

Life and Death in Psychoanalysis

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Introduction

The six essays presented in this volume are a series of fragments or stages in a meditation on Freud's thought, undertaken in an effort to evolve—through a ~~historico-structural approach~~ to Freud's work—a problematics of the object of psychoanalysis.

If, concerning the discovery of psychoanalysis, I invoke the necessity of a certain historical approach, it is not in order to set out in pursuit of sources or influences, which may indeed account in part for a body of thought, nor to accord to chronology any other value than that of a convenient system of reference. The history—or the historical dimension—of psychoanalytic thought, as I understand it, can refer only to coordinates which are those of psychoanalysis itself. This is to say that in opposition to a manifest or official history (which Freud himself was occasionally intent on writing), such an enterprise would appeal to a latent and partially unconscious history, subtended by repetitive themes. This implies as well that it is inseparable from a certain dialectical approach, entailing an evolution through reversals and crises, mediated by contradictions whose status will not be immediately apparent in any attempt to situate them. Even if, in an interpretative stage, all the *contradictions* in Freud's thought are perhaps not amenable to the same treatment, not attributable to the same "mechanism" or "agency," they are all initially deserving of the same "free floating" attention. No doubt, in practice certain contradictions may prove to be relatively "extrinsic" or adventitious, the results of polemic or of hasty formulation; but even in such cases, they cannot be discarded without a certain loss. For, as we know from *The Interpretation of Dreams*, an absurdity in the manifest content or the secondary elaboration may be the index of a criticism or a difficulty at a deeper level. But it is above all certain large contradictions, traversing Freud's work from one end to the other, which must be interpreted dialectically, either as contradictions of thought—consequently referable to a certain "unspoken" dimension—or as contradictions of the object itself: such, for instance, is the case for the major contradiction inherent in the notion of the "ego," at once a totality and a

specific agency, a cathected love object that nevertheless arrogates to itself the position of a subject—and so on.

The contradictions in Freud's thought and the contradictions in his object are, in the final analysis, inseparable. But, in addition, their energy can be mobilized only if the problems or concepts concerning which they emerge are related both to the structural equilibrium in which those concepts find their point of insertion and to the propositions and the systems of oppositions in which they are engaged. The history of a notion which would neglect the structural perspective would result either in unfruitful absurdity, or in a reduction of the successive aspects of a thought to their lowest common denominator: the platitude on which most "treatises" of psychoanalysis seem intent. To cite but a single example, which we will have the opportunity to elaborate, it is impossible to discover, through Freud's occasionally awkward formulations, the meaning of the "pleasure principle," without taking into account the structural upheavals in which they find their place.¹

Beyond the history of any specific problem then, I would sketch in these pages a history of the *overall* reorganizations of Freud's work, of the transition from a specific equilibrium to a structural imbalance and then to a different stage of his thought. A particularly decisive aspect of such a study would consist in showing how the major recastings of Freud's work (the famous "turning points") are correlated with the displacement of certain segments of his doctrine, conceptual groupings which one ought then to find in a different place and with a new function. Whence the ultimate question of knowing *what* finally motivates these reorganizations: the constraints of a structure and its equilibrium? The play of "cathexes" (i.e., the charges with which the author affects specific doctrinal elements, which then necessarily reemerge elsewhere if they are masked in their original locations)? Or is it the existence, in the final analysis, of a certain number of fundamental invariants, whether these be grouped under the rubric of intuition, of "Freud's discovery," or of a specific fundamental wish?

But might not the idea of a fundamental exigency—of an "invariancy" recurring throughout conceptual upheavals which are nevertheless astonishing—justify a radical critique of Freud's thought: if the essential was already there from the beginning (in the famous *Project for a Scientific Psychology* of 1895), the so-called recastings of Freud's work could be reduced to a kaleidoscopic play, to a series of permutations which would evoke less the evolution and enrichment of scientific thought than the versions of what Lévi-Strauss designates as "wild thought" (*la pensée sauvage*)?

An answer, which I can only sketch at this juncture, would be pursued on two levels. (1) Concerning empirical facts, it is easy to demonstrate the

positive enhancement from which psychoanalytic doctrine, in the course of its evolution, has benefited as a result of *analytic experience*. But so obvious a truth, in turn, invites a different reflection: one ought to delineate the developmental model of a system of thought which, in certain aspects, appears to be *philosophical*, evolving according to its own inner necessity, whereas, on the other hand, it integrates in the manner of a *science* the new *data* afforded by a particularly rich field of observation. We are faced, then, with a unique meshing of theoretical thought and of experience, different in kind from any other because of one insuperable factor: the "internal" necessity of the doctrine and the "internal" impetus of what is revealed in therapeutic observation are grafted on a single root and intersect in the depth of a common "umbilicus." (2) At the level of content, the only answer consists in delineating the major and constant lines of the Freudian problematic, in order subsequently, taking one's distance from the author's own formulations, to attempt an *interpretation* of that problematic, which restores it to its most radical elements. Whereby is postulated the thesis that one can—in terms which at times repeat those of Freud and at times reverse them—reconstitute a structure of Freudian theory beyond the successive forms in which it is embodied.

It goes without saying that our approach to Freud's thought tends to deny that there exist within it moments of real "break" [*coupure*]. Without wanting to discuss that term—on which current fashion has seized—I hope to demonstrate that in Freud, throughout the changes in theory, it is the permanence of an exigency and the repetition of the journal of a discovery that are being expressed in a conceptualization which does not always succeed in immediately finding its adequate scientific form.

Interpreting Freud, rediscovering in him unconscious lines of force, is thus an approach dictated by its very object. But if I designate as "psychoanalytic" or "interpretative" this kind of study, it is not in the sense that an Ernest Jones conceives it in his biography of Freud, following methodological leads, it is true, already proposed by Freud himself. A Freudian text from 1911 ("The Claims of Psychoanalysis to Scientific Interest") gives several indications concerning the way in which one might conceive of the psychoanalytic approach to a philosophical work. Caught between a purely rational critique and a reduction of a body of thought to entirely "subjective" conditions, Freud proposes a skillful compromise: psychoanalysis puts its finger on the weak points of a theory, but it is left to internal criticism to demonstrate those weaknesses revealed by a different discipline.

I do not think that such is the last word concerning a psychoanalytic study of systematic thought, if it is true that what psychoanalysis discovers goes far beyond the realm of the individual and finds in the

individual unconscious the figures, if not the solutions, of a more general combinatorial model. It is not, in any event, through any psychobiographical orientation that this work would be psychoanalytic. My study is first of all and essentially a study of Freud's text: at once *literal*, *critical*, and *interpretative*.

To the extent that it is literal and interpretative, this kind of approach to Freud is a necessarily tentative and imperfect effort to transpose *mutatis mutandis* what can be assimilated from the art of listening and interpreting in psychoanalytic therapy.² Thus the dual and complementary rule of free association and free-floating attention would find its equivalent in an "analytic" reading perpetually prepared to treat at the same level sequences of varying length: of words (even if they make no sense), of sentences, and of texts. Our interpretation ought then to draw on a knowledge of the unconscious mechanisms delineated by psychoanalysis: displacement, condensation, symbolization, which I have partially reformulated, in different coordinates, under the headings of metaphor and metonymy.³

Ours is a *critical* reading, however, to the extent that the style of each work, its location and destination require that it not be taken for granted, as a simple building block to be juxtaposed with others. If it is verifiable that psychoanalytic thought is constantly subject to the attraction of a kind of entropy, abrading its asperities to the lowest level, that vicissitude of psychoanalytic thought is already present in Freud, notably in the general presentations which he gave of his theory; so that it is unfair to the originality of his thought to base one's exposition of it essentially or entirely on one of the major synthetic texts.

It would be wrong to ignore the opposition that may exist between a critical intention and the analytic rule just invoked, which imposes on the practitioner—analyst or analysand—a suspension of judgment comparable in a sense, to "phenomenological reduction": the elimination of any selection among the "material." But I do not regard my attempt to combine or alternate these two contrary attitudes as unfaithful to the theory of the psychical apparatus, nor, for that matter, to certain inevitable aspects of psychoanalytic practice: when "secondary elaboration," an ego phenomenon, becomes all-pervasive, it may prove methodologically sound tentatively to disregard—in order to return better armed later on when the analysis has progressed—certain developments in which systematization attempts to block out any infiltration of the unconscious. It should, moreover, be admitted that with Freud as our object, one need never go that far: the most systematic text easily manifests its permeability to the life of the unconscious, upon contact with the essays, sketches, and speculative experiments through which it is ramified.

I have attempted to present my interpretation *as such* and to specify with precision its contours, while at the same time justifying it as a

nascent tendency of Freud's work to interpret itself. Thereby I hope to define my effort in relation to two contrary "interpretative" attitudes. One of these consists in assimilating all of Freud's pronouncements to one's own position, through a series of slippages which are never acknowledged as such. The other attitude, more faithful no doubt, does not, however, do full justice to the originality of Freud's thought in the unity of its emergence: it would sort out the wheat from the chaff in order to use the former in its own "bread," but it risks, in so doing, limiting itself largely to the most classical, most official, and least inspired level of Freud's doctrine.

II

It occurred to me that the sequence of these essays, grouped around the classical notion of conflict, outlined the network of a more complex problematic: the intervention of the vital order and of death at the periphery of the domain of psychoanalysis and also—according to what modalities?—within that domain.

Life and death: two terms which are present in analytic theory, occasionally with striking prominence, but which are far more concealed in practice. From the "exigencies of life" of the *Project* of 1895 and the unconditional adoption, during the period of the "transference" with Fliess, of the doctrine of "periods" and bisexuality, to the life instinct, which, at the end of Freud's work, comes to subsume sexuality, biology and biologism are massively present in the author's writings. Is it simply a matter of the contiguity of an immediately adjacent domain, concerning which, retroactively, discoveries regarding instinctual life and sexuality would allow one to renew one's point of view? Such is the "interdisciplinary" approach that Freud explicitly⁴—and Jones in his wake⁵—proposes in defining the contribution of psychoanalysis to biology: a contribution concerning which it should indeed be noted that it still awaits accomplishment. As for the converse: the intervention of the life sciences in psychoanalysis is frequently invoked by Freud as decisive, notably in reference to the theory of drives, but the fact that that invocation most often refers to the speculative or poetic demons of biologism should give us pause.

If life, despite these reservations, is regarded as materially present at the frontiers of the psyche, death's entry on the Freudian scene is far more enigmatic. In the beginning, like all modalities of the negative, it is radically excluded from the field of the unconscious. Then suddenly in 1920, it emerges at the center of the system, as one of the two fundamental forces—and perhaps even as the only primordial force—in the heart of the psyche, of living beings, and of matter itself. The soul of conflict, an elemental form of strife, which from then on is in the forefront of Freud's

most theoretical formulations, death nevertheless remains, most often, a silent personage in clinical practice. For Freud maintains until the end the strictest reservations concerning the developments which, almost naturally, his new conceptualization would seem to invite: the occurrence of "death anxiety" or of an originary wish to die will never be located, in analytic psychopathology, in that position of irreducible "bedrock" which is attributed par excellence to the castration complex.

Might it be that death—human death as finitude and not the sole reduction to zero of vital tensions—finds its place, in psychoanalysis, in a dimension which is more ethical than explanatory? A text⁶—a single text—published only five years before "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," might lead one to suppose so, at least from its first lines. Appearing to join up with that heroic and classical current which, from the Stoics to Montaigne and Heidegger, urges us to illuminate our life—our existence—with a deathly light, "Thoughts for the Times on War and Death" would recall in concluding that "the bearing of life is the first duty of every living being," and invite us to transpose the old adage "If you seek peace, prepare for war" into "Si vis vitam para mortem." This maxim Freud, yielding perhaps to the temptation of his subject, translates: "If you would endure life, be prepared for death." Thus: for *your* death.

That is, however, a conclusion which follows, without any other justification, a development that is oriented quite differently: "Our unconscious is just as inaccessible to the idea of our own death, as murderously minded towards the stranger, as divided or ambivalent towards the loved, as was man in earliest antiquity."⁷

In the unconscious, death would be always the death of the other, a destruction or a loss we provoke, and we would accede to some intuition of our own mortality only through an ambivalent identification with a loved person whose death we simultaneously fear and desire: essentially in mourning. So that, more modestly perhaps in relation to the temptations of the heroic formulation, "If you want life, prepare for death" might be translated as "If you want life, prepare for the death of the other." If a certain ethic in relation to death might be evolved from the Freudian attitude, it would be in the sense of a distrust concerning every form of enthusiasm, be it that of *amor fati*, and of a lucidity that does not hide the irreducible meshing of my death with that of the other. The seal of authenticity that marks Freud's "necrological notes" or "condolence" letters reflects only the pursuit of a self-analysis which was never abandoned.

Which is to say that in therapy—although it can be defined in no other way than as an unveiling of truth---ultimately a reference to death as the truth of life or as the experience of truth can only be regarded as an uninterpretable, axiomatic limit-element. The suspension of every "pur-

positive idea" concerns as well, and perhaps first of all, what is defined in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as "the final purpose of life." And if one can perhaps discover within therapy other ways in which death comes to be represented, they are not necessarily to be sought on the side of "representation" or "ideation" but in a certain immanence of discourse itself.

Refracted or represented in quite diverse ways, neither life nor death are thus direct terms of reference for psychoanalytic practice. That remark may serve as well as a warning: an interrogation—without precaution—of the psychoanalytic act, with reference to a conception of existence which (pessimistically or optimistically) relates human life to its finitude, would constitute, from the beginning, a refusal to take into account that calling into question necessitated by the discovery of the unconscious and of the shifts occurring within it. Not that I would reject definitively any consideration of the dimension of a "project" in its relation to psychoanalysis. But I believe that the bases of such a discussion would have to be previously prepared by a study pursuing Freud's deliberately theoretical intention when he introduces into psychoanalysis the biological polarity of life and death, and that such an inquiry, prolonging Freud's indications by interpreting them, should attempt to retrace the vicissitudes of the vital order (life and death) when it is transposed to the level of the psychical apparatus.

We shall follow this transformation into something different that life undergoes when it symbolizes itself on the human level in three movements that will lead us to examine successively the problematics of sexuality, of the ego, and of the death drive.

1

The Order of Life and the Genesis of Human Sexuality

Our point of reference in discussing sexuality in psychoanalysis will be Freud's fundamental and resolutely innovative text *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. The importance the author attributed to that work is manifest in the frequency with which he modified it: in reeditions of 1910, 1915, 1920, and 1924–25, revised on each occasion in the very detail of its sentences and terminology, with additions which simultaneously preserve the original organization of the work and open it up to later discoveries. There are, in addition, copious notes, particularly for the final, 1924 version, which is contemporaneous with the "last theory of drives." It is in these strata and repetitions that the evolution and enrichment of the theory of sexuality may be best situated. But since we have just alluded to a last turning point, the final version—in the sense in which a "version" constitutes as well a way of reversing a work, a turning point—that final version, begun in 1920, is inscribed only minimally in the text itself, with the exception of the footnotes. So that if one wanted an approximate idea of what the *Three Essays* might have been had they been first undertaken in 1920, one would do best to consult a text like the *Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1938), and specifically its third chapter. And yet even in so late a text as the *Outline*, one senses the immense difficulty experienced by Freud in proposing a synthesis, as though his final contribution—concerning Eros and the death drive—could but barely be integrated into the first notion of sexuality.

For the *Three Essays* do not present an abstract theory of drives in general, but describe instead that drive par excellence: the sexual drive. So much so, in fact, that without pretending to remain faithful (through some falsely eclectic synthesis) to the entirety of what Freud may have said concerning drives, we may claim, nevertheless, to follow the dominant line of his thought in offering a thesis which will recur throughout our argument: *it is sexuality which represents the model of every drive and probably constitutes the only drive in the strict sense of the term*. And

if it is indeed true that, after 1920, Freud proposes and supports a theory englobing two types of drives, and links sexuality with one of them—with that biological, even cosmological force he then calls Eros—it is at that point that our thesis will seem most openly in contradiction with Freud's thought, but it is precisely at that juncture as well that a series of difficulties will also surface in Freud's own work.

In our first development, we will confine ourselves to sexuality as it constitutes the object of the *Three Essays*. In any effort to grasp what is, in fact, at stake in that text, nothing is more instructive than a glance at its organization: an apparently simple scheme, in three parts: sexual aberrations, infantile sexuality, the transformations of puberty. And yet were one to reconstitute a detailed table of contents, the greatest complication would result. That complexity is, of course, in part due to interpolations dating from different kinds of arrangement: a level one might term heuristic (following the genesis of psychoanalytic discovery itself), a polemical level (destroying the accepted conception of sexuality), a genetic level (retracing its emergence within the human being). We shall attempt to delineate how these three different levels may be articulated, how specifically the movement of Freud's thought, the heuristic level, follows—as in every profound exercise of thought—the movement of the "thing itself": a truth it was Hegel's to have rendered explicit.

