

Round Table « Sexuality and perversion in adolescence »

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I will give a brief account of what, in my opinion, perversion is about; what kind of difficulty, of contradiction perversion has with the analytical experience whereby -I have the impression- we see a few perverts in analysis, and something about the *queer* phenomenon which appears in the last question.

Let's see what happens when there is a pervert in analysis, or at least, when he consults an analyst; this is a case that I heard at the Congress of Berlin. It was a case of bestiality, whose account aroused, among the audience, a sort of fascination due to some astonishing remarks, such as for example that bestialists have a community in the Internet in which there are farms where can go... to amuse themselves. In a family interview the boy who had the problem -let's say it this way- is determined to communicate his inclinations to the family, and then, in the middle of the interview, he confesses that he had a love affair with one of the mares the family keeps in their country house. And the father says to him: "But how come?", and the boy says to him: "Well...I stepped over a little bench". This shows something of what I want to tell about the perverse structure which is based on the way in which or how, that is, regarding what one considers as the impossibility of that bond, it is that the pervert owns a certain ability concerning the "know how to do with" the body, and that this renders so difficult any possible communion with analysis.

The starting point is what we understand by perversion, not only in adolescence but what we understand by perverse structure, and I have a particular interest in introducing this question regarding sexuation in humans, that is, in speaking beings. The way in which they access to a sexuated position either as a man or a woman by means of the inclusion in an order of relationships implied by language -this is something of what Mario Waserman translated as Oedipus- and the effects produced by such inclusion, that is to say, the sacrifice, something of the order of castration.

The speaking beings are invoked by this order in the sense that there is an "invocation" that arouses a vocation for the sexuated position that we will assume. This invocation is present in the parental discourse which necessarily attributes to humans a certain form of sexuation, even before they are born. To attribute means: to formulate

attributes, to preach about them; and to preach about them beyond the manifest enunciations, even when one daydreams about who will be his son, one is not even aware of what one is attributing there.

The subject recognizes himself as a speaking being as long as he is included in that order, rejecting the distinction with which he is invoked by all sorts of identifications. Identifications are those answers to that mysterious invocation, which they cannot understand since they are objects of language in that moment only. As attempts to answer to the mystery of sexuation, identifications imply -as well- an attempt to misrecognize or refuse to recognize castration.

Concerning this, beyond their phenomenical descriptions and psychopathological categories or catalogues, clinical structures are facts of discourse; that is to say, modes of relationship with the Other with capital letter, modes of relationship with language and what this implies or imposes, subjective positions, modes of relationship with the unconscious knowledge that those invocations entail, which we are bound to ignore.

Perversion as such is a strategy, a way of response of the speaking being, of the parlêtre –as Lacan quotes- which is affected by his inclusion into that linguistic order of relationships that castration imposes on him. Hence: the mystery of the phallus, something that he never seems to understand. And this, inasmuch as the phallus makes phase, is meant for both sexuated positions. Mystery is at the same time what the Other lacks and the question for the maternal desire.

The perverse strategy tends to disavow¹ the ignorance that the access to this order causes, the fissure of the sexual rapport which does not exist, will say Lacan; to disavow it with a reaffirmation of the pervert's Ego as holder of a preconscious phantasm, that's to say, of an imagined scene whereby to achieve a joyful satisfaction, by means of a knowing and a power over an inanimate object reduced to abjection or bound by a contract.

If he has to disavow it is because he is aware of castration, but it is not about -as in the case of neurosis- willing to achieve a knowing in order to access jouissance (a knowledge always supposed to the other), but rather about disavowing what cannot be known about sex. For such reason, he must skillfully deal with the environment, the semblant, through a scenic assembly that masks the real, that's to say, that prevents the real from filtering through such assembly. Hence, the care for the detail, the adaptation to reality, the reiteration of the scenes.

