)**
- **Protofemininity for girls and boys (Stoller 1968)**
- **Woman is born Man is made (Person 1999)**
- **Daughters can represents their fathers disclaimed feminine identifications**

- **Gender is a dyadic process and interpersonal matrix**
- **Gender is not a rigid category but it is related to the open or rigid way it is used in the individual mind or family**

Sexuality

□ **Laplanche (1973, 1999)**

- **Was studying psychoanalysis by using the psychoanalytic method**
- **Repressed sexuality**
- **General theory of seduction**
- **The unconscious = sexuality**
- **The sexual desire is related to the primary relation with the maternal object**
- **Related to Ferenczi: “the confusion of tongues”**

Sexuality

- **The sexual desire can not be totally put into words: it goes beyond words**
- **Mother is the first object that brings the child into excitement. But mother is also the lover of the father → failing as an available object for the child. So the exciting desire is not gratified but frustrated → there comes the desire for the lost perfect object which never will be reached. So the wish will always be there, it penetrates human sexuality.**

Sexuality

□ Fonagy (2008)

- **The primary objectrelational experiences of the little child**
- **In the beginning the soma is the self later comes the step to the psychological self**
- **Mental functioning is rooted in somatic experiences**
- **It is about the transformation of primary to secondary/mental representations, it all starts with sensomotoric sensations stored in the non consciousness**
- **That transformation asks for adequate mirroring, by safe and sensitive primary objects.**

Sexuality

- **(Infantile) sexual excitement stems from the period before mentalizing. So it cannot be represented/mirrored by the parents to the child in an adequate way, and so it cannot be taken in into a self which is experienced as congruent. In a way sexual desire is experienced as "strange" and should be projected into the other. That is why sexual desire is experienced in the other and by that it can be experienced as together with the other.**

Fairbairn (1954)

- **Libido,sexuality is not an impersonal force; rather it is personal,seeking not discharge but object → object seeking libido.**
- **Libido/sexuality is a two person phenomenon. It is interpersonal and intrapsyhic**

Sexual dysfunctions, gender dysphory and perversions

- ❑ **In paraphilic disorders, sexual dysfunctions and gender dysphory, the Actual neurosis is dominant above the Psychoneurosis.**
- ❑ **The step from somatic to psychological self is not (yet) made.**
- ❑ **Because of the level of development or by pathological reasons**

Sexual dysfunctions, gender dysphory and perversions

- **K. Horney (1926)**
 - **The paternalistic view of classical freudian thinking is seen as a defense against the separation of the mother**
- **McDougall (1986)**
 - **Perversive fantasies/acting are there in adult sexual behavior**
 - **It is not experienced as forcefull, when it is then we talk about a perversion: about consent**

Perversions

- **Stoller (1976;1985)**
 - **Perversion is related to cruelty and humiliation**
 - **It is about revenge related to the trauma in childhood**
 - **Perversion is related to intimacy**
 - **Sexual behavior used to avoid a longstanding intimate relation**
 - **So a longstanding intimate relation is never a perversive one**

Perversions

- Kohut (1971,1977)
 - **Perversion is related to the absence of a safe attachment object**

- Chasseguet-Smirgel (1974)
 - **Boundary violation by the early mother**
 - **Seductive mother.The father is absent**

- Khan (1979)
 - **The pervert tries to compensate the deficiencies of the early mother to create a new balance**
 - **By creating idealized fantasies the child tries to compensate the failing of the mother**

Freud, S. (1911). Formulations of the two principles of mental functioning.

- **There are two different principles for mental functioning**
 1. **taking into account of the reality principle**
 2. **Functioning according to the pleasure principle**



- **Disavowal of reality**

- **One system loaded with the pleasure principle the other with the anxiety for punishment**

Disavowal

- ❑ **The main mechanism in perversions**
- ❑ **Related to denial**
- ❑ **Provokes the process of splitting**
- ❑ **The right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing**
- ❑ **You know and at the same time you don't know**
- ❑ **It is about two different things, one is excluding the other**
- ❑ **In perversions the disavowal is partial, in psychosis it is total and there is no symbolizing**

Conclusion

- **The perversion is an attempt to compensate early deficits, the deficiency of safety by creating an object relation which is not a mutual one, and not a relation at the level of take and give.**
- **It is based on power, exploitation and it doesn't see the other person in its own rights**
- **It is a problem in the area of self object differentiation**
- **There is a failure in mentalizing, fantasizing and symbolizing**
- **No triangulation**
- **No take and give relations**
- **No transitional space**
- **Disavowal of reality**
- **Patients with a borderline or a neurotic personality organisation**