The guiding thread in our study will be the notion of *drive* (*Trieb*), and the pair it forms with a second term: *instinct*. If it is true in general that terminology, and above all its transposition from one language to another, can guide—but also misguide—us, problems of translation have introduced in the present case a confusion which is far from having disappeared. Whence our concern that the following remarks not be attributed simply to the meticulousness of a translator. *Trieb* has frequently been translated in French as *instinct*, and transposed by psychoanalysts in English, as well, as *instinct*. Yet we encounter in Freud, and in the German language in general, not one but two terms, two "signifiers," to use a more recent terminology. Two signifiers then, and it may be said that in common usage they have more or less the same meaning, just as their etymologies are parallel: *Trieb* comes from *treiben*, "to push"; *Instinkt* finds its origin in Latin, from *instinguere*, which also means "to incite," "to push." But—as is frequently the case with languages and especially with German—when faced with a doublet of this type, an author approaching latent inflections of vocabulary with all the seriousness they deserve will attempt to exploit such objective duplicity in order to introduce a slight difference of meaning, which is occasionally barely perceptible, but will at times be accentuated to the point of constituting a veritable opposition. Such is the case with *Trieb* ("drive") and *Instinkt* ("instinct"): two terms which are employed by Freud even if, unfortu-

nately, it has been insufficiently noted that the term *Instinkt* is used to designate something entirely different from what is described elsewhere as sexuality. *Instinkt*, in Freud's language, is a preformed behavioral pattern, whose arrangement is determined hereditarily, and which is repeated according to modalities relatively adapted to a certain type of object. More important than etymology then, more important even than their semantic resonances in German culture, we discover a certain relation between meanings assumed by the two terms in Freud's scientific discovery, a complex relation, comprising an *analogy*, a *difference*, and also a *derivation* from one to the other. This is a derivation which is not simply conceptual, but which we may, with Freud, relate to a real derivation: the derivation in man of drives from instincts.¹

First their analogy: it is based on a common substrate in the analysis of the concept. The analysis of a drive, as it is presented to us in its elements, is also valid, in its generality, for an instinct. That analysis is sketched out, through successive approximations, in the course of different editions of the *Three Essays*, but in order to find a more systematic presentation, one had best consult a later text, "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes."² There, the drive is decomposed according to four dimensions or, as Freud puts it, according to the four "terms which are used in reference to the concept of a drive": "impetus" (*Drang*), "aim" (*Ziel*), "object" (*Objekt*), and "source" (*Quelle*).

The *impetus*, he first tell us, is the motor factor in the drive, "the amount of force or the measure of the demand for work which it represents. The character of exercising pressure is common to all drives; it is in fact their very essence." These lines are exemplary in their reference to mechanics and, more precisely, to dynamics, which will always remain central for Freud. What is called the economic point of view in psychoanalysis is quite precisely that of a "demand for work": if there is work, a modification in the organism, it is because ultimately there is an exigency, a force; and, as in the physical sciences, force can be defined only through the measure of a quantity of work. To define a drive by its impetus, a *Trieb* by its *Drang*, is, from an epistemological point of view, almost a tautology: the latter is but the hypostasized, abstract element of the former. So that, to anticipate what will follow, we would propose the following hypothesis: it is that abstract element alone, the economic factor, which will remain constant in the derivation that will bring us from instincts to drives.

The *aim* now. It is, Freud tells us in the *Three Essays*, "the act to which the drive is driven." Thus, in the case of a preformed instinct, it is the motory scheme, the series of acts which results in a certain accomplishment. What precisely is that accomplishment? If we refer this time to the text "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," we see that this accomplishment is

always the same and ultimately rather monotonous; the only "final" aim is always satisfaction, defined in the most general way: the appeasing of a certain tension caused precisely by the *Drang*, that pressure we have been speaking about. The question then arises of determining the relation between an aim which is entirely general and (as with "impetus") abstract—the appeasing of tension—and, on the other hand, the very specific and determined acts which are the aims of various instincts: eating, seeing (since one finds in Freud a "drive to see"), making love, etc. The problem is that of the specification of the aim: why is it that something quite specific and not simply appeasement represents the *final aim*?

If we pursue the analysis, drawing on different texts of Freud, we discover that the aim of the drive constantly calls into play the following two factors: at times the object, at others, the source. The *object*: to the extent that Freud and, after him, virtually all psychoanalysts gradually came to focus on the notion of "object relations," which represents a kind of synthetic point of view between, on the one hand, a type of activity, the specific mode of a particular drive action, and on the other, its privileged object. Thus orality, to take the first example of a drive, implies both a certain mode of relation, say incorporation, and a certain type of object, one which is capable of being swallowed or incorporated. We encounter here a first possible elaboration of the notion of aim, its specification by its *source*; and here, apparently (we will soon see that the theory is in fact more complex) a far more biologicistic and vitalistic orientation seems to prevail.

We shall examine, then, in greater detail these two concepts: *object* and *source*. Object of the drive? In order to eliminate rapidly certain misconceptions, we shall recall first that such an object is not necessarily an inanimate one, a thing: the Freudian *Objekt* is not opposed in essence to subjective being. No "objectification" of the love relation is intended. If in the classical language of the French seventeenth century, the term was already used to designate the focus of passion—*flamme, ressentiment*—it is in that rather broad sense that our "object" should be understood. And yet our caution against a vulgarized concept of the love object ("You treat me like an object," as the phrase goes) should not be taken as absolute. One perceives this simply by following the movement of its "definition" in the *Three Essays*. Temporarily, in the introduction, the "sexual object" is defined as "the person from whom sexual attraction proceeds."³ But the analysis of sexual aberrations results in an inversion of this point of view:

It has been brought to our notice that we have been in the habit of regarding the connection between the sexual drive and the sexual object as more intimate than it in fact is. Experience of the cases that are considered abnormal has shown us that

in them the sexual instinct and the sexual object are merely soldered together—a fact which we have been in danger of overlooking in consequence of the uniformity of the normal picture, where the object appears to form part and parcel of the drive. We are thus warned to loosen the bond that exists in our thoughts between drive and object. It seems probable that the sexual drive is in the first instance independent of its object; nor is its origin likely to be due to its object's attractions.⁴

Thus, despite our reservations, the term *object* appears initially to designate something which functions as a means: "the thing in regard to which or through which the drive is able to achieve its aim."⁵ There is a priority of satisfaction and of the satisfying action in relation to that "in regard to which" that action finds its conclusion. This brings us to a familiar problem in psychoanalytic thought, which might be termed summarily the "contingency" of the object. Insofar as the object is that "in which" the aim finds its realization, the specificity or individuality of the object is, after all, of minimal concern; it is enough for it to possess certain *traits* which trigger the satisfying action; in itself, it remains relatively indifferent and contingent.

An additional dimension of the object in psychoanalysis is that it is not necessarily an object in the sense of the theory of knowledge: an "objective" object. We might here distinguish clearly two meanings which unfortunately, in recent psychoanalytic theory, are too often in a state of coalescence: the notion of objectivity in the sense of knowledge and the notion of objectality in which the object, this time, is an object of the drive and not a scientific or perceptual object. I point this out in order to emphasize that the object of the drive can be, without prejudice, a *fantasmatic* object and that it is perhaps essentially such.

Finally, to conclude this series of clarifications, we should insist that the object is not necessarily a "total" person; it may be a *partial* (or *component*) object, in the phrase introduced by Melanie Klein but found—and quite early—at the center of Freud's thought. Partial objects include breast, penis, and numerous other elements related to bodily life (excrement, child, etc.), all of which have in common the fundamental characteristic of being, in fact or in fantasy, *detached* or *detachable*.

In concluding this analysis of the notion of *drive*, we will focus our attention at greater length on the term *source*. If, in the *Three Essays*, the definition of a source—as we shall soon see—is relatively complex and ambiguous, in the text "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," to which reference has been made collaterally, it is univocal: the *Quelle* is an unknown but theoretically knowable somatic process, a kind of biological *x*, whose psychical translation would in fact be the drive. By the "source of a drive" is meant "that somatic process in an organ or part of the body from which there results a stimulus represented in mental life by a drive."⁶ We note here the term *represented*, a fundamental articulation of Freud's

metapsychology, which the limits of this presentation do not allow us to elaborate: suffice it to observe that the most frequent model used by Freud to account for the relation between the somatic and the psychical employs the metaphor of a kind of "delegation" provided with a mandate that need not be absolutely imperative. Thus a local biological stimulus finds its delegation, its "representation" in psychical life as a drive. We do not know whether the somatic process in question is of a strictly chemical nature, or whether it corresponds as well to a release of other (e.g., mechanical) forces: the study of the sources of drives, Freud concludes, "lies outside the scope of psychology," and the problem might eventually be solved by biology.⁷ Thus we encounter the central problem of our own study: the relation to the science of life.

We shall return in a moment to the question of the source, which seems particularly interesting as the point of articulation between instinct and drive. In the interim, before examining that *articulation*, we shall insist first on the analogy which exists, concerning our four "elements," between an instinct and a drive; or rather, in other words, we shall underscore the generality of the definitions of *impetus*, *object*, *aim*, and *source*, a generality which allows them to be applied to both instincts and drives. Such is, I believe, the wager implicit in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes," and such as well is the trap that text sets for the unprepared reader: the essay would examine drives *in general*, not simply sexual drives but all those "groups" of drives—including consequently the "ego-drives" or "self-preserved drives"—concerning which we shall shortly have to ask whether the name *drive* is in fact properly applied to them. To deal with every *Trieb* in general is necessarily to proceed in an abstract manner. To deal with drives in general is to biologize them, to subject them to an analysis which is also valid for so-called instinctual patterns of behavior. As evidence, one need but invoke the validity of such concepts in recent analyses in the fields of animal psychology or ethology. The research of contemporary animal psychologists, specifically in Lorenz's school, makes extensive use, even if reference is not regularly made to Freud, of concepts analogous to his; specifically, the notion of "impetus" is employed, since the *hydraulic model*, which is most often invoked by Freud to account for the economic factor, is expressly adopted by them. The notion of an object which would simultaneously be contingent and, from a certain point of view, specific is present in the notion of a perceptual constellation triggering a specific act, and capable of releasing a specific mechanism because it includes a series of determined traits. As is known, it is by the use of perceptual lures, whose different characteristics are made to vary, that certain of these triggers have been precisely defined. Finally, the notion of an *aim* is also present in ethological analysis in the form of a fixed behavioral pattern, a series of chain reactions ending in a permanent discharge of tension: a cycle which may

stop at any particular stage if the succeeding triggering device is not present to provoke the corresponding mechanism.

Having insisted on the *general* value of Freud's definitions, a generality which includes both a negative aspect (since the definitions may appear abstract) but also a positive one (since these notions can be shown to coincide with those of a science as concretely empirical as ethology), we shall return to the *Three Essays*, and to their very first page, on which is found a succinct description of the "popular" conception of sexuality. The *Three Essays* begin:

The fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a "sexual drive," on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition, that is, of hunger. Everyday language possesses no counterpart to the word "hunger," but science makes use of the word "libido" for that purpose.

Popular opinion has quite definite ideas about the nature and characteristics of this sexual drive. It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; while its aim is presumed to be sexual union, or at all events actions leading in that direction.⁸

This "popular" conception is, at the same time, a biologizing conception in which sexuality, the sexual *drive*, is conceived of on the model of an *instinct*, a response to a natural need whose paradigm is hunger (if we may be allowed at this point to make more systematic use than Freud of the conceptual pair *drive*-*instinct*). In the case of sexuality, this need would appear to be grounded in a process of maturation, a process of strictly internal origin, in which the physiological moment of puberty is determinant; it would thus be a behavioral sequence narrowly determined by its "source," with a fixed and quite precise "object," since sexuality would focus uniquely and in a manner predetermined for all eternity on the other sex; finally, its "aim" would be similarly fixed: "sexual union, or at all events actions leading in that direction." We should, then, insist on the fact that this "popular conception," which Freud summarizes here in order to expose it subsequently to his attack, coincides with an image which may seem scientific, in the sense of a science of life, an image which, in the last analysis, is perhaps quite valid, at least in domains *other* than that of human sexuality. If we return now to the organization of the *Three Essays*, we shall understand better how that organization is modeled, in its movement, on the very object of the work: the entire organization may be understood as a function of a certain "destruction" (perhaps in the sense of Hegel's *Aufhebung*) of this "popular"—but also biologizing—image of sexuality. There are three chapters, as we recalled earlier. The first is "Sexual Aberrations," and we might subtitle that first chapter "The

Instinct Lost.") The second chapter is entitled "Sexuality," and we elaborate: "The Genesis of Human Sexuality." Finally, the third chapter, "The Transformations of Puberty"; perhaps then, in a sense, the instinct regained? No doubt, but regained at a different level. Rather than *regained*, we would propose provisionally a formula such as "The Instinct Mimed."

We shall treat the first *Essay* only briefly, and in order to situate the second, which is the principal focus of this chapter. It presents us with a polemical, almost apologetic catalogue of sexual aberrations. At stake is an effort to destroy received notions of a *specific aim* and *specific object* through a description of perversions. It is a presentation, moreover, which is distinguished neither by its scientific rigor nor by the exhaustiveness of its explanations. There is no basis for seeking in the *Three Essays* the alpha—and certainly not the omega—of the psychoanalytic theory of the perversions. The crux for Freud is to show just how extended, almost universal, the field of perversions is, and how their existence demolishes any idea of a determined aim or object for human sexuality. Sexuality, one might say upon reading this first chapter, gives the appearance, in a so-called normal adult, of an instinct, but that is only the precarious result of a historical evolution which at every stage of its development may bifurcate differently, resulting in the strangest aberrations.

Our consideration of the second *Essay* will center on a passage which delineates the essence of the matter in that it redefines sexuality as a function of its infantile origins. I refer to the conclusion of a section entitled "The Manifestations of Infantile Sexuality":

Our study of thumb-sucking or sensual sucking [taken as a model of oral sexuality] has already given us the three essential characteristics of an infantile sexual manifestation. At its origin it *attaches itself to* [or *props itself upon*; *entsteht in Anlehnung an*] one of the vital somatic functions; it has as yet no sexual object, and is thus *auto-erotic*; and its sexual aim is dominated by an *erotogenic zone*.⁹

We should observe straightaway that these three characteristics are found in most erotic manifestations of childhood and that they even transcend in large measure the sexuality of the *age of childhood*, marking definitively the entirety of human sexuality. The definition invokes three original and complex notions: the notion of *propping*, the notion of *auto-erotism*; finally, the notion of an *erotogenic zone*.

Propping [*Etayage*], the French reader will perhaps be surprised to hear, is a fundamental term in Freud's conceptual apparatus. In current translations of Freud, in French as well as in the excellent Standard Edition in English, the only trace of the Freudian concept is the sporadic and poorly justified use of an adjective derived from the Greek: "anaclitic." A prolonged consideration of Freudian terminology¹⁰ and an effort

at retranslating Freud's work have led us to choose, along with the original French translator who had already used it unsystematically, the term *étagage* (*propping*) and its derivatives. If we have adopted that term, it is because it was necessary to bring into focus, as had not been done before, the rigorous conceptual value which the German word *Anlehnung*—meaning “to find support” or propping in something else—takes on in Freud. We have attempted thereby to bring into relief with its various resonances a notion long obscured by translations more concerned with elegance than rigor, specifically by an excessively learned and insufficiently explicit pseudoscientific term: *anaclysis*. In addition, the adjective *anaclytic* had in turn been inflected by an elaborate psychoanalytic tradition originating in a point which is already, in fact, secondary. For the term *anaclytic* was introduced by the translators in a text later than the *Three Essays*, the essay “On Narcissism” (1914), in which Freud contrasts two types of “object choice,” two ways in which the human subject selects his love object: a “narcissistic” object choice, in which man chooses his love object in his own image, and an “anaclytic” object choice (*Anlehnungstypus*, in the German) in which (such at least is how the matter was a bit hastily interpreted) one's sexuality is based on the object of the function of self-preservation. Thus the term *propping* has been understood in this tradition as a leaning on the *object*, and ultimately a *leaning on the mother*. It may thus be intuited how an elaborate theory of a relation with the mother has come to inflect a notion intended to account for sexuality in its emergence. In fact, if one examines that notion more closely, one sees that originally it by no means designates a leaning of the subject on the object (of child on mother), even if such “leaning” is observable elsewhere. The phenomenon Freud describes is a *leaning of the drive*, the fact that emergent sexuality attaches itself to and is propped upon another process which is both similar and profoundly divergent: the sexual drive is propped upon a nonsexual, vital function or, as Freud formulates it in terms which defy all additional commentary, upon a “bodily function essential to life.” It will thus be admitted that our divergence from Freud's thought is minimal, that we are in fact only rendering it more precise when we say that what is described as propping is a *leaning originally of infantile sexuality on the instincts*, if by instinct is meant that which orients the “bodily function essential to life”; in the particular case first analyzed by Freud, the instinct is hunger and the function feeding. Without the terminological coherence of Freud's writings being absolutely systematic, we shall nevertheless find, in a manner sufficiently motivated to allow us in turn to “lean” upon it, that the terms *function*, *need*, and *instinct* characterize generally the vital register of self-preservation in opposition to the sexual register.