The pervert is a character who teaches as long as he knows. He teaches, he preaches, he persuades. The figures are: the judge, the teacher, the priest, the politician, the doctor. His goal is to make know what cannot be known, he devotes himself to jouissance, he

¹ N. de T. : *verleugnen*

preaches his gospel, and he flaunts his power...just to mention some traits of the character. Hence, the troublesome relationship of these characters with the analysis; the entrance into transference becomes complex due to the fact that the subject supposed to know is installed in the pervert's Ego and from that point he has nothing to expect from the word of the Other, that's to say, from the associative course. There is a sort of structural misencounter between the will of jouissance -what Leonardo Peskin just mentioned as the shape that desire acquires in perversion- and the desire of the analyst. This makes the bond with analysis always precarious and extremely contradictory with the place of the analyst, since it renders abstinence difficult. On the one hand, it promotes a certain passivity which turns into indulgence and seduction inducing curiosity or fascination, as a part of the demand to participate that the pervert always addresses to the other, demand of participating in the scene, tending to include him, to capture him offering himself to appease that curiosity, that urge to know about jouissance that the neurotic always has.

On the contrary, the other position may promote in the analyst impugnation, rejection; which is taken as a challenge: that is what the pervert is expecting to challenge back, thereby reinforcing his posture.

If in the first case -when producing fascination and curiosity- he 'neurotises', he divides the analyst, then the analyst himself becomes the divided one as the semblant of the hysterical subject, which may be considered as a diagnostic indicator of perverse structure; if the analyst finds himself too much questioned about something, confused and so on...it is a way of detecting such structure.

Another of the cases of the Congress of Berlin was that of a patient who, in order to satisfy himself, had to wrap himself up in a awful plastic thing and it was a solitary practice - of course- and this boy decided to marry and he messed up his life...

Now, what is interesting was the desperate effort the analysts made, in both cases, so as: neither get fascinated by the issue and remain involved, nor reject. But then, the analytic operation was almost disrupted.

This need of dividing himself that the partner has, as effect of perverse manipulation, does not imply any complementarity of the sort that becomes increasingly imaginised in the case of sadomasochism. On the contrary, it requires of the violentisation of the other or of his body in order to access the jouissance of the own body. Hence, there is inconsideration; there is a sort of display of plenitude on the part of the pervert in the attempt of domination and abuse of the other, beyond his consent which is never at stake. What matters, instead, is to subdue him to a categorical and apathetic law, ruled by jouissance as supreme good. Apathy -this derives from Kant's law- implies not to take feelings into account; tenderness is drifted apart. The partner's consent may even eliminate satisfaction. Sometimes, these very partners and their misery are what we see in an analysis, what reaches us as patients.

The adolescents that I have seen as related to the problematic of perversion rather belong to the field of the vacillation of the sexuated position during adolescence. This is very different between males and females, the arguments vary. In the male version, the problem is centered in relation to the other's castration, the mother's castration; their argument is more of the style of fetishism, which disavows castration, they are prone to incarnate the character of the phallic mother, somehow identifying themselves with what fulfills her, all variants of travestism included. The feminine version is different, it is hard to tell if there is perverse structure, if the paradigm of perversion is fetishism, if the paradigm is sadism...and eventually it's more the issue of making a man for a woman, the idea of this is based on his object of choice: if he chooses a woman he is heterosexual whatever it takes.

In these cases of vacillation of the sexuated position, the analytical process develops inasmuch as there is conflict or if such may be promoted. This is defined as neurotic division. Thus there is rejection of jouissance, which only becomes present through actuations -the acting-out- be they either guilt-ridden, that is to say, prone to subsequent remorse and self reproach more than to present jouissance, or when they appear under the form of challenges to the barriers of morals, of disgust, of shame... which are what may be called the civilizing function of pulsion, the question about the "And why not?", that civilizes as long as it calls into question certain modalities discursively established and imposed, as well as it implies the possibility of a dialectization that enables the subject to find his own and singular modality of jouissance.

If so happens, the libidinal dimension, the establishment of loving bonds, their conflicts and the suffering they cause, occupy the transference and the world scene. The attempt to institute and to support sentimental bonds becomes a central concern for the subjects. Love implies to give what one does not have, that is: to give what one has, such would be charity, charity is a form of bond; but love implies to give the lack, this is castration, the lack in jouissance, to recognize the lack and offer it to the other. Hence the dependence that this implies and all the resentments that such dependence arouses. To give the lack in love implies the expectation of achieving a reciprocal acknowledgement of castration, in order to pass through it. In this sense, love makes it possible for jouissance to condescend to desire, that is, to cede the lack. Thus, the contradiction between love and perversion, insofar as the pervert, along with his absolutely structured knowledge, tends to disavow the lack; so this is what is left obstructed in perversion, both in the transference and in the social bonds, while what prevails is the trace of degradation of the love life and the compulsive necessity of reducing the other to abjection, as a distinctive trait in the perverse modality of homosexuality, always prone to fleeting and anonymous contacts. Different from homosexuality, as a modality of choice of a love object.