Exhibitionism, voyeurism

- ❑ **Exhibitionism is about showing their genitals to strange women or children**
- ❑ **The exhibitionist tries to cope with his castration anxiety.**
- ❑ **By terrifying the other he restores the balance in himself**
- ❑ **The ritual has to be repeated there is no working through**
- ❑ **The exhibitionist tries to transform the early trauma into a triumph**
- ❑ **The exhibitionist is violating the privacy of the other**
- ❑ **Exhibitionism and voyeurism are in a way related it is in both cases related to looking and being looked after.**

Sadomasochism

- ❑ **Those people need sado/masochistic fantasies or actions for sexual gratification**
- ❑ **Most of the time victims of physical/sexual abuse**
- ❑ **Their behaviour has to do with turning passive into active**
- ❑ **It is about “thing representations” and not about “word representations”**
- ❑ **It is again about the transformation of trauma into triumph and repetition instead of working through**

Fetisjism

- ❑ **The fetisjist needs a dead object for getting sexual arousal**
- ❑ **The fetisj helps him to overcome his castration anxiety**
- ❑ **He feels not good enough cared for or mirrored by the primary mother object**
- ❑ **They need an external object to cope with their anxieties**
- ❑ **Greenacre (1979): the fetisj represents the function of the transitional object**
- ❑ **For Kohut the fetisj takes the place of the selfobject which was not available**

Pedophilia

- ❑ **By the gratification of his sexual wishes he can really damage his innocent victim**
- ❑ **It is a narcissistic form of object choice**
- ❑ **The pedophil is severely disturbed in early childhood, so again feelings of trioph and power to compensate trauma**
- ❑ **He sees the child as a mirroring object**
- ❑ **Comorbidity with severe personality disorders, as narcissitic or anti-social.**

- ❑ **In case of really young children the damage can express itself by conduct disorders, because they were not able to mentalize what was happening**
- ❑ **The disaster is overwhelming them**

Transvestite

- ❑ **Men dresses in women clothes to get sexual aroused**
- ❑ **Which brings him heterosexual contact or masturbation**
- ❑ **Identification with the phallic mother, the mother with a penis, in order to control his castration anxiety, or an attempt to avoid the anxiety to separate from the mother**
- ❑ **There was no place for a safe third object: the father**

Sexual dysfunctions

- ❑ **Erectile dysfunctions**
- ❑ **Male hypoactive sexual desire disorder**
- ❑ **Female orgasmic disorder**
- ❑ **Female sexual interest/arousal disorder**
- ❑ **Premature/delayed ejaculation**

- ❑ **Sexual dysfunctions can be related to sexual abuse in childhood. Then sexuality is connected to incest and misuse**
- ❑ **Sometimes sexual problems are related to non-sexual problems or conflicts in the relation between partners, or in one of the partners (adequate integration of love and hate)**

Gender Dysphory

- ❑ **New category in the DSM-5**
- ❑ **Related to “Transgender”:**
 - **Transvestite**
 - **Transgender**
 - **Transsexuality**
- ❑ **Not a form of sexual dysfunction**
- ❑ **Not a form of paraphilia**

Gender Dysphory

- ❑ **Those people experience a discrepancy between the gender as it was given to them at birth and their gender as they experience it**
- ❑ **They feel not at ease in their bodies. Sometimes there is the wish to change their bodies: transsexuals.**
- ❑ **Transvestites: mostly they experience themselves as heterosexuals and men**
- ❑ **Transgender: somewhere in between transvestites and transsexuals. They presents themselves alternatively as man or as woman**

Gender Dysphory

- ❑ **In gender it is about psychology and not about sexuality as an instinct.**
- ❑ **Those people feel desperate and depressive**
- ❑ **Some parts of their body are experienced as alien. Going together with feelings of hate against specific parts of the body**
- ❑ **Reality testing is all right. The way they are experiencing their body should be differentiated from psychotic delusions**

Conclusion

- ❑ **Normality as well as perversions should be seen in reference to a specific norm**
- ❑ **Normality and perversions are constructing each other**
- ❑ **Perversion marks the boundary across which you become an outlaw**
- ❑ **Normality marks off the territory that if stayed inside of, keeps you safe from shame, disgust and anxiety**

- ❑ **When sexuality is simultaneously subjective and intersubjective, intrapsychic and interpersonal then desire itself is inevitably marked by the losses of the earliest objectrelational experiences**
- ❑ **Sexuality as desire is a mental representation and not a need.**

Conclusion

- You can be mentally ill if you are a heterosexual, a transvestite and mentally healthy being a homosexual or bisexual.
- **Thank you for listening**
- **Thijs de Wolf**
- **mhmdewolf@gmail.com**