With the *propping of the drive on the function*, we are faced not with an abstract genesis, a quasi-metaphysical deduction, but with a process that is described with the utmost precision in the archetypal example of *orality*. In orality, it is shown, two phases may be delineated: one consisting in sucking of the breast, and a second, quite different from the first, which is characterized as “sensual sucking.” In the first phase —breast-sucking for nourishment—we are faced with a function or, to recall our earlier distinction, with a total *instinctual* pattern of behavior, one which is, in fact, so complete, as we have seen, that it is precisely hunger, the feeding pattern, which the “popular conception” assumes to be the *model of every instinct*. It is an instinctual pattern with its “impetus,” and this time we should be able to specify precisely what may be hidden behind the energetic *x* term and, drawing on psychophysiology, to relate to a specific humoral or tissue imbalance that state of tension corresponding subjectively to the impression of hunger. We thus have an “impetus,” an accumulation of tensions; a “source” as well, the digestive system, with—to localize and restrict things further—those points in which appetite is most specifically felt. A specific “object” is similarly introduced into the discussion. Shall we identify it as the breast? Well, no, since it is not the breast which procures satisfaction but the nourishment: milk. Finally, there is a preformed process or “aim,” that process of breast-sucking which observers have undertaken to describe with great precision: the search for the nipple, feeding, the release of tension, pacification.

Now the crucial point is that simultaneous with the feeding function's achievement of satisfaction in nourishment, a sexual process begins to appear. Parallel with feeding there is a stimulation of lips and tongue by the nipple and the flow of warm milk. This stimulation is initially modeled on the function, so that between the two, it is at first barely possible to distinguish a difference. The object? It would appear to be furnished at the level of the function. Can we be sure whether it is still the milk or already the breast? The source? It too is determined by the feeding process, since lips are also part of the digestive system. The aim as well is quite close to the aim of nourishment. Ultimately object, aim, and source are intimately entwined in an extremely simple proposition allowing us to describe the process: “It's coming in by the mouth.” “It” is the object; “coming in” is the aim, and whether a sexual or an alimentary aim is in question, the process is in any event a “coming in”; “by the mouth”: at the level of the source, we find the same duplicity: the mouth is simultaneously a sexual organ and an organ of the feeding function.

Thus the “propping” consists initially in that support which emergent sexuality finds in a function linked to the preservation of life. We can find

no better conclusion than the following quotation of another passage Freud devotes to the oral-erotic activity of the child:

It is also easy to guess the occasions on which the child had his first experiences of the pleasure which he is now striving to renew. It was the child's first and most vital activity, his sucking at his mother's breast, or at substitutes for it, that must have familiarized him with this pleasure. The child's lips, in our view, behave like an *erotogenic zone*, and no doubt stimulation by the warm flow of milk is the cause of the pleasurable sensation. The satisfaction of the erotogenic zone is associated, in the first instance, with the satisfaction of the need for nourishment. To begin with, sexual activity attaches itself to [props itself upon] functions serving the purpose of self-preservation and does not become independent of them until later. No one who has seen a baby sinking back satiated from the breast and falling asleep with flushed cheeks and a blissful smile can escape the reflection that this picture persists as a prototype of the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life. The need for repeating the sexual satisfaction now becomes detached from the need for taking nourishment.¹¹

In the very act of feeding, the process of propping may be revealed in a culminating satisfaction that already resembles orgasm; but above all, in an immediately subsequent phase, we witness a separation of the two, since sexuality, at first entirely grounded in the function, is simultaneously entirely *in the movement which disassociates it* from the vital function. In fact, the prototype of oral sexuality is not in the sucking of the breast, and is not, in all its generality, the activity of sucking [*succion*] but rather what Freud, drawing on the works of Lindner, calls *das Ludeln oder Lutschen* [*suçotement*]. Henceforth, the object is abandoned, the aim and the source also take on autonomy in relation to the activity of feeding and the digestive system. With "sensual sucking" we thus come to the second "characteristic" referred to above, which is also a "moment" intimately linked to the process of propping which precedes it: auto-erotism.

Auto-erotism. Freud borrows the term from the sexologists of his time, notably Havelock Ellis, but he brings to it a new import: He defines it essentially in terms of the absence of an object (*Objektlösigkeit*): "a sexual activity . . . not directed towards other people." Now that definition prompts us to indicate immediately that if the notion of auto-erotism will fulfill an extremely important function in Freud's thought, it will simultaneously lead to a major aberration in psychoanalytic thinking and, perhaps, to a certain aberration in the thought of Freud himself, concerning the "object" and primal absence of the object. In such a perspective the object would be generated as it were *ex nihilo*, by a stroke of some magic wand, from an initial state regarded as totally "objectless." The human individual must thus "open up" to his world—things as well as individuals—starting from what we are tempted to call a state of

biological idealism, no doubt even more inconceivable than philosophical solipsism. Deriving an object from an objectless state seems so unpromising a theoretical task to certain analysts that they do not hesitate to affirm—in a reaction which is laudable in its intentions but which only leads to a different error—that *sexuality per se* has an object from the beginning. Such is the position of a psychoanalytic author like Balint who undertakes, with frequently attractive arguments, to demonstrate that a "primary object love" in the child exists,¹² so successfully, in fact, that henceforth all psychoanalytic discussion concerning the object has been restricted to the following alternative: either a total absence of objects for the human being, or the presence from the beginning of a *sexual object*. What path shall we take to avoid this false impasse? The solution is indicated on several occasions, in passages corresponding to moments of particular lucidity in Freud's thought. If we say "particular lucidity," it is out of a sense that certain discoveries may be forgotten, eclipsed, or repressed by their author: there are clear examples in the case of Freud himself, and notably concerning the point under consideration.

The following is a crucial passage, located further on, in the third *Essay*, but which summarizes the theses of the second *Essay*:

At a time at which the first beginnings of sexual satisfaction are still linked with the taking of nourishment [i.e., in the propping phase], the sexual instinct has a sexual object outside the infant's own body in the shape of his mother's breast. It is only later that he loses it, just at the time, perhaps, when he is able to form a total idea of the person to whom the organ that is giving him satisfaction belongs. As a rule the sexual drive then becomes auto-erotic [*auto-erotism is thus not the initial stage*], and not until the period of latency has been passed through is the original relation restored. There are thus good reasons why a child sucking at his mother's breast has become the prototype of every relation of love. The finding of an object is in fact a re-finding of it.¹³

The text cited has an entirely different ring to it from that vast fable of autoerotism as a state of the primary and total absence of an object: a state which one leaves in order to *find* an object; autoerotism is, on the contrary, a second stage, the stage of the loss of the object. A loss of the "partial" object, it should be noted, since it is a loss of the breast which is being considered, and Freud introduces at this point the precious observation that perhaps the partial object is lost at the moment in which the total object—the mother as person—begins to emerge. But above all, if such a text is to be taken seriously, it means that *on the one hand there is from the beginning an object, but that on the other hand sexuality does not have, from the beginning, a real object*. It should be understood that the real object, milk, was the object of the function, which is virtually preordained to the world of satisfaction. Such is the real object which has

been lost, but the object linked to the autoerotic turn, the breast—become a fantasmatic breast—is, for its part, the object of the sexual drive. Thus the sexual object is not identical to the object of the function, but is displaced in relation to it; they are in a relation of essential contiguity which leads us to slide almost indifferently from one to the other, from the milk to the breast as its symbol. "The finding of an object," Freud concludes in a formulation that has since become famous, "is in fact a re-finding of it." We would elucidate this as follows: the object to be rediscovered is not the lost object, but its substitute by displacement; the lost object is the object of self-preservation, of hunger, and the object one seeks to refind in sexuality is an object displaced in relation to that first object. From this, of course, arises the impossibility of ultimately ever rediscovering the object, since the object which has been lost is not the same as that which is to be rediscovered. Therein lies the key to the essential "duplicity" situated at the very beginning of the sexual quest.

The sexual aim is, similarly, in a quite special position in relation to the aim of the feeding function; it is simultaneously the same and different. The aim of feeding was ingestion; in psychoanalysis, however, the term used is incorporation.¹⁴ The terms may seem virtually identical, and yet there is a slight divergence between the two. With incorporation, the aim has become the scenario of a fantasy, a scenario borrowing from the function its register and its language, but adding to ingestion the various implications grouped under the term "cannibalism," with such meanings as: preserving within oneself, destroying, assimilating. Incorporation, moreover, extends ingestion to an entire series of possible relations; ingestion is no longer limited to food, since one can conceive of incorporation occurring in other bodily systems than the digestive apparatus: reference is thus made in psychoanalysis to incorporation at the level of other bodily orifices, of the skin or even, for instance, of the eyes. To speak of a visual incorporation may allow for the interpretation of certain symptoms. Thus from the aim of the function to the sexual aim, a transition exists which may still be defined in terms of a certain kind of displacement: one which, this time, follows an analogical or metaphorical line, and no longer an associative chain through contiguity.

Finally, before leaving the vicissitudes of the aim in the process of propping, we should note, alongside the fantasmatic scenario or activity (incorporation, in the case of orality), a second kind of aim, no doubt linked to the scenario but much more localized, much less "dialectical": that of a "pleasure taken on the spot," the sheer enjoyment of sensual sucking. Between the fantasmatic aim of incorporation and the far more local and far less subtle aim of stimulating the lips, there is necessarily a complex relation that we shall have to reexamine.

There remains the problem of the source. We noted earlier that this is perhaps the central question if what we are presently studying is indeed the origin, thus precisely the source of sexuality. It should be emphasized that this is not simply a word game, neither for us nor for Freud, since we encounter in the *Three Essays* two meanings of the word source, with a relation between the two we should do well to follow. In an initial stage, source is taken in the most concrete and local sense of the term: as an erotogenic zone (to continue with the example of orality, the labial zone stimulated by the passage of milk). It is as though a biological scheme existed which would secrete sexuality from certain predetermined zones, exactly as certain physiological setups give rise to the need for nourishment through certain local tensions; we thus find the idea of a source in a strictly physiological sense. But we find as well a second meaning of the term, which is at least as interesting, although simultaneously far more general. We pass progressively from the erotogenic zone, as a privileged place for stimulation, to a far more extended series of processes. Already in the text of the *Three Essays*, but even more as Freud's considerations expand through broader clinical experience, the capacity to be the point of departure of sexual stimulation is revealed to be by no means the privilege of those zones which are successively described as the loci of oral, anal, urethral, or genital sexuality. Indeed, it is not exclusively those well-localized zones with their cutaneo-mucous covering, but every cutaneous region which is capable of serving as point of departure for sexual stimulation. In a later stage of his thought, Freud will posit that the erotogenic (areas productive of sexual stimulation) includes not simply every cutaneous region, but every organ, including internal ones; in so doing, he drew on an interpretation of the symptoms of hypochondria.¹⁴ Then, generalizing still further, he is eventually led to the position that every function and, finally, every human activity can be erotogenic. We are drawing in this last observation on the chapter in the *Three Essays* dealing with "indirect sources" of sexuality in order to note this time that far from being simply a biochemical process localizable in an organ or in a collection of differentiated cells, the "source" of sexuality can be as general a process as the mechanical stimulation of the body in its entirety; take, for example, the rocking of an infant or the sexual stimulation that may result from rhythmic jolts, as in the course of a railroad trip; or the example of sexual stimulation linked to muscular activity, specifically to sports. Then, in a still vaster perspective, Freud comes to assert that intense intellectual effort can itself be a point of departure for sexual stimulation—a fact that the most ordinary clinical observation confirms. Such is also the case for such general processes as affects, notably "painful" affects; thus, a suddenly emergent state of anxiety will fre-

quently trigger a sexual stimulation. We shall, moreover, in a subsequent discussion of masochism, have occasion to return to the painful affect as an "indirect source" of sexuality.

Freud's conclusion on the subject reads:

Sexual excitation arises as a concomitant effect [we shall retain this term *Nebenwirkung*, "marginal effect," for it defines the process of propping in its double movement of leaning, and then detachment or deviation] in the case of a great number of internal processes [mechanical stimulation, muscular activity, intellectual work, etc.] as soon as the intensity of those processes passes beyond certain quantitative limits. What we have called the component drives [*Partialtriebe, pulsions partielles*] of sexuality are either derived directly from these internal sources or are composed of elements both from those sources and from the erotogenic zones.¹⁵

We thus see the priority accorded by Freud, not to the source in its strictly physiological sense, but to the source in its so-called "indirect" sense, as in an "internal source" which ultimately is nothing but the transcription of the sexual repercussions of anything occurring in the body beyond a certain quantitative threshold. The interest of this redefinition of the source lies in the fact that any function, any vital process, can "secrete" sexuality; any agitation may participate in it. Sexuality in its entirety is in the slight deviation, the *clinamen* from the function. It is in the *clinamen* insofar as the latter results in an autoerotic internalization.

What, then, is ultimately the source of the drive? In the present perspective, we may say that it is the *instinct* in its entirety. The entire instinct with its own "source," "impetus," "aim," and "object," as we have defined them; the instinct, kit and caboodle with its four factors, is in turn the source of a process which mimics, displaces, and denatures it: the drive. To that extent the erotogenic zone, the privileged somatic zone, is not quite a source in the same sense as one might speak of the somatic source of an instinct; it is, rather, defined as a point particularly exposed to the concomitant, or marginal, effect—the *Nebenwirkung*—we have just evoked.

We thus conclude an all too brief itinerary. We shall put aside a consideration of the third chapter of the *Three Essays* in favor of other topics, and characterize it simply as the moment of the instinct regained; regained, as in any rediscovery—we demonstrated as much above concerning the rediscovery of the object—as other than it was in the beginning, for the discovery is always a rediscovery of *something else*. Clearly, this phase is oedipal. We shall presently neglect this third stage in order to insist on what gives to the first two chapters their meaning, orientation, and unity. Consider once more what they entail: to that end we shall use the term *perversion*, since that indeed is the focus of the first

chapter, with the sexual aberrations of adults, as well as of the second with the notion of a "polymorphous perverse" child. We shall consider the term *perversion* and the kind of movement operative within its very concept. (Perversion?) The notion is commonly defined as a *deviation from instinct*, which presupposes a specific path and aim and implies the choice of a divergent path (in biology, and currently in the "human sciences," reference is often made to "deviants"). This is so clearly the case that a glance at any psychiatric textbook reveals that its authors admit a remarkable diversity of perversions, concerning the entirety of the field of "instincts" and according to the number and classification of the instincts they adopt; not only sexual perversions but also, and perhaps above all, perversions of the moral sense, of the social instincts, of the nutritive instinct, etc. In the *Three Essays*, on the contrary, Freud finds his notion of perversion strictly on the sexual perversions. Are we thus suggesting, since deviance is necessarily defined in relation to a norm, that Freud himself would rally to the notion of a sexual instinct? Moreover, the definition of a "sexual instinct" ultimately would consist only in a revised and improved version of the "popular conception." Such is not the case, for Freud's dialectic is more fundamental. The movement we sketched above, a movement of exposition which is simultaneously the movement of a system of thought and, in the last analysis, the movement of the thing itself, is that the *exception*—i.e., the perversion—ends up by *taking the rule along with it*. The exception, which should presuppose the existence of a definite instinct, a preexistent sexual function, with its well-defined norms of accomplishment; that exception ends up by undermining and destroying the very notion of a biological norm. The whole of sexuality, or at least the whole of infantile sexuality, ends up by becoming perversion.