In perversion, love is often confused with Erotism and with ability about the body, this is why that of: "But how come?" "Well...I stepped over a little bench". It's a technical knowledge.

The second question is interesting since it deals with this idea of how when one wants to enunciate, in these things -beyond what perversion implies- when one wants to enunciate, one is involved in the issue.

Thus when it is said: "How to give account of sexuality when it's posed on the edge of legality and basculates between the legal and the illegal?" which brings into question what one considers to be legal, then, what is the legality at stake?, the legality imposed by who?, and here comes the issue about challenge. When is it said:

Through sexual subversion, the adolescents attempt to turn upside down the parental sexual legality, replacing it by the promiscuity of the body that coexists with emotional inhibition.

This unfolds a whole series of conceptions, in principle due of the use of the terms in question. The question of challenge is just like this; challenging the canons of parental sexuality seems to be a necessary step in adolescence. But I'm not quite sure if it is on the side of promiscuity, for example if you saw the Cohen Brothers' latest film "Burn after Reading", among all the bullshit that appears, when the one who is in charge of informing goes and tells the guy of the CIA... "What's up?" "Oh man...it appears that everybody is fucking everybody". Then the guy says: "I don't want to know, don't even tell me"; obsessive modality, from a hysterical perspective though, it would be his sole interest, then he would say: "Come on, tell me" ...but the guy does not want to know.

But somehow the idea is that in the world scene that they describe, they appear as everybody is against everybody and everything is promiscuous. Thus, in this present world, the children in relation to that order could react in an opposite way, in the sense that they are those kids who are always engaged, they always have a steady partner and they are able to built steady relationships even as defensive modalities against jouissance.

The public-private dichotomy seems to be as well related to challenge, to the need of being recognized by oneself and others as sexuated beings, of being admired as such and at the same time, of scandalizing a little.

The sharing of the lack within the bonds of intimacy makes possible what Lacan quotes as the access to jouissance on the inverse scale of desire, public monstration cedes; in general that is like a moment, beyond whatever cultural guidelines.

The emotional inhibition above mentioned is related to what we said in terms of putting the lack at stake in libidinal bonds, which enables to elaborate castration, to tolerate dependence on the other for the scene of jouissance. Analysis tends to favor this, but for the

same reason, one must abstain from promoting emotional experience as an ideal, in the style of: "there must be feelings".

This leads us to the third question that says: "Perversion in adolescence, does it only make reference to sadomasochism or it includes the *queer*?" The English definition of *queer* is: rare, strange, bizarre, alien...it does not have a precise translation but it's something extremely rare and that probably: "has nothing to do with me".

Why does the *queer* has to do with the question about the ideals?, this is precisely what I want to bring up. The "*Queer Theory*", the theory of the *queer* is like an heiress of the gay, lesbian studies of the years '80, which in turn were heirs of the feminist culture of the years '70, which in turn derived from of the polymorph perverse notion of childhood sexuality in psychoanalysis. All these studies have always had polemical relationships with analysis, some in favor, and some against. The *queer* theory develops in rapport with Foucault's studies about Classical Antiquity and intends to give account of the multiple phenomenons and subjective experiences in which varied and numerous modalities of *jouissance* are put at stake, escaping the imposed and dominant social normativity, baptized as: "Heteronormativity". Social norm that presents itself as the vertebral column of democratic societies, it does not need to be sanctioned by a juridical order, it refers to the ideology of the white, adult, middle-class men, affirmed in their sexual inclination towards women, monograms, centered on the heterosexual couple as paradigm of the love relationship and in the values of marriage and family. Thereby defined, heteronormativity is an ideology that shapes the beings to which it addresses itself, classifying them, categorizing them, and making them feel alien to themselves -this is what *queer* is about- when they don't adjust to the regulating system. *Queer* -then- is what most of us become, this is: women who do not assume themselves as the phallic complement of their husbands, cultural and racial minorities, all those whose way of enjoyment is alien, other than expected, and it is not a statistical version of normality, because the truth is that mainly, all of us are *queer* since the diversity of discrimination, in one way or another, is what makes that almost all of us remain in that category.

