

**The orgasm as a moment of the metamorphosis  
of the death drive**

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I will talk about research that I am undergoing and for which I have few references and little support. It's like sailing on an unknown sea. There are only some references in Freud who consider the orgasm to be an unconscious expression similar to laughing or crying. There are some extraordinary notes in *Dostoevsky and Parricide*. I haven't found anything in Lacan. Maybe other psychoanalysts have studied this but since W Reich's errors, it's as if he had burnt this ground and prevented further research. Reich considered that the orgasm was a natural potential repressed by culture. Clinical practice shows on the contrary that it's a very inconstant return of the repressed : depending on the time of life, the partner, the circumstances, it may happen or it may not, it sometimes occurs once in a lifetime or in a dream, or with a stranger under transgressive conditions. Or maybe transgression is only in the fantasy. For it to occur, circumstances must allow a

momentary lifting of the repression of the bodily “jouissance”. “Jouissance” can last for a long time, it’s even tiring. The orgasm puts an end to “jouissance”. It’s the pleasure of ending pleasure. How does it happen ? To introduce my idea I will say that “jouissance” is always in excess, it’s too much drive linked to maternal incest, disgusting ,and on the contrary, transgression is anti-paternal, exciting. It’s always more fun to do what one shouldn’t. What is the reason then that repression prevents the orgasmic explosion ? It’s due to castration, that is, the threat of feminization by the father. That’s why I will first underline that only the feminine is subject to orgasm. Men only have orgasms in response to the feminine one, as an answer to the feminine orgasm. That’s why men are so obsessed by feminine “jouissance”. I even dare say that their thoughts are organized by this obsession.

I’m now coming to the second difficulty of my research : the obstacle to the lifting of repression. It's paternal castration I have said. The obstacle is the father and that's why transgression in itself is an excitation and is then a source of relief. It's already a primary source of violence : transgression breaks through one prohibition, which is in

itself a source of orgasmic pleasure. You can see the importance of this point. I said a moment ago that only the feminine is subject to orgasm but if a man cannot force a woman to have an orgasm he can still have his own pleasure from the transgression, from the violence of her violation. And even worse : he often prefers to exert violence better than giving pleasure to a woman, because the feminine orgasm obsesses him, but it also frightens him. In this sense, the transgressive violence is in itself a universal sexual exchanger. To be violent is equivalent to fuck. Deep down, a lot of men prefer war to love.

But let's go a bit further : if we seriously think that the obstacle to the lifting of repression is the father, for this reason the transgressive orgasm is equivalent to a parricide fantasy. It's for this reason that these warrior men prefer war : it's because they are terrorised by the feminine orgasm. The Rat Man thought that making love could kill his father. It is also what Freud very clearly says in his text on *Dostoevsky and Parricide* concerning Dostoevsky's epileptic fits being orgasmic equivalents. The strong presence of the death drive is a spring of pleasure, it's like the other side of the orgasm. I can speak of some strong cultural metaphors of this strength of Death

Drive, for example in the majority of cultures the married woman takes the name of her husband and rejects her father's name. This is a condition of their exogamous «jouissance» by symbolic parricide. Another example, the mystics obtain orgasm by pronouncing many times the name of God, who is a kind of dead father.

Here we come to the real difficulties. How can death drive be metamorphosed into an orgasmic parricide?

And to start with that problem, what is death drive? Like everyone Freud didn't want to know about it for a long time. Despite himself, he discovered it after the bloody massacres of the Great War and certain losses in his family. He discovered it even though it was blatantly obvious in his clinical practice with the obsessive fear of suicide and murderous fantasies