What, then, is perverted, since we may no longer refer to a "sexual instinct," at least in the case of the small child? What is perverted is still the instinct, but it is as a vital function that it is perverted *by* sexuality. Thus the two notions discussed at the beginning of this chapter—instinct and drive—once more are seen to meet and separate. The drive properly speaking, in the only sense faithful to Freud's discovery, is sexuality. Now sexuality, in its entirety, in the human infant, lies in a movement which deflects the instinct, metaphorizes its aim, displaces and internalizes its object, and concentrates its source on what is ultimately a minimal zone, the erotogenic zone. Concerning that erotogenic zone, which we have barely discussed, we should indicate the interest we are inclined to attribute to it. It is a kind of breaking or turning point within the bodily envelope, since what is in question is above all sphincteral orifices: mouth, anus, etc. It is also a zone of exchange, since the principal biological exchanges are borne by it (the prime example is again feeding, but there

are other exchanges as well). This zone of exchange is also a zone for care, namely the particular and attentive care provided by the mother. These zones, then, attract the first erotogenic maneuvers from the adult. An even more significant factor, if we introduce the subjectivity of the first "partner": these zones *focalize parental fantasies* and above all *maternal fantasies*, so that we may say, in what is barely a metaphor, that they are the points through which is introduced into the child that alien internal entity which is, properly speaking, *the sexual excitation*. It is this alien internal entity and its evolution within the human being which will be the object of our next study.

2

Sexuality and the Vital Order in Psychical Conflict

In beginning this second elaboration, which is also concerned with sexuality, we shall first propose a series of observations relating to our previous lecture, which was no doubt too brief to trace a Freudian genesis of sexuality from the vital order. First of all, it should be noted that our earlier effort was a necessarily imperfect approximation. We only developed a single *aspect* of the problem of sexuality. The very term *genesis* evokes the notion of an emergence, the possibility of a linear understanding of what is later by what precedes it. But this perspective should be corrected by a reversal: on the one hand, the proposed genesis implies in fact that what comes first—say, the vital order—contains what might be called a fundamental imperfection in the human being: a dehiscence. What is “perverted” by sexuality is indeed the function, but a function which is somehow feeble or premature. Therein lies the whole problem of the “vital order” in man and of the possibility, or rather the impossibility, of grasping it “beneath” what has come to “cover” it over (assuming that these terms still have any other than a strictly didactic function). On the other hand, to that very extent, it is the *later* which is perhaps more important, and alone allows us to understand and to interpret what we persist in calling *the prior*. We are alluding here to a notion which is equally prevalent in Freud’s thought, and which will presently figure between the lines of what we shall undertake to explain: the notion of “deferred action” (*Nachträglichkeit*).¹

Our second preliminary observation, similarly undertaken along with Freud, bears on the extraordinary broadening of the notion of sexuality occasioned by psychoanalysis, a broadening as much in the extension of the concept as in its comprehension. In its *extension*, since sexuality would seem to include not only the small sector of genital activity, not only perversions or neuroses, but all of human activity, as the introduction of the concept of sublimation, for example, demonstrates. At this point we should recall the term *pansexuality* which was used as a veritable

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2

SEXUALITY AND ATTACHMENT
IN METAPSYCHOLOGY¹

Daniel Widlöcher introduces his article on "Primary Love and Infantile Sexuality"² with a discussion of Michael Balint's 1937 lecture and article on 'primary object-love'.³ It is difficult not to agree with this point of departure, since Michael Balint's voice emerges at a moment when the dominant position is the official Freudian doctrine of 'primary narcissism' as an objectless state. The dogma of the 'monad', a state from which the little human being would, somehow, have to exit in order to join up with the 'object', is vigorously, even definitively, swept away.

It is yet more remarkable that in just a few lines Daniel Widlöcher is able to characterise this discussion as an "eternal debate" and as a "debate that did not take place",⁴ evidence that Michael Balint (and his Hungarian entourage) had probably not sufficiently

1 First published in *Sexualité infantile et attachement* ed. Daniel Widlöcher (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000).

2 Daniel Widlöcher, "Primary Love and Infantile Sexuality: An Eternal Debate", trans. Susan Fairfield, in *Infantile Sexuality and Attachment* (London: Karnac, 2002).

3 Michael Balint, "Early Developmental States of the Ego. Primary Object Love", in *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1952), pp. 90–108.

4 op. cit. p.1.

established his theses and had not, in the first instance, sufficiently cleared the ground on which he based his arguments. This is not the place to take up Balint's thought as it emerges, in all its complexity, in his collection *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique*. The main point of our reservations would probably concentrate on the term 'love' itself, which is used to characterise the first mother-child relation. It is a term that brings together all the ambiguities present in Freud's late theorisation, ambiguities which Balint, in spite of himself, was to inherit.

The Freudian theory that Balint criticises is that of narcissism as the primary state of the human being. But in addition, Freud states that the key aspect of 'autoerotism' is no longer to be distinguished as a separate moment: it simply becomes "the sexual activity of the narcissistic stage of allocation of the libido".⁵ As we know, in this *last Freudian theory* the world of the drives is entirely subsumed within the opposition between 'life drives' (Eros) and 'death drives'. But given the fact that the death drive will be rejected by the majority of authors cited by Daniel Widlöcher, and that Balint himself expressly criticises this hypothesis,⁶ we end up with an extremely simplified view in which the entire world of the drives is submitted to the hegemony of the life drive, of love, or of Eros.⁷ Under the heading of the latter are gathered not only sexuality but love in its narcissistic forms, and ultimately the self-preservative drives as well: "The contrast between the drives of self-preservation and the preservation of the species, as well

⁵ Sigmund Freud, "Lecture 26: The Libido Theory and Narcissism", *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916–17), SE 16, p. 416.

⁶ Cf. for example, "On Love and Hate" (1951) in *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique*, op. cit., pp. 121–135.

⁷ It is precisely so as to provide a counterweight to this hegemony of the narcissistic Eros that Freud introduced the death drive, which, according to my interpretation, is a means of reintroducing the destructive and 'unbinding' aspects of sexuality itself. Cf. in particular Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Jeffrey Mehlman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins 1977), chapter 6, "Why the Death Drive?"; and "The So-Called Death Drive: A Sexual Drive", in *The British Journal of Psychotherapy*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2006, pp. 455–471.

as the contrast between ego-love and object-love, falls within Eros".⁸

Balint is doubtless aware that there are different points of view in Freud, and this is something that distinguishes him from the later authors Widlöcher cites.⁹ What we have often tried to show is that in Freud it is not a question of "fluctuating" views, as Widlöcher puts it, but of an entire line of thought which Freud himself attempts to re-absorb within his subsequent elaboration, yet which remains extremely stimulating.¹⁰ It is worth recalling certain distinctions, some of which are explicit, some of which are implicit.

Explicit distinctions. First of all there is the essential idea that neither narcissism nor perhaps autoerotism is a primary state. Far from being practically innate *a priori* they only appear in the course of the adult-child relation. This is the case for autoerotism, which in 1905 Freud believes succeeds a primary phase of relation to the object:

At a time at which the first beginnings of sexual satisfaction are still linked with the taking of nourishment [J.L.: *this is the moment of leaning-on*], the sexual drive has a sexual object outside the infant's own body in the shape of the mother's breast. It is only later that the drive loses that object, just at the time, perhaps, when the child is able to form a total idea of the person to whom the organ that is giving him satisfaction belongs. As a rule the sexual drive

⁸ Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (1940a), SE 23, p. 148 [Trans.: James Strachey's translation of Freud has been altered here and throughout, where appropriate, to reflect Laplanche's preference for rendering Freud's German term *Trieb* as 'drive' (Fr. *pulsion*) rather than the more familiar but misleading 'instinct'].

⁹ Cf. in particular "Critical Notes on the Theory of the Pregenital Organisations of the Libido" (1935), in *Primary Love and Psychoanalytic Technique*, p. 46 (on autoerotism) and pp. 56–57 (on narcissism).

¹⁰ Cf. in particular Jean Laplanche, *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, trans. David Macey (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989) "2.7 A major instance of confusion: the 'objectless' state", pp. 68–81. The idea here is that Balint replaces the confusion of the 'objectless' state with that of primary 'love'.

¹¹ then becomes autoerotic.

I concluded in 1970 that the above text

has an entirely different ring to it from that vast fable of autoerotism as a state of the primary and total absence of an object: a state which one leaves in order to *find* an object. A loss of the 'partial' object, it should be noted, since it is a loss of the breast which is being considered, and Freud introduces at this point the precious observation that perhaps the partial object is lost at the moment in which the total object – the mother as person – begins to emerge. But above all, if such a text is to be taken seriously, it means that *on the one hand there is from the beginning an object, but that on the other hand sexuality does not have, from the beginning, a real object.*¹²

In order to describe this *second* moment I have proposed the term 'auto-time', a phase in which sexuality is turned back upon the internal fantasmatic object.¹³

Now, the same thing occurs with respect to narcissism, which when Freud first advances it in "On Narcissism: An Introduction" also appears as *second* in relation to autoerotism: "What is the relation of the narcissism of which we are now speaking to auto-eroticism, which we have described as an early state of the libido?" The response is given in two short sentences, which probably contain Freud's most acute and most distilled view on this question:

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d), SE 7, p. 222. Bracketed remarks are mine.

¹² Life and Death in Psychoanalysis, op.cit., p. 19.

12 Life and Death, op.cit., pp. 85-102. [Trans. Laplanche's term *temps auto*' is translated by Jeffrey Mehlman as 'self-phase'].

[W]e are bound to suppose that a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed ... so there must be something added to auto-erotism – a new psychical action – in order to bring about narcissism.¹⁴

This line of thought will of course be rapidly covered over by the notion of 'primary objectless narcissism'. It does persist, however, and especially in the work of Federn. It does so to the extent that Freud was led to say he didn't understand Federn at all, as though he no longer wanted to understand anything of the position that he had initially elaborated.¹⁵ I have for my part enlarged the furrow that was dug and then abandoned by Freud (i.e. the notion of a sequence: sexual satisfaction linked to need — autoeroticism — narcissism), while rejecting the idea of successive 'stages' in favour of "moments that are, to a greater or lesser extent, both *punctual* and *reiterated*".¹⁶

Another explicit distinction, which Freud will be led to flatten out, not to say integrate into his all-encompassing Eros, is that between the self-preserved drives and the sexual drives. This is a major distinction, for it already outlines what will be the relation between sexuality and attachment. We shall discuss their connection further on. Let us simply mention that for Freud the self-preserved functions are not objectless: “[they] are never capable of auto-erotic satisfaction”.¹⁷ However shaky this expression may be (referring, as it does, to an autoerotism of self-preservation!) the idea is clear enough: from the beginning, the self-preserved drives are oriented towards the good-enough object. Moreover, it is precisely to this extent that they are capable of showing the way to the sexual drives.

¹⁴ "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (1914c), SE 14, pp. 76–77.

15 Cf. *Life and Death*, op. cit., chapter 4, "The Ego and Narcissism"; and Maria Teresa de Melo Carvalho, *Paul Federn, une autre voie pour la théorie du moi* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996).

¹⁶ New Foundations for Psychoanalysis, op. cit., p. 73.

17 Sigmund Freud, "Instincts and their Vicissitudes" (1915c), SE 14, p. 134, n. 2.

But we cannot discuss this further without making reference to other *distinctions and conceptualisations* that are *implicit* in Freud's work. They are implicit in the sense that they are not the object of any thematic exposition in Freud and have gone on to be completely neglected in the entire course of a long tradition. This omission is, to be sure, already notable in the German literature but it becomes complete with the passage into English. First of all there is the total blindness concerning the distinction within the Freudian text itself between the notions of *drive* (*Trieb*) and *instinct* (*Instinkt*).¹⁸ The difference between them is certainly never thematised by Freud, but this does not preclude there being a very clear distinction in the use of these terms, just as there is for that other pairing of 'drive' and 'need'. Yet in the English translations of Freud the two terms are collapsed into one another. In addition – a serious phenomenon – the authors who passed from German to English in their own output crossed this frontier without taking any account of it: the frontier, that is, dividing an *instinctual* conception, which for Freud is primarily applicable to self-preservation and to 'instinct in animals', from his conception of the *drive*. Instinct is relatively fixed within the species, is largely innate, and corresponds to adaptive aims; whereas drive, the model for which remains the sexual drive, is variable from one individual to another, is contingent with regard to its aims and objects, and is emphatically 'polymorphous perverse', at least in proximity to its origins. It was not until 1967 that this distinction within the Freudian usage was truly revealed.¹⁹

It is from the same date too that the notion of 'leaning-on' rediscovered not only its meaning and its importance but its very existence. Indeed, however important it may be, the concept of *Anlehnung* is only used sporadically by Freud. It was never given a systematic exposition. Moreover, the notion would be crushed in

18 Cf. "Drive and Instinct" in the present volume.

19 Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Instinct (or Drive)", in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (London: Karnac, 1973).

Strachey's translation by the invention of the barbaric and pseudo-scientific term 'anaclisis'. From that point on, and rapidly, the notion of *a genesis, in which the sexual drive leans for support upon self-preservative instinctual functioning*, would be utterly eclipsed by the entirely different notions of 'anaclitic relation' (the child deriving support from the mother) and even 'anaclitic depression', which was created by Spitz to describe states in which the child is deprived of the mother. Need it be emphasised that it was not until the 'French' reading of Freud and the selection of the word *étagage* that all the attention was drawn to this concept?²⁰

Without going into detail, let us say that the very notion of leaning-on presupposes the distinction between an instinctual mode of functioning that is self-preservative and oriented towards the object, and an erotic mode of functioning that begins by deriving support from the former and then detaches itself and 'becomes autoerotic'.

In my view, it would therefore be anachronistic to align Balint in any way with a conception of leaning-on of which he knows nothing, just as he ultimately neglects its Freudian premise, i.e. the self-preservation/sexuality dualism.

Must we reproach Balint, who joined the Freudian band-wagon while it was in full swing, for taking the 'myth of the amoeba' as his starting point, thus neglecting the entire development anterior to it and everything in Freud's own thought which authorises a totally different view? Need we reproach him for a reading of Freud that neglects the very different strata of the *Three Essays*? Perhaps not. But we are justified in reproaching those authors who came after him, right up to Jeremy Holmes,²¹ for having completely neglected what French Freudian and psychoanalytic research has been empha-

20 Cf. Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Anaclisis" in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, op. cit.; and Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death*, op. cit., chapter 1, "The Vital Order and the Genesis of Human Sexuality".

21 *Attachment, Intimacy, Autonomy: Using Attachment Theory in Adult Psychotherapy* (New York: Jason Aronson, 1996), p. 2.

sising since 1967–1970: the difference between self-preservation and sexuality, the opening of self-preservation onto the external object, and the articulation of two types of functioning within the relation of leaning-on.

Here I must note that even Michel Renard and Pierre Lab,²² the French authors whom Widlöcher describes as coming to the rescue of this ‘monadological’ point of view (which is ‘Freudian’ only in the most restricted sense of the term), were writing in 1969 without taking account of either the theory of leaning-on or the following, pertinent points of view already developed by Daniel Lagache in 1961:

It is to deny the evidence to claim that the newborn has no conscious experiences while it alternates between sleeping and waking. Its conscious experiences are above all experiences of bodily states and bodily acts, which means that they depend primarily upon intero- and proprioceptive receptions. The child is not, however, enclosed within its subjectivity. It is difficult to conceive of the relation between the newborn and the breast other than as the relation of a subject to an object: without existing as a cognitive structure, the subject functions and is successively actualised in the needs which awaken him and motivate him, in the acts of orientation and then consumption which appease him and put him to sleep. Similarly, the breast and the milk fulfil their function as object long before there is any positional consciousness of objects.²³

²² Michel Renard, “La narcissisme”, and Pierre Lab, “La conflit intra-psychique”, in *La théorie psychanalytique*, ed. Sacha Nacht (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969).

²³ Daniel Lagache, “La psychanalyse et la structure de la personnalité” (1961), in *Ceuvres IV* (Paris : Presses Universitaires de France 1986), p. 201.

Thus for years a certain, predominantly Anglo-Saxon tradition continued to wrestle with the myth of the originary monad, or with the false problem raised by Fairbairn of the pleasure-seeking drive and the object-seeking drive, and without taking account of the fact that the double opposition between self-preservation and sexuality on the one hand, and drive and instinct on the other, would perhaps open onto new perspectives. There thus remained a mutual estrangement between, on the one hand, a French line of thought related to the thoroughgoing re-examination of the presuppositions, the implicit concepts, the historical evolution and even the ‘goings astray’ of Freudian thought, and, on the other hand, a debate within the Anglophone literature which congealed around a static, even ahistorical conception of Freudianism,²⁴ the latter being accepted or refused *without* benefit of inventory.