The mess with the *queer*, as a theory, resides in its success, the remarkable academic and political success that it has achieved. Therefore, prejudices have not changed, prejudices still remain the way they were, yet they must be repressed in the sense that it is not politically correct to discriminate any of these practices whatsoever.

On the other hand, it is interesting to point out that adolescents seek to group together according to certain traits that differentiate them from the rest -for example tribes, either urban or not- since this may provide them an identificatory support as a step to access a modality that is typical of *jouissance*; hence this work to access a sexuated position.

The problem about discourses and what they impose, as well as the ways in which they entwine themselves with bonds, are interesting and they appear, they present themselves under the form of personal theories, such as for example, theories about nutrition; indeed, we all have them, but adolescents have even more, millions of theories about nutrition: what one must eat, what one must not eat, that one must be vegetarian, that one must not be vegetarian and so on...These theories are well tolerated and some of them have very good press, but for example, if a girl can explain for hours why she is vegetarian and sounds terrific, she is a heroine; but if she says she does not consume alcohol –either because she is phobic or because she doesn't even know why- that is called into question. One may have a quite strange theory, but if it follows a guideline other than that of the group, that is called into question, it causes awkwardness.

The *queer* phenomenon and its relation with supplementary jouissance, which Lacan will define as ineffable or feminine jouissance, the one that does not remain within the phallic rule and thus cannot access to the signifier's network and that it is like Lacan's main contribution to this matter, shows itself beautifully.

If you want, to familiarize you with the *queer*, so that it doesn't sound so weird, in the film "*The hours*" or even in Michael Cunningham's novel which is like the script of the movie but with a couple of variants, three women whose lives are interconnected through the novel of Virginia Woolf *Mrs. Dalloway* (in the three stories, Nicole Kidman, Julianne Moore and Meryl Streep), all the characters suffer the pressure of the social normative and it's about the way in which they deal with it and the plot raises the question about feminine jouissance; in other words, it tells about time, women, discomfort.

There, the bond among these women, what cannot be included in a social normative, what is kept as a mystery, as an object of insatiable appetite, not only displays the *queer* and its suffering but also the tragic aspect that entails the difficulty to assimilate what is immeasurable with the normative order.

I give account of all this in order to assert that in all these phenomenons that may appear as adolescent sexuality, the problem of the analysts -in general- is centered on the question of the ideals. For as long as we remain subject to orientate the cure in terms of an ideal, we are unable to analyze. Such is the main difficulty we have to deal with in order to sustain abstinence, as the only way of access to any novelty of the unconscious.

Summary

What we mean by perversion in adolescence and what we mean with the notion of perverse structure? Clinical structures are facts of speech. They impose subjective positions and different relationships with the unconscious knowledge.

Perversion is a strategy, an answer to the "ignorance" that linguistic order imposes: the perverse strategy tends to disavow the ignorance about what cannot be known about sex. The relationship with the analysis is very difficult because the supposed to know subject is settled in the pervert's Ego (and not in the analyst's person) He demands the analyst to participate in the perverse scene.

The so called perversion in adolescence belongs to the field of the vacillation about the sexual position. This conflict is a manifestation of neurotic conflict. The jouissance is rejected but it is only apparent in defiant or guilty acting-outs. When the analysis leads to the possibility of a dialectization, the subject is able to find his own and singular modality of jouissance. The libidinal dimension (the establishment of loving bonds) occupies the transference and the world scene.

Love and perversion are in controversy. On one bank, in the realm of loving, jouissance condescends to desire and allows the appearance of the lack. On the other bank, the perverse disavows the lack both in the transference and in the social links. The trace of degradation of the loving life and the compulsive need of reducing the other to abjection prevail in perversion. There is a distinctive difference between the perverse modality of homosexuality- always prone to fleeting anonymous contacts- and the homosexuality as a modality of a love object choice.

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