A striking example would be Mahlerian thought, which for years dominated entire sectors of Anglo-Saxon thinking and did so, as Lagache put it, by “denying the evidence”. The idea that every child passes through an autistic phase and then through a phase of symbiosis with the mother before acquiring its ‘separation-individuation’ secondarily, is unable to flourish except within the framework of the theory of ‘primary narcissism’ conceived as a first state from which the ‘monad’ would somehow have to exit.

Margaret Mahler’s theory has really prospered very little on French soil. Lagache’s thought opposes it in a very precise fashion. For my part, ever since *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* I have argued vigorously against the theory of the ‘primitive monad’, in whatever forms it may take. Finally, a richly researched and argued article by Jean Gortais did justice to a realist conception of symbiosis: “in our view it is essentially on the register of illusion, of the fantasmatic, and

²⁴ The evidence for this pervasive Anglo-Saxon ahistoricism is the authors’ citations, which refer largely to the dates of the latest published edition consulted. Who would guess that the citation ‘Freud (1987)’ refers to the *Three Essays*, in the successive versions of 1905, 1910, 1915 and 1924?

also of definitive regression and delusion that the concept of symbiosis can be meaningful. For this reason, it is fundamentally related to dedifferentiation and not to non-differentiation".²⁵

As the latest and radically desexualised avatar of originary narcissism, Mahlerism has in fact been swept away on the international level by all the data of child observation, which can currently be gathered together under the general heading of 'attachment theory'. The refutation is unconditional, and its fullest expression can be found in Martin Dornes' article, "La théorie de Margaret Mahler reconsiderée".²⁶ But here the danger ultimately remains the same as it did with Balint's first critique: the return to 'intersubjectivity' effected under the sign of a motivation-based monism (in this case, attachment; in Balint, it was love) in which ultimately the great loser is infantile sexuality, in the Freudian sense of the term.²⁷ We should add that the same disaster could well cause the disappearance of the Freudian unconscious, along with the major function of fantasy.

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This means that, in our view, owing to the hegemony of attachment theory there is a risk that the debate over attachment and sexuality may never in fact take place, unless attachment can be accommodated within the framework of a rigorous metapsychology. This would be a metapsychology that certainly has its origins in Freud, but which, as the outcome of a working through, does not hesitate to make choices and propose important reconfigurations.

²⁵ Jean Gortais, "Le concept de symbiose en psychanalyse", in *Psychanalyse à la Université*, vol. 12, no. 46, pp. 201–257, p. 251.

²⁶ In *Psyche*, vol. 50, no. 11, 1996. Reprinted in Martin Dornes, *Psychanalyse et psychologie du premier âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2002).

²⁷ Let us recall again the following passage from Balint: "In contrast to the pregenital relation, this genital or adult relation is always sexual ... whereas the pregenital relation, this genital or adult relation is always sexual (sexually not dimorphous)". "On Love and Hate", op. cit., p. 126.

In order to set out very succinctly such a *metapsychology on new foundations*, we shall take our point of departure from the double distinction already invoked above: that between instinctual functioning and drive functioning, and that between self-preservation and sexuality. First of all, it is crucial that we treat these two oppositions separately, since they only slightly overlap.

I. The opposition between *drive* and *instinct* is fundamental, and we can only regret the decades of futile debate occasioned by the confusion of one with the other: among the chief factors responsible for this confusion, although not the only one, would be the migration of Freudian thought into the English language (and not only Strachey's translation). Let us mark the points of difference on three registers: instinct appears as adaptive, genetically programmed and economically aimed at equilibrium. The drive, as we conceive it, is non- and even anti-adaptive.²⁸ Although it is inscribed within the body and within biology, it is not genetic in origin but owes its emergence to the specificity of the adult-child relation. Finally, it functions according to a principle other than that of a reduction of tensions.

Let us take up these points in a schematic fashion. As to instinct, it emerges as hereditary and as adaptive. I recall one definition – Tinbergen's, from a long time ago – of instinct as:

a hierarchically organised nervous mechanism which is susceptible to certain priming, releasing and directing impulses of internal as well as external origin, and which responds to these impulses by coordinated movements that contribute to the maintenance of the individual and the species.²⁹

²⁸ Primarily in the Freudian lineage of the *Three Essays* of 1905, but this is not to deny that we are making choices which 'put Freud to work'.

²⁹ Nikolaas Tinbergen, *The Study of Instinct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), p. 112.

Subsequently, this fixed aspect of instinct has been rendered noticeably more supple, but without undermining its genetically programmed basis. It was chiefly Lorenz who established that in terms of its development within the individual, instinct is much more variable than was believed. He speaks of an 'intercalation' (*Verschränkung*) whereby innate instinctual elements are plaited with elements that are acquired by training or intelligence.³⁰ It is this increased suppleness in the notion of instinct which has enabled its opening onto the more recently explored domain of attachment.

The drive, which is unveiled in magisterial fashion in the *Three Essays* of 1905, is quite different. Here, the points of view of heredity and adaptation are closely connected and in this they are jointly refutable. Adaptation is immediately undermined by the notion of 'polymorphous perversity', which is placed at the beginning of the entire elaboration. The contingency of objects and the variability of aims, which are often interchangeable, undermine the 'popular idea' of a subordination of the drives to the biological finality of procreation. As to what Freud calls the somatic 'source', it is difficult enough to assign in the case of the 'oral' drive (the lips?) or the 'anal' drive (the anus?), and it is altogether lacking in such cases as the voyeuristic drive: how could we make sense of the idea of a 'reduction of tension at its source' here? One would not risk the absurdity of speaking of 'a reduction of ocular tension'.

Freud (and perhaps even so his disciples, such as Abraham or, in a different way, Ferenczi) doubtless finds himself seized with vertigo when confronted with an evolution that lacks any pre-established finality, and will strive to describe a sort of normative evolution, oriented towards 'genitality'. But the purported succession of libidinal stages, even if it survives within the Vulgate of the teachings of 'psychoanalytic psychology' has been endlessly discredited, as much by clinical observation as by theoretical critique (Melanie Klein

³⁰ Konrad Lorenz, *Studies in Animal and Human Behaviour*, 2 vols. (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970 and 1971).

was doubtless at the forefront of this critique). To be sure, the vague succession of 'libidinal stages' can be correlated in a certain way with the progress of rearing (itself determined socially as much as physiologically). But this also means that nothing permits the postulation of a genetic programming of infantile *libidinal evolution as such*.

Let us also add the following point, whose full impact will emerge later on: genetic programming, in the sexual domain above all, presupposes mediation by means of a neuro-hormonal relay. This is clearly the case, and in a precise way, when it comes to the evolution and the metamorphoses of adult sexuality. However, it has never occurred to anyone to search for the presence of hormones at the level of the purported somatic 'sources' of the infantile partial drives!

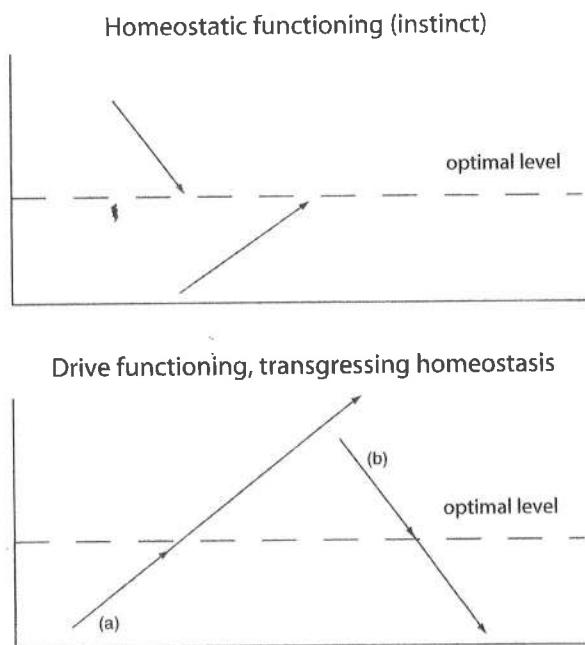
But it is probably at the level of *functioning* and of the 'economy' of pleasure that drive and instinct can be radically distinguished. We have for a long time recognised the difficulties Freud has in giving a univocal formulation of the pleasure principle. We had in fact proposed distinguishing two very different modes of functioning: a homeostatic functioning governed by the 'constancy principle' and tending to restore the level to an optimum; and a functioning oriented towards pure discharge (the primary process), which leads to a total exhaustion of the excitation.³¹

'Constancy principle' and 'zero principle': in order to complete the opposition we must add a distinction that is internal to the German term *Lust*, and which Freud himself reveals: *Lust* is at once *pleasure* as a relaxation of tension (the classical meaning of the 'pleasure principle'), and the 'desire' or 'pleasure-desire' related to the increase of tension.³²

³¹ Jean Laplanche and Jean-Bertrand Pontalis, "Constancy principle", "Nirvana principle" and "Pleasure principle", in *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, op. cit.; and Jean Laplanche, *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis*, op. cit., p. 113 ff.

³² See the two notes in the *Three Essays*, op. cit. p. 135 n. 2 and p. 212 n. 1, as well as my commentary in *Traduire Freud*, eds. André Bourguignon, Pierre Cotet, Jean Laplanche and François Robert (Paris: Universitaires de France, 1989) pp. 125–126, and "The Freud Museum Seminar", in *Jean Laplanche: Seduction, Translation, Drives*, ed. John Fletcher and Martin Stanton (London: ICA, 1992) p. 54.

If we are prepared to take some distance from the Freudian formulations, which are frequently ambiguous and tend to collapse drive and instinct into one another,³³ we can distinguish between a functioning of the instinctual type, which always tends towards relaxation by obtaining the best possible level, and a drive functioning which defies and transgresses the line of the homeostatic level – the principle of excitation or desire tending sometimes towards an excitation beyond all limit, sometimes, and perhaps at the end of the process, towards total exhaustion



This radical repositioning, moreover, enables us better to situate the question of aim, object and pleasure than the clarification Fairbairn offered, for the real opposition is not that between ‘object-seeking’ and ‘pleasure-seeking’. From his earliest writings Freud

³³ Cf. for example, Jean Laplanche, *Problématiques III: La Sublimation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), p. 37 ff.

clearly demonstrates that these two searches are strictly correlated: the good-enough *object* is procured by means of the specific action ('aim') and leads to a lasting relaxation of tension ('pleasure'). But these are a matter of behaviours that we encompass with the broad term 'instinct'. However, what is opposed to this *joint* pursuit of the object and of satisfaction is most certainly the drive-based quest, which, for its part, is the *pursuit of excitation* to the point of exhaustion, regardless of both the real object and the relaxation of tension.

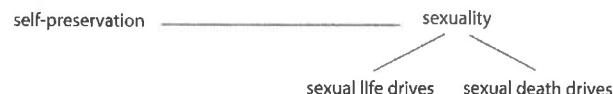
This also entails a complete reversal as regards the type of 'object' and its position. The object of the instinct is the real object, which is situated at the end of the process, even if it is pre-intuited in the form of a 'value'.³⁴ The object of the drive is to be situated within unconscious fantasy; it is the exciting object, the 'source-object', of which the real can offer nothing but *unsatisfying*, though in their turn *exciting*, effigies.

II. Drive and instinct are general categories. It is important not to tack their opposition onto the different types of motivation and/or behaviour in question. From this second point of view we come to the terms of the first Freudian dualism (while reserving the right to nuance and update it): self-preservation/sexuality.³⁵ But why do we not simply align self-preservation with the 'instinctual' on the one hand, and sexuality with the 'drive' on the other?

On the one hand, 'self-preservation' – the totality of forces that tend towards the preservation of the individual – is, by its very definition, adaptive and innately based, and tends towards a state of vital equilibrium. 'Self-preservation' is by nature, then, 'instinctual'; but it

³⁴ In the sense that Lagache speaks of hunger as the intuition of the value of food.

³⁵ It seems to me that the 'second dualism', life and death, must be subsumed under the term 'sexuality' (Cf. *Life and Death and New Foundations*):



is important to apply some nuances here, owing to the introduction of the notion of 'attachment'. Attachment, which had already been discovered by Freud under the name of 'affection', has been considerably extended by the recent work done in infant observation. After Bowlby came Zazzo, Brazelton, Stern, Dornes, Montagner etc. Schematically, the following points should be underlined:

- 1) Attachment emerges from a domain that is broadly understood as that of *self-preservation* and instinct. The majority of authors insist on the innate and 'attuned' basis of inter-relations between the adult and the child. This does not mean that one should neglect the way in which this relation is enriched in the course of its development. But this enrichment (where narcissism and the narcissistic relation will play a major role) remains, despite everything, oriented by the self-preservative aim.
- 2) Attachment is only *one part of instinctual self-preserved behaviour*: it is that part in which the individual essentially needs the other to ensure his survival, his 'homeostasis'. The proportion of non-relational homeostatic mechanisms (for example, the maintenance of blood constants) to mechanisms that immediately require the intervention of the other, varies according to species. As such, in certain species the provision of nourishment is necessarily mediated by the congeneric adult, whereas for others it is not. (Roughly speaking, we may assume that the dividing line is that which lies between homeothermic and poikilothermic species).³⁶
- 3) One final point is essential for our purposes: the attachment relation is supported by a *communication*, an exchange of messages between adult and child. These messages are not initially linguistic, even though they may become so later on. For the most part they derive from an innate origin, which is in sharp contrast to

³⁶ [Trans.: the terms 'homeothermic' and 'poikilothermic' refer to warm- and cold-blooded animals respectively].

Freud's supposition that it is the mechanical path of discharge (that is, the uncoordinated cries of the thirsty infant) which acquires the function of "mutual understanding" in a "secondary" fashion.³⁷

Let us turn to sexuality in respect of our distinction between drive and instinct. Here it must be affirmed that in man sexuality is double, and profoundly split. The immense Freudian discovery merits being properly situated within this duality.

- 1) It is not a matter of denying the existence – within the animal, of course, but also within man – of an instinctual sexuality connected to the maturation of the organism and involving neuro-hormonal relays, the complexity of which is now beginning to be recognised. As Freud had already emphasised, this sexuality pushes human beings towards sexual behaviours that are more or less pre-programmed and that are aimed, without this aim being consciously posed, at the self-preservation of the species. But the *problem* is that this sexuality, which is hormonal in origin, is *absent in man* from birth to the pre-pubertal period.
- 2) It is precisely between birth and puberty that *human drive sexuality* is situated – the infantile sexuality that Freud discovered and which continues to scandalise today.

This sexuality is an *enlarged sexuality* and is not, at first, connected to any one erotogenic zone; nor is it connected, in any absolute way, to the difference of the sexes.

This sexuality is not *innate*, which does not, however, justify the objection that we are returning to the notion of the

³⁷ [Trans.: Laplanche is quoting Freud's *Project for a Scientific Psychology*. Freud's German term is *Übereinstimmung*, which Strachey simply translates as "communication" ((1950a [1895]), SE 1, p. 318). We render it as 'mutual understanding' in order to distinguish it from Laplanche's own use of "communication" earlier in the paragraph and so as to acknowledge Laplanche's own more faithful translation of Freud's term: "*compréhension mutuelle*".]

'innocent child'. The child is a 'genetic-sexual-innocent', if one wishes to put it that way, which does not prevent the child from becoming sexual in the first hours of its life.

This drive sexuality is indissociably connected to *fantasy*, as its cause. Repressed, it is what constitutes the contents of the unconscious and is the very object of psychoanalysis.

- 3) What, then, is the relation between drive sexuality and instinctual sexuality within the human being?

It is not one of collaboration or of harmonious blending, but a deeply conflictual relation, which at first glance looks like a temporal succession. Instinctual sexuality arrives in the pubertal or pre-pubertal period, *after* infantile sexuality. But nevertheless, it is in no sense infantile sexuality's *legitimate heir*: the sequence of infantile stages described by Freud is a barely credible fiction. Infantile sexuality before puberty is largely repressed and unconscious, rendering it all the more toxic. Finally, the two respective modes of functioning – 'the pursuit of excitation' and 'the pursuit of pleasure in the object' – are and will remain most difficult to reconcile.

Ultimately, our idea is that with respect to his sexuality man is subject to the greatest of paradoxes: *acquired* drive sexuality *precedes* innate instinctual sexuality within him, such that when it surges forth, adaptive instinctual sexuality finds its place 'occupied', as it were, by the infantile drives, already and always present within the unconscious.

III. We shall not advance onto the issues that follow from this: problems concerning sublimation; problems concerning the integration of desire into the pursuit of pleasure; the persistence of infantile sexuality within the adult, etc. We shall, however, return to this long period in which *attachment and infantile sexuality seem to coexist*. What is their original relation? Is there a connection or relation between them of support? Of genesis?

Here, the notion of *leaning-on* remains indispensable, at least as a stage in, or support for, our thinking, in order to grasp what is at stake. Having developed and examined this notion for a long time,³⁸ we shall recall what is at stake in just a few words. Infantile sexuality first emerges in the exercise of the great functions, in the satisfaction of the great needs of self-preservation. Initially conjoint with the satisfaction of need (feeding, defecation, etc), sexual pleasure detaches itself secondarily, becoming autonomous with autoerotism and its relation to fantasy.

This process, which is barely outlined by Freud, requires interpretation. We have proposed to distinguish three versions of it:³⁹

- 1) an impoverished interpretation that proposes a mechanistic parallelism;
- 2) an interpretation that makes it into a process of emergence;
- 3) a contrary interpretation, made in terms of seduction.

The mechanistic interpretation is rejected by Widlöcher, as it is by me. It presupposes an homogeneous conception of instinctual self-preservative functioning on the one hand and drive sexuality on the other, which I have never stopped rebutting. A single source for two instincts? And what source? What parallel aims? What 'object' common to both?

The interpretation by emergence, of the kind I have proposed as a way to save the Freudian hypothesis.⁴⁰ In this schema we not only have the notion of support ('leaning-on') but simultaneously that of a time-lag and a borrowing by one from the other. Conjunction followed by emergence, by means of a sort of metabolisation and symbolisation of aims and objects. In this positive and saving interpretation of lean-

38 *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1967), *Life and Death in Psychoanalysis* (1970), *Problématiques III* (1975–76), *Le fourvoiement biologisant de la sexualité chez Freud* (1991).

39 *Problématiques VII: Le fourvoiement biologisant de la sexualité chez Freud* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2006), p. 55 ff.

40 One of the most recent discussions of this appears in *Problématiques VII*, ibid., p. 60 ff.

ing-on, the object of self-preservation is the milk, while the breast is the sexual object. With leaning-on there is thus a 'metonymisation' of the object at the same time as a turning around within fantasy. For its part, the aim undergoes 'metaphorisation' in passing from the domain of self-preservation to the sexual – anal expulsion or projection, for example, being the metaphorisation of the excretion of *faeces*.⁴¹

This type of solution, which is ultimately *endogenous*, seems to me to be that retained by Widlöcher: it is an action on the part of the subject which, taking up self-preservative functioning in a second moment, transforms it into sexuality by making it pass into fantasy. Where I speak of 'metaphorisation', Widlöcher uses the terms "early psychic creativity", "pure subjectivity proper to fantasmatric activity",⁴² "treatment of scenes on the level of illusion",⁴³ "a resumption within the imaginary which ... confers new meaning". According to Widlöcher, "infantile sexuality [would be the] hallucinatory resumption of a physical and relational experience of satisfaction which has another origin".⁴⁴

I have frequently, and for a long time, criticised such a 'creativist' and 'illusionist' conception of human sexuality. In Freud these conceptions find their apogee in the theory of the 'hallucinatory satisfaction of desire', which I reject. Indeed, the first real satisfaction can only be the satisfaction of a *need* (an alimentary need in the Freudian example); and its *reproduction* – be it within a memory, a fantasy or even an hallucination – can only be the reproduction of an *alimentary* satisfaction. There is in Freud and in his successors, right up to the most developed version by Widlöcher, a veritable sleight of hand: if the sexual is not present *within* the original, *real experience* it will never be rediscovered in the fantasmatric reproduction or the symbolic elaboration of that experience.

41 [Editor: For this derivation of psychical entities according to relations of contiguity as distinct from relations of similarity, see "Derivation of Psychoanalytic Entities", *Life and Death*, op.cit., pp. 127–139].

42 Widlöcher, "Primary Love and Infantile Sexuality", p. 19.

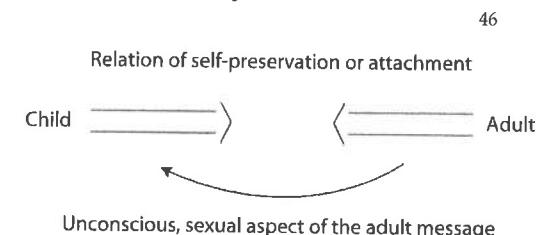
43 Ibid., translation altered.

44 Ibid., p. 20, translation altered.

But the 'creativity' by which Widlöcher sets so much store does not in fact go so far as to create sexuality: this is in reality introduced from the earliest intersubjective experience, and introduced by the activity of the adult rather than the infant.

You can see how it may be said that "seduction is the truth of 'leaning-on'".⁴⁵ Not that I deny the active role of the infant in terms of symbolisation and the creation of fantasy, and within the process of *afterwardsness*. But this activity is brought to bear upon messages that are *already* compromised by the sexual on the part of the adult other. It is precisely by virtue of this enigmatic aspect of the adult message that the child is stimulated to develop an unusual activity of 'translation'. An exchange of messages that remain purely self-preservative benefits from an 'attunement', since the codes used between the adult and the child are largely pre-established. However, the child's creativity, asserted by Widlöcher, is kindled by the 'drive to translate', which comes to the child from the adult message 'to be translated' – an enigmatic message since it is compromised by the sexuality of the adult.

To return to attachment, we can see why the 'communication' aspect, the exchange of messages and responses, is essential to the theory of seduction. It is only because the adult's messages are compromised by his sexual unconscious that, secondarily, the child's attempts at symbolisation are set in motion, where the child actively works on material that is *already* sexual.



45 *New Foundations for Psychoanalysis*, op. cit. pp. 144–5.

46 Diagram taken from "Les forces en jeu dans le conflit psychique" (1995), in *Entre séduction et inspiration: l'homme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999).

We shall not pursue here the process of repression resulting from these attempts at translation, which always partially fail.⁴⁷

However, apropos of 'the general theory of seduction', I shall take the occasion of the present article to respond to objections made by Widlöcher.

Widlöcher's earlier objection had been that the mother-child relation is not sufficiently universal, even among humans, to account for the appearance of infantile sexuality in all cases. I responded to this by saying that I have doubtless been misread, for what I call the 'Fundamental Anthropological Situation' is the truly universal relation *between a child* who has no genetically programmed unconscious ('genetically innocent') and *an adult* (not necessarily the mother) who, psychoanalysis tells us, is inhabited by an unconscious. It is a situation that is absolutely ineluctable, even if the infant has no parents, and even if he is . . . a clone!

In his present article, Widlöcher's objection is very different: he willingly accepts the mechanism of seduction but wishes to leave a space for a more spontaneous and less interpersonal emergence of autoerotism. To tell the truth, the objection is valid not only for my thought but for his own conception of a secondary elaboration of sexuality within hallucinatory 'creativity'. Indeed, I think that we both admit that a somatic reactivity, a general organic excitability must certainly be pre-existent, but that something else is needed in order to make it a *drive*. This is something that has already been said by Lichtenstein:

[T]here is an innate body responsiveness, a capacity . . . to respond to contact with another person with a specific kind of somatic excitation which is not a drive, because it has no direction, but which is the

⁴⁷ The fullest account of this appears in "Short Treatise on the Unconscious" (1993), in *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (London: Routledge, 1999).

innate prerequisite for the later development of a drive.⁴⁸

For the other's message to be *implanted* we must acknowledge the existence of a primary somatic receptivity.⁴⁹

To resume my debate with Widlöcher briefly, our points of view are largely convergent when it comes to the nature of the infantile sexual drive (its connection to fantasy) and its mode of functioning being wholly different from instinct. However, as to the articulation between self-preservation and the drives, and as to the genesis of the sexual, our points of view are close but do not coincide: his adherence to the fiction of hallucinatory satisfaction (of need? of desire?) – which is still too often considered to be beyond criticism – remains as a point of dispute between us.

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Having attempted to situate clearly attachment and sexuality, in terms of their essence, their relationship and their genesis, we shall say a few words about the errors that lead to the epistemological hegemony of one over the other.

Attachment has become the privileged domain of those who *observe childhood*. Even so, must infantile sexuality – as well as adult sexuality – therefore disappear from the field of observation? I do not think so; and nor do we find among the best child observers the sort of epistemological blindness with which they are credited by André Green.

It is, however, true that infantile sexuality, connected as it is

⁴⁸ Heinz Lichtenstein, "Identity and Sexuality", in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, vol. 9, 1961, p. 250.

⁴⁹ Cf. Gérard Mendel, *La psychanalyse revisitée* (Paris: Le Découvertre, 1988), p. 113 ff. Mendel thinks that this reactivity is not sexual. Lichtenstein thinks that it is 'already' sexual. A quibble over words? Not at all. The fact that sexuality, in Freud's sense of the term, only appears with fantasy would rather confirm Mendel's view.

to the appearance of fantasy and to repression, is by definition left poorly identified in any direct way. Child observers such as Roiphe and Galenson demonstrate that these two aspects – a sexuality that is in the process of being repressed and parental sexuality – are nonetheless discernable, at the heart of observation itself, if one wishes to take the trouble.⁵⁰ The path remains open from this observation to a more concrete identification of the connection between attachment and infantile sexuality.

On the side of analysis, and essentially the analysis of the adult, the point of view is the opposite. Here, drive sexuality is on the way towards monopolising all our attention (and with good reason!):

- 1) Within individual evolution, sexuality has a tendency to cover over like a net and to co-opt the totality of inter-human relations. This is what I have sometimes called ‘pansexualism in action’⁵¹.
- 2) The analytic rule that privileges ‘saying everything’, even what is considered improper, necessarily promotes the ‘sexual’ within communication.
- 3) The transference situation itself supports this hegemony of the sexual. The two previous factors are constitutive of what I once named the ‘tub’ of psychoanalysis.⁵²

Coming back to transference, in our view it is ‘provoked’, created by the analytic situation, which confronts the analysand with the enigma: his internal enigma but also the enigma of the other. In this sense, the analytic transference has in essence nothing to do with a simple transference of habits. It places the subject back within the originary situation, that of the genesis of infantile sexuality.

50 Herman Roiphe and Eleanor Galenson, *The Infantile Origins of Sexual Identity* (New York: International Universities Press, 1981), chapters 13 and 14.

51 “Sublimation and/or Inspiration”, *New Formations*, no 48, 2002–3, p.35.

52 Cf. *Problématiques IV. Le baquet. Transcendance du transfert* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987).

We can see to what extent abstract metapsychological considerations are alone capable of focusing adequately on the essence of psychoanalytic *practice*, Freud’s primary and inaugural invention.

to look for the *message*, the residue of message and communication, which are always present, even in what are apparently the crudest of acts. It is this which leads me to reject as insufficient such notions as the 'predator', and the idea that the victim is treated purely as an 'object'. Even when enslaved, the victim is never treated purely and simply as a 'thing'. And the fact of sadism (need we recall, *with Freud?*) presupposes at least a minimum level of masochistic identification with the victim. The only guiding thread within practice is the patient, desperate search for a thread of message. Need we recall – in a scarcely different register – those victims who have saved themselves by establishing a minimal dialogue with their aggressor?

2) My title could be read differently, it could be read to mean 'crime is sexual'. In other words, it poses the question of the role of the sexual in *all crime*, even the most ordinary, the most banal, the most 'realistic'. No analyst can elude this question, even if it is not every day that he has a 'criminal' on his couch.

9

GENDER, SEX AND THE SEXUAL¹

Gender is plural. It is ordinarily double, as in masculine-feminine, but it is not so by nature. It is often plural, as in the history of languages, and in social evolution.

Sex is dual. It is so by virtue of sexual reproduction and also by virtue of its human symbolization, which sets and freezes the duality as presence/absence, phallic/castrated.

The sexual is multiple, polymorphous. The fundamental discovery of Freud, it is based on repression, the unconscious, and fantasy. It is the object of psychoanalysis.²

Proposition: The sexual is the unconscious residue of the symbolization-repression of gender by sex.

What I present here is a sort of synthesis – one which is too abbreviated and which merits further development – of a work that we have pursued for about three years in my teaching and research

1 First published in *Libres cahiers pour la psychanalyse. Études sur la Théorie de la séduction* (Paris: In Press, 2003) pp. 69–103.

2 [Editor: On Laplanche's French neologism 'sexual' (as distinct from the normal 'sexuel'), see the Editor's note to the Forward of this volume. The term is usually printed in italics to mark it off from the standard English term with the same spelling].

seminar; the basic question being, to put things in a very classical manner, the question of sexual identity – as it is called in psychoanalysis.

The current tendency is to speak of gender identity, and the question immediately arises whether this is simply a change in vocabulary or something more profound. Is it a positive development or the mark of a repression, and if there is repression, where is it? As you may know, I tend to think that ‘repression in theory’ and ‘repression in the thing itself’ – that is to say in the concrete evolution of the individual – often go hand in hand.

My plan will be very simple. First, I shall spend a little time on conceptual distinctions and on the question, “why introduce gender?” and then, for the second part, I shall sketch the functioning, in the early history of the human being, of the triad gender-sex-sexual.

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* *

Conceptual distinctions are not worthwhile in themselves but only for the conflictual potentialities they harbour; if they are binary they are often the mark of negation and therefore of repression. Some displacements may hide repressions. So it is with the displacement of the question of sexual identity onto the question of gender identity. What this displacement perhaps conceals is that the fundamental Freudian discovery does not lie in gender identity but – besides gender, besides sex or the sexed – in the question of the *sexual*.

Following Freud, I would like to distinguish between the sexual (*le sexuel*) and the sexed (*le sexué*) or that which concerns ‘sex’. It has been claimed, perhaps correctly, that the etymology of ‘sex’ is from ‘... cut’, because the ‘sexed’ clearly entails the difference of the sexes or the difference of sex, which in German is called an ‘Unterschied’.³ There is

³ In a quite general way, although not systematically, Freud uses the term *Unterschied* (difference) to indicate a binary opposition and *Verschiedenheit* (diversity) when there is a plurality of terms: difference between black and white, diversity of colours. [Editor: cf. “18th December, 1973”, *Problématiques II: Castrations-Symbolisations*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), pp. 44-58].

the ‘sexual’, for example, in “The Three Essays on Sexualtheorie”, that is to say on the theory of the sexual (*le sexuel*) or rather what I would call ‘the sexual (*le sexual*)’. It is perhaps an eccentricity on my part to speak of *le sexual* and not *le sexuel*, but I do so in order to indicate clearly this opposition and the originality of the Freudian concept.⁴ In German, there are two terms. There is ‘Geschlecht’, of course, which means ‘sexed sex’, but there is also ‘Sexual’, the sexual (*le sexuel*), which I am calling the ‘*le sexual*’. When Freud speaks of enlarged sexuality, the sexuality of the *Three Essays*, it is always the *sexual*. It would have been unthinkable for Freud to have entitled his inaugural work, “Three Essays on the Theory of the Sexed – or of Sexuation”. ‘Sexualtheorie’ is not a ‘Geschlechtstheorie’.⁵ It is a sexuality that has been called ‘non-procreative’ and even primarily non-sexed, as distinct from what is called precisely ‘sexed reproduction’. The *sexual*, then, is not the sexed; it is essentially perverse infantile sexuality.

‘Enlarged’ sexuality is the great psychoanalytic discovery, maintained from beginning to end and difficult to conceptualize – as Freud himself shows when he tries to reflect on the question in, for example, his *Introductory Lectures*. It is infantile, certainly, more closely connected to fantasy than to the object, and is thus auto-erotic, governed by fantasy, governed by the unconscious. (Isn’t the unconscious ultimately the *sexual*? One can legitimately ask this question). So for Freud, the ‘*sexual*’ is exterior to, even prior to, the difference of the sexes, even the difference of the genders: it is oral, anal or para-genital.

Nevertheless, whenever Freud tries to define it he is brought back to the need to put it into relation with what it is not, that is to

⁴ In German the derivation of the terms *sexuell* and *sexual* is very close. The provenance of both is the Latin *sexualis*. ‘Sexual’ is more erudite and more Germanic; ‘sexuell’ has more a flavour of the Romance languages and has more common currency.

⁵ Conversely, Freud employs the term *Geschlechtlichkeit* in a quite specific sense, different from that of ‘sexuality’. This is the case in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900a) where there is “a conversation in which ‘it was just as though we had become aware of our sex, it was as though I were to say: I’m a man and you’re a woman’”, SE 4, p. 333.

say, with sexed activity or with sex; and he does this according to the three classic paths of the association of ideas. First, the path of *resemblance*: Freud seeks resemblances between the pleasures of the *sexual*, the pleasures of infantile sexuality or perverse pleasures, and what is characteristic of genital sexuality, namely the experience of orgasm. Some of the resemblances are more or less valid; some are more or less artificial, such as that claimed between the "blissful smile" of the sated nursing and "the expression of sexual satisfaction in later life".⁶ Second and above all, there are the arguments of *contiguity*: contiguity since the *sexual* is found in foreplay and in the perversions contiguous to genital orgasm; and even the argument of 'anatomical' contiguity, which Freud already calls a sort of 'destiny', in which the contiguity is between the vagina and the rectum.⁷

But what I would like to stress instead is association 'by opposition', which among the associationists is typically referred to as the 'third type of association'. Does *sexual* pleasure exist in *opposition* to sexed pleasure? Doubtless this is often true in reality, in the pursuit of erotic activities, even in terms of economic characteristics, since one may imagine – I shall perhaps return to this – that the economic functioning of the '*sexual*' is aimed at the pursuit of tension, whereas the '*sexed*' aims rather at the classic pleasure of relaxation. But this is not the true opposition. We encounter a sort of subversion of the very notion of logical opposition, which itself suddenly becomes an opposition in the real, i.e. a prohibition. In other words, the *sexual* is defined as 'that which is condemned by the adult'. There is not a single text by Freud in which he speaks of infantile sexuality without putting this opposition forward, not as a sort of contingent reaction to infantile sexuality, but as something that truly *defines* it. I believe that even these days infantile sexuality, strictly speaking, is what is most repugnant in the eyes of the adult. Even today 'bad habits' remain the most difficult

6 "Infantile Sexuality", *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905d), SE 7, p. 182.
 7 "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love II)" (1912d), SE 11, p. 189; *ibid.*, p. 187, note 1.

thing for adults to accept. So it is a curious definition, by opposition. By a sort of circular reasoning the sexual is condemned because it is sexual, but it is sexual, or '*sexual*', because it is condemned. The *sexual* is the repressed; it is repressed because it is the *sexual*.

Here, then, we confront the great difficulty of having to define an enlarged sexuality that we appear to be able to grasp only in terms of its relation to what is sexed, to sexuality in the classic sense. Will introducing a third term save us, or will it rather add to the confusion, add to the repression?

The third term is 'gender', which was first introduced in English, but which came to be translated or transposed into different languages and in particular into French. The notion of gender is currently enjoying such success among sociologists, feminists, and especially among feminist sociologists, that it is supposed to have been introduced by them. In fact, it is now established that the term was introduced by the sexologist John Money in 1955, and later reintroduced, with well-known success, by Robert Stoller, who in 1968 created the term 'core gender identity'. He thus integrated the term into specifically psychoanalytic thought.⁸

Here it would be necessary to enter into the infinite and powerfully seductive variations of Stoller's thought – a non-conventional thinker who is very interesting even if he often contradicts himself. I particularly like to cite what he says about contemporary psychoanalytic thought when he compares it to the Pantheon of imperial Rome, where temples to the most diverse divinities coexisted in a kind of joyous jumble.⁹

However, my main argument is that with Stoller, and after him, the notion of gender becomes a synonym for a set of convictions:

8 Robert Stoller, *Sex and Gender* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1968), which was published in a French translation under the title *Recherches sur l'identité sexuelle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1978). The transposition of the title alone shows the difficulty classical French psychoanalytic thought has in integrating the term and the idea of gender.
 9 *Presentations of Gender* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 82.

the conviction of belonging to one of two social groups defined as masculine or feminine, or else the conviction that the assignment to one of these two groups is correct. I shall come back to this term 'assignment'.

I shall not follow Stoller's thinking here.¹⁰ What interests me is the appearance of this new anglophone binary, the sex-gender couple. 'Sex' being understood principally as biological, and 'gender' as socio-cultural but also as subjective. The problem thus arises of the politics of translation into languages with no common usage of the word 'gender'. French more or less had this, but mainly in connection with 'grammatical gender', a very rich and tricky question on which I shall offer a few notes in an appendix at the end of this essay.¹¹ Notably, German does not have a term that corresponds exactly. Without going into detail, German has '*Geschlecht*' which means 'gender' and 'sex' at the same time. Thus Freudian German only has the opposition '*Geschlecht / sexual*'. In fact, when they translate English texts, Germans are led – and this is important because it amounts to a veritable interpretation – to translate the English 'sex' by 'biological sex', and 'gender' by 'sociological sex', which is already, and obviously, an entire theoretical option itself – one which remains undiscussed.

Terms and concepts are weapons, weapons of war: gender against sex and, one could say, gender and sex allied against the *sexual*. Gender against sex in Stoller because under the single banner of gender he removes all conflictuality from a large part of the problematic of gender. The German author Reimut Reiche devoted an article titled "Gender ohne Sex"¹² to the way in which, in his view, the introduction of gender – "gender without sex" – leads to a biased conceptualization that completely erases the problem of sex and sexuality. Notably, Reiche criticizes the notion of 'imprinting' and especially of a non-conflictual imprint, which belongs to Stoller's attempt to define

10 Cf. "Appendix I: Stoller and Gender".

11 Cf. "Appendix II: Linguistic gender".

12 In *Psyche*, 1997, 9/10. This title is a mixture of the English words 'gender' and 'sex' and a German word (*ohne*): "Gender without Sex".

gender. But it seems to me that what Reiche does not see is that the gender/sex pair serves as an even more formidable machine against the Freudian discovery.

It is here that the feminist movements as a whole enter the battle. Whether or not they are 'differentialists', as it is said, in the end the sex/gender binary is always more or less preserved. In de Beauvoir, the distinction between the terms is not posed; I mean that at the time of her book the difference between the category of sex and the category of gender was not yet explicit but was, as can be shown, already functioning implicitly. One could say that her general position is that biological sex must be postulated as a foundation, even if this foundation must be completely subverted. I cite a passage from *The Second Sex*:

Certainly these facts [of biology, of the physical differences between men and women] cannot be denied – but in themselves they have no significance ... It is not merely as a body, but rather as a body subject to taboos, to laws, that the subject is conscious of himself and attains fulfilment.¹³

This is evidently a passage characteristic of the atmosphere – let us call it voluntarist and existentialist – in which this book was written (a book which in other respects continues to be very interesting because of its numerous descriptions). Yet it is clear that there is a double movement in the work of most feminists – the most theoretical and the most radical. There is a first movement, which subverts the notion of sex to the point of annihilating it, in a purely retroactive fashion, by gender; and then there is a moment when it is realized that, in spite of everything, it is necessary to postulate something

13 Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M. Parshley (London: Picador, 1988) pp. 66–8.

foundational, a sort of pure nature, or, as de Beauvoir says, "facts" that "in themselves ... have no significance", even if it is precisely to subvert and annihilate it.

This is the case with Judith Butler, whose second book, *Bodies that Matter*, constitutes a thorough revision of her first, *Gender Trouble*, in that it immediately reintroduces the 'biological' aspect of 'sex' and its 'constraints', explaining that their omission in the preceding work had the 'good tactical reason' of acting as a counterbalance: "doesn't everybody else talk about that?"¹⁴

This is the case with Nicole-Claude Matthieu, one of whose articles, which is extremely difficult, is titled "Three modes of conceptualization of the relation between sex and gender".¹⁵ You can see from the title alone that in the end she still needs the notion of sex. Gender, she says, can "translate" sex, or can "symbolize" sex or can "construct" sex, which is to say, construct it by reconstructing it, even "by destroying it". But this positions sex as a kind of biological precondition, since gender "translates", "symbolizes" or "constructs" a sex that is already there before it. Thus, implicitly or even surreptitiously, a sort of biological definition of sex is ultimately restored.

Here is a more recent passage by Nicole-Claude Matthieu: "As with the replacement of the term 'race' by the term 'ethnic group', to leave sex out of gender risks preserving its status as an inescapable reality by forgetting that biology, and *chiefly* the physiology of fertility, is *largely* dependent on social environment".¹⁶ I have emphasized the words "chiefly" and "largely" in this excerpt. You see that in a body of thought that aims at great rigor, she nonetheless introduces large tracts of indeterminacy by saying that biology is "chiefly" the physiology of fertility. If it is "chiefly" so, then it could nonetheless also be

¹⁴ Interview in *A Critical Sense*, ed. Peter Osborne (London and New York, Routledge, 1996), p. 112.

¹⁵ "Trois modes de conceptualisation du rapport entre sexe et genre", in *L'anatomie politique*, (Paris: Côté femmes, 1991).

¹⁶ In *Dictionnaire critique du féminisme* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2000), pp. 197–98, emphasis added.

something else. That it is "largely" dependent on social environment means that it may not be totally dependent on it, etc. "Chiefly": sex is accepted in the domain of procreation. "Largely": one escapes by a partial dependence.¹⁷

In short, the feminists in general, including the 'radicals' – or, one could say, the less radical of the radicals – need sex in order to subvert and 'denaturalize' it in gender. But is it necessary to return to the good old sex/gender sequence and in the following order: sex before gender, nature before culture, even if one agrees to 'denature' nature?¹⁸ Of course, in all of this, the Freudian *sexual* risks becoming a major absence. Psychoanalysis is mentioned but as something listed under the class of ideologies that subordinate gender to sex, the first being the 'translation' of the second (Matthieu).

Does introducing gender into psychoanalysis entail allying oneself with those who would banalize the Freudian discovery? Or paradoxically would it be a way to reaffirm the *sexual* as the intimate enemy of gender?

I have at least one excuse for introducing gender into psychoanalytic thought: it has a presence, more or less sketchy, throughout Freud. To be sure, he never used the term; the German language scarcely permits him to because '*Geschlecht*' means both 'sex' and 'gender'; the word *Geschlecht* is used even in connection with humankind [*le genre humain*]. Thus Freud lacks the word, even though it could probably be reinvented in German using the scholarly term

¹⁷ Unless one goes as far as the radicalism of certain feminists who, in order to suppress the notion of sex completely find themselves led to combat the very notion of difference at the level of logic (e.g. Monique Wittig). But I can only gesture towards this point here.

¹⁸ It is precisely here that I am opposed to hastily positioning (and translating into French) *gender* as 'psychosocial sex' and *sex* as 'biological sex'. Such a categorization reduces the gender-sex opposition to the old sociology/biology refrain, whereas the opposition is much more fruitful and complex. Further on I shall show in particular that the sex that enters into a symbolic relation with gender is not the sex of biology but in large part the sex of a fantasy anatomy, profoundly marked by the condition of the *human animal*.

'Genus'.¹⁹ But although the word 'gender' is lacking, the thing is not completely absent. Freud insists – I recall this briefly – on the existence within the human being of three pairs of opposites: 'active-passive' and 'phallic-castrated' but also, which is what interests us here, the third, 'masculine-feminine'. He tells us that the third pair is the most difficult to think; it may even be essentially resistant to thought. At the two ends of the evolution that leads to adulthood, one finds the masculinity-femininity enigma. In the adult, it is the enigma of something that is neither purely biological, nor purely psychological, nor purely sociological, but a curious mixture of the three. As Freud says: "When you meet a human being, the first distinction that you make is 'male or female?' and you are accustomed to make the distinction with unhesitating certainty".²⁰ The 'first sight' of a human being, of a fellow creature, differentiates in an 'unthought' way between masculine and feminine. At the other end, and this interests us even more, at the other end we have a famous text, "On the Sexual Theories of Children", where Freud creates the amusing and curious hypothesis of a traveller who comes from another planet (from Sirius let's say) and whose curiosity is aroused by the presence of these two 'sexes'. If one wished to modify Freud's text slightly one would have to say 'genders', for it is actually the 'habitus' of these two categories of human being that counts and not the genital organs as such, which are usually concealed.²¹

Further on I shall come back to this problem of the *enigma* because in this case the human being is not envisaged in terms of a succession, whereby the child becomes adult or whereby the adult recalls the child that he was, but rather in terms of a simultaneity: it is the child *in the presence* of the adult who asks himself the question

19 A term used in relation to linguistic 'gender' but whose usage could have been enlarged.

20 "Lecture 33: Femininity", *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933a), SE 22, p. 113.

21 (1908c), SE 9, pp. 207–226.

about this difference present in adults. But Freud very often forgets this questioning. What I mean is that the category of gender is often absent or unthought. One could mention, for example, the whole problematic that Freud constructs concerning homosexuality and paranoia in the Schreber case. Freud writes the basic statement, which he will play with by modifying each of its terms, in the following way: "*I* (a man) *love him* (a man)".²² Furthermore, we know how Freud's entire dialectic concerning the different modes of delusion consists of modifying the "I" of "I love", the "him" of "him (a man)" and also, of course, the verb 'to love' which can be transformed into 'to hate'. Thus, the whole dialectic of "*I* (a man) / *I love him (a man)*" is centred on the *second part of the sentence* without ever calling into question what is meant by "*I*, a man". To do so would constitute a problematic, however, that is precisely that of Schreber himself, and which with good reason many analysts have aligned with that of transsexualism.

In psychoanalysis, and generally in clinical practice, the vast majority of 'observations' – if not all of them – begin unthinkingly with: "This is a 30 year old man..." or 'A woman of 25...' Is gender truly non-conflictual to the point of being unquestioningly assumed from the beginning? Has gender, so to speak, expelled the conflictual outside of itself in the form of the *sexual*?

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I now come to my second part, which is the history of the gender-sex-sexual triad. By 'history' I mean purely and simply the infantile genesis of this triad in the human being, the little human being; a genesis that psychoanalysts must not hesitate to approach.

There generally exists a kind of foundational 'adulto-centrism'. I have spoken of the feminists but they are certainly not the

22 "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia (Dementia Paranoides)" (1911c), SE p. 63.

only ones – one could say the same thing of the ethnologists. I say this about ethnologists because, if you take Lévi-Strauss, for example, the theory of the incest prohibition is a theory situated entirely on the level of the adult. Besides, the major incest prohibition in Lévi-Strauss is the prohibition against sororal incest, which clearly shows that it is a question of adults of the same age, a world of only adults. There certainly is a post-Cartesian prejudice there, a kind of adulto-centrism that is not even close to being abolished.

In a few lines that were circulated before this presentation, I have contrasted two sentences: de Beauvoir's, "One is not born a woman, but becomes one"²³ and Freud's, "In conformity with its peculiar nature, psycho-analysis does not try to describe what a woman is – that would be a task it could scarcely perform – but sets about enquiring how she comes into being".²⁴

One could say many things about the similarities between these two sentences. First of all and strikingly, de Beauvoir in 1949 does not feel the need to cite Freud's statement, which is so close to her own. Although quite close, it is certainly different; and yet, in spite of everything, it is the precursor to her work.

In what respect are they close and in what respect remote? They are remote insofar as, in a certain way, one could say that de Beauvoir shows herself more 'naturalist' than Freud. She accepts 'woman' as a being, as a given, as a sort of nature, a raw given that evidently one is led to take up subjectively, whether to become it or to refuse it. 'She becomes it.' In Freud, on the other hand, we have something quite extraordinary in that his statement is completely contradictory. Freud tells us: "She becomes what we are incapable of defining". In a certain sense, Freud is here more existentialist than Simone de Beauvoir. One could also situate them in the dispute over 'afterwardsness'. On one side, that of de Beauvoir, we have retroactive interpretation, the

omnipotence of changing afterwards the meaning of the past, 'resignification': this was already the Jungian thesis of *Zuriickphantasieren*, 'retrospective fantasizing'. In this line of thought there is the 'performative', gender as performative, as certain feminists say. On the other side, that of Freud, there is determinism, which is also confirmed at the end of the lecture on femininity in *New Introductory Lectures*, where Freud accentuates this determinism in a caricatured and rather unpleasant way, in order to assert that a woman, once she has become an adult, has a "psychic rigidity" and "unchangeability" that he has never encountered in young men of the same age.²⁵ The responsibility for this assertion I leave entirely to him.

Thus one could identify a point of view that splits de Beauvoir-Freud on the question of afterwardsness between 'retroactive modification' – the action of the future and of the present upon the past – and 'deferred action' – a determinism, however delayed it may be, of the present by the past. I have tried to go beyond this split by introducing two essential elements into afterwardsness: one element is the *primacy of the other* which, because they remain in the frame of a single individual, is precisely what these conceptions of afterwardsness do not mention. They do not bring the presence of the other into play in the process of afterwardsness. The second element, equally lacking from these conceptions, is child-adult *simultaneity*. What I mean is that the child-adult couple should not be conceived essentially in terms of one succeeding the other, but rather of one actually finding itself in the presence of the other – concretely so, in the first years of life, from the first months. I think that the key to the notion of afterwardsness is to take it beyond the consideration of just the single individual, where one remains enclosed in an opposition with no exit: asking whether the child is the cause of the adult, or whether the adult freely reinterprets the child; asking whether determinism follows the arrow of time or whether, on the

23 *The Second Sex*, op.cit. p. 295.

24 "Lecture 33: Femininity", op. cit., p. 116.

25 "Lecture 33: Femininity", op. cit., pp. 134–5.

contrary, it moves in the opposite direction. It is an opposition that can only be overcome if one positions the individual in the presence of the other, if one positions the child *in the presence* of the adult and as *receiving messages* from the adult, messages that are not a *raw given*, but are 'to be translated'.²⁶

So, for this talk I have proposed, *in this order*, 'gender, sex, the sexual'. To speak of the little human being in this order is to put gender in first place. *It is therefore to call into question the primacy of sexual difference as a foundation.*

Subjectively speaking – and here the discussions and the observations are quite numerous – nothing permits the claim that biological sex is intimately perceived, apprehended and lived by the subject in any way at all in the first months of life. Here I have in mind texts such as that of Person and Ovesey,²⁷ which Kernberg summarizes in his book on "love relations,"²⁸ and in particular Roiphe and Galenson's book on *The Infantile Origins of Sexual Identity*,²⁹ which was published in French some years ago.

Gender, according to all these authors and according to all the observations they report – I cannot cite them here but they are completely convincing – gender would be first in time and in becoming conscious, and it would start to become stable toward the end of the first year. But – and we must immediately add a *but* – gender is *neither* a hypothetical cerebral impregnation, which would be a sort of hormonal impregnation (although we know that there is a certain perinatal hormonal impregnation; it ends rapidly and has *no* influence on the choice of gender), *nor* an imprint in Stoller's sense, *nor*

26 Cf. "Notes on Afterwardsness" in *Essays on Otherness*, ed. John Fletcher (London & New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 260–65.

27 Ethel Person and Lionel Ovesey, "Psychoanalytic Theories of Gender Identity", in *The Journal of the American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, vol. 11, 1983, pp. 203–226.

28 Otto Kernberg, *Love Relations* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995).

29 (New York: International Universities Press, 1981).

a habit. All these notions are, in the end, what I call 'ipso-centrist', which is to say centred on the individual alone.

To define gender in my sense, and I am not alone in saying this, the crucial term is '*assignment*'. Assignment underlines the primacy of the other in the process – whether the first assignment is the declaration at the town hall, at the church or in some other official place, a declaration involving the assignment of a first name, the assignment to a place in a kinship network, etc., or very often the assignment to membership in a religion. But I want to emphasize this important point: it is a process that is not discrete, not done once and for all, not limited to a single act. In this I distinguish myself clearly from all that could be said, for example, of 'determination by the name'. This is a field already opened up by Stekel, but which only received further development (partly unwarranted) with the Lacanian inflation of the notion of the signifier. That the assignment of the first name can carry unconscious messages is one thing. But the 'signifier' is not a determining factor in itself. Assignment is a complex ensemble of acts that go on within language and within the meaningful behaviour of the family circle. One could speak of an ongoing assignment, of a veritable *prescription*. Prescription in the sense in which one speaks of messages called 'prescriptives'; it is therefore of the order of the message, even a bombardment of messages.

A word of warning! It is said that 'gender is social', 'sex is biological'. Caution must be taken with the term 'social', because here it covers up at least two realities that intersect. On the one hand there is the social, or the socio-cultural, in general. Of course it is in 'the social' that the assignment is inscribed, if only in that famous declaration at the beginning of life that is made at the level of the institutional structures of a given society. But the inscriber is not the social in general; it is the little group of close *socii*, of friends and blood relations. This is, effectively, the father, the mother, a friend, a

brother, a cousin, etc. Thus it is the little group of *socii* who inscribe in the social, but it is not Society that does the assigning.³⁰

This idea of assignment or of 'identification by' completely changes the vector of identification. Here there is a way to get out of the aporia of Freud's 'O so beautiful' formula which has caused so much thought and commentary: "an individual's first and most important identification, his identification with the father in his own personal prehistory".³¹ As you know, this beautiful formula is immediately contradicted by a note in which Freud says: "Perhaps it would be safer to say 'with the parents'; for before a child has arrived at definite knowledge of the difference between the sexes, the lack of a penis, it does not distinguish in value between its father and its mother" (op. cit. p. 31, n.1).³² This primitive identification with the father of personal prehistory, which has been revived as 'symbolic' identification by certain Lacanians (I am thinking of Florence, for example, in his work on identification),³³ is considered more or less the matrix of the ego ideal. I simply ask the following question, or rather I propose this: instead of being an 'identification with', wouldn't this be an '*identification by*'? In other words, I would say: 'primitive identification by the *socius* of personal prehistory'.

Because I am not the first to go in this direction, I shall pause for breath a moment to cite Person and Ovesey in their very impor-

30 At the beginning of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921c) Freud affirms that "... from the very first, individual psychology ... is at the same time social psychology as well", (SE 18 p. 69). But one quickly sees that the "social psychology" of which he speaks is that of close interactions within the narrow circle of the *socius*: "his parents and ... his brothers and sisters, ... the object of his love, and ... his physician" (ibid. p. 70).

31 *The Ego and the Id* (1923b), SE 19, p. 31.

32 For a critique of these passages of Freud's, which are absolutely enigmatic and symptomatic, cf. Jean Laplanche *Problématiques I L'angoisse*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980), p. 335-37.

33 Jean Florence, *L'identification dans la théorie freudienne* (Universités Saint-Louis: Brussels, 1978).

tant article on the question of gender identity. Person and Ovesey completely invert the commonly accepted sequence – that is, of the biological coming before the social – by saying the following (you will see which aspects can be accepted and which can be criticized or modified): "In this sense, one can say that gender precedes sexuality in development and organizes sexuality, not the reverse."³⁴ A formula that I accept, though only partially. As to the idea of precedence, you can see that I subscribe to this absolutely – that is to say, to the precedence of gender in relation to anything else. As to the term 'sexuality', I think it is too vague to be accepted (except as a sort of general term, a kind of bridging term). For my part, I would say, "gender precedes sex"; and furthermore, differing from Person and Ovesey, who say, "gender precedes sex and organizes it", I would say, "Yes, gender precedes sex. But, far from organizing it, it is organized by it".

I am tempted here to call upon the schema of what I have called the 'general theory of seduction'. The general theory of seduction starts from the idea of messages from the other. In these messages, there is a code or a carrier wave, that is to say a basic language, which is a conscious/preconscious language. In other words, I have never said – I do not think I have ever said – that there are unconscious messages from the parents. On the contrary, I think that there are conscious/preconscious messages and that the parental unconscious is like the 'noise' – in the sense of communication theory – that comes to perturb and to compromise the conscious/preconscious message.

But the code, or the language that corresponds to a code – the carrier language – is not necessarily always the same. Until now, in the general theory of seduction, which aims to explain the genesis of the drive, I have mainly focused on the code of attachment in so far as it is carried by bodily care given to the child. Thus, in this case, communication takes place within the attachment relation. Here, today, I

34 Ethel Spector Person, *The Sexual Century*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.70.

try to advance a second, more hypothetical step that demands to be articulated with the former. Communication does not only occur with the language of bodily care; there is also the social code, the social language; there are also the messages of the *socius*: these messages are chiefly *messages of gender assignment*. But they are also the carriers of a good deal of 'noise', all that is brought by the adults who are close to the child: parents, grand-parents, brothers and sisters, their fantasies, their unconscious or preconscious expectations. A father may consciously assign the masculine gender to his offspring but have expected a daughter, even have unconsciously desired to penetrate a daughter. Actually, this field of the unconscious relation of parents to their children has been very poorly explored; the first messages are generally maternal (but not necessarily solely maternal), and I don't think that the parental unconscious is limited to infiltrating the care given to the infant's body. These unconscious wishes also infiltrate the assignment of gender. Therefore it's what is 'sexed' and also and above all the '*sexual*' of the parents that *makes a noise* in the assignment. I say the *sexual* above all because I want to hold onto the idea that adults in the presence of a child will, most importantly, reactivate their own *infantile sexuality*.

The theory of seduction, as I have attempted to formulate it, postulates a translation, and so a translation code. Here it is evidently on the side of sex that one must search. Gender is acquired, assigned, but enigmatic, until about fifteen months. Sex comes to stabilize and to translate gender in the course of the second year, in what Roiphe and Galenson call 'the early genital phase'.

The *castration complex* is at the centre of it. Of course it offers some certainties, but these very certainties are too clear-cut and must be questioned. The certainty of the castration complex is based upon ideology and illusion. Freud said: "Destiny is anatomy".³⁵ This des-

³⁵ As a translation, this is preferable to "Anatomy is destiny". German permits the phrase to be translated in this way, and I believe it is more striking to say "Destiny is anatomy".

tiny is that there are two sexes, separated, he says, by "The Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes".³⁶ But here Freud's argument cannot dispense with a certain slight of hand, which consists in introducing a confusion between *anatomy* and *biology*. Indeed, at other moments, he speaks of the 'bedrock' of biology, in effect making this destiny a biological fate. Many people see an affirmation of Freud's 'biologism' in the phrase "Anatomy is destiny". But *anatomy* is not biology, nor is it physiology, and still less is it hormonal determinism. There are several levels (not to mention other registers) within anatomy itself: there is scientific anatomy, which may be purely descriptive or may be structural – for example, the anatomy of specific apparatuses, which describes the function of the genital apparatus on the basis of its anatomical structure – and then there is 'popular' anatomy. But the anatomy that is a 'destiny' is a 'popular' anatomy, and moreover it is perceptual, even purely illusory. 'Perceptual' in what respect? In animals that do not have an upright posture there are *two* groups of external genitals *perceived* as such, that is to say visualized as such, the female genital organs being perfectly perceptible – visible and also, above all, perceived by smell. So, for the animal there are *two sexes*. For man, owing to his erect posture, there is a double perceptual loss: the loss or regression of olfactory perception, and the loss of the sight of the external female genital organs. Perception is then reduced to what Freud sometimes calls 'inspection' (*Inspektion*), that is to say pure visualization in the medical sense of the term. For the human being, the perception of genital organs is no longer the perception of *two* genital organs but of only one. The difference between the sexes becomes a 'difference of sex'.

In Spinoza there is a passage of which I'm especially fond, which does not seem to do anything but in reality works perfectly. He says: "For the intellect and will that would constitute the essence of

³⁶ Freud, "Psychical Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925j), SE 19, p. 243.

God would have to be vastly different from human intellect and will, and would have no point of agreement except the name. They could be no more alike than the celestial constellation of the dog and the dog that barks.³⁷ Well, this is a disparity between two things that actually have nothing in common except the name: "the celestial constellation of the dog" and "the dog that barks". I would say that this can be transposed onto the question of the difference of the sexes: the perceptible difference of sex as sign or as signifier has practically nothing to do with biological and physiological male/female difference.

Isn't this contingency an extraordinary destiny? The erect posture makes the female organs perceptually inaccessible; but this contingency has been raised by many civilizations, and no doubt our own, to the rank of a major, universal, signifier of presence/absence.

Is perceptual anatomical difference a language, a code? It is certainly not a complete code, but it is at the least something that structures a code – a most rigid code at that, structured precisely by the law of the excluded third, by presence/absence. It is rather a skeleton of a code, but of a logical code that for a long time I have referred to as 'phallic logic'.³⁸ This is the logic of presence/absence, of zero and one, which has received an impressive expansion in the modern universe of computer science.

Thus it is difficult to disengage the question of the difference of sex from the castration complex.

Once disentangled from certain ideological presuppositions, studies such as those by Roiphe and Galenson, long-term observations of an entire population of closely observed children, appear emphatically to reinforce the idea of a very widespread, even universal castration complex. But in contrast to Freud, the castration

³⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, Part 1, "Prop. 17, Schol", in *The Essential Spinoza: Ethics and Related Writings*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2006), p. 15.

³⁸ Cf. *Problématiques II, Castration, symbolisation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1980).

complex according to Roiphe and Galenson is not initially bound up with the Oedipus. They speak of an 'early genital phase', a 'castration reaction', which is actually a reaction by means of the castration complex.

Many questions may be opened up here – those that I evoked quite a while back in one of my *Problématiques* called *Castration, Symbolisation* where I asked whether the universality of the castration complex in its rigid form, with its logical opposition of 'phallic/castrated', is inevitable, or whether there are more flexible, more varied, more ambivalent models of symbolization.

Does the inevitability of the logic of the excluded third in the equipment of our western civilization necessarily go hand in hand with the reign of the castration complex at the level of the individual or of the little group, which is to say as *ideology*? After all, in analyses, memories bound to the castration complex are often encountered in attenuated form: attenuated in that they are compromised by what they seek to repress.

Yet what they seek to repress is precisely 'the sexual'. What sex and, as one might say, its secular arm, the castration complex, tend to repress is infantile sexuality. Repress it or, more precisely, create it by repressing it.

Here I can only mention what recently emerged from a dialogue with Daniel Widlöcher concerning 'attachment and infantile sexuality'.³⁹ Infantile sexuality, the 'sexual', is the very object of psychoanalysis. It is drive-based, and not instinctual. It functions according to a particular economic regime that seeks tension rather than the reduction of tension, and it has the fantasy object at its source and not at its end-point, thus reversing the 'object relation'. Consequently the *sexual* will occupy the entire domain and attempt to organize itself but in a way that is always precarious, until the upheaval of puberty when the genital instincts will have to come to terms with it.

³⁹ See "Sexuality and Attachment in Metapsychology" in this volume.

I shall shortly close this presentation in order to give way to discussion, which is to say to uncertainties.

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I wanted to provide a precise framework in order to open up some hypotheses and some uncertainties. As to the *hypotheses*, some of these profoundly unsettle commonly accepted views:

- Precedence of gender: gender comes before sex, a point that upends habits of thought, the ruts of routine thought that put the 'biological' before the 'social'.
- Precedence of assignment: assignment comes before symbolization.
- Primary identification: far from being a primary identification 'with' (the adult), this is, I propose, a primary identification 'by' (the adult).
- The contingent, perceptual and illusory character of anatomical sexual difference, the veritable destiny of modern civilization.

As to the *uncertainties*: these are numerous, and I'm sure you will raise them. I shall point to the question of knowing how the two lines of enigmatic messages which I am currently trying to define come to be combined: that is to say, we must make room for the second line, that of social assignment, next to the line of attachment. How are the problems of femininity and bisexuality to be positioned with respect to this double line? What is the relation between what I have suggested concerning 'identification by' and the notion of the ego ideal? I have certainly not addressed all of the uncertainties, the questions and the objections that you will want to raise.

APPENDIX I

STOLLER AND GENDER

I would like to start off by *noting a few impressions* that arise from reading Stoller – Stoller as researcher and thinker.¹

Stoller shows a strikingly impressive freedom of style, in fact he flaunts it. He doesn't hesitate to criticize and reconsider his own observations (e.g., in Chapter 5 of *Presentations of Gender*, "How Biology Can Contribute to Gender Identity"). Sometimes he makes fun of himself, or of explanations that are too complete. Among many other examples, there is the moment in *Perversion* (pp. 81–82) where he throws into a single rag-bag non-analytic psychological or physiological theories as well as analytic theories, and concludes that "psychoanalytic theory is the most syncretic system since the Pantheon of the Romans" (*Perversion*, p. 82 n).

Or again in *Presentations of Gender* (pp. 3–4) he criticizes psychoanalytic jargon, while also showing a mistrust of "case reports" (pp. 2 and 9) – a mistrust concerning theory that can, however, end up in a curious scepticism: "A last hopeless mutter: of what practical importance is it whether perversions are classified as neuroses or as something different?" (*Perversion*, p. 101 n).

Excessively simplistic biological explanations are shown no mercy, especially those drawn from animal experimentation concerning the erection centre in monkeys (*Perversion*, pp. 21–22); Stoller returns here to explanations that take account of fantasy, while underlining the fact that fantasy is no less neurophysiological than the rest. Similarly, in Chapter 5 of *Presentations of Gender* cited above, he finally gives pre-eminence to the individual acquisition of gender over the

¹ Works referred to: *Sex and Gender* (London: Karnac, 1984 [orig. 1968]); *Perversion: the Erotic form of Hatred* (London: Karnac, 1986 [orig. 1975]); *Presentations of Gender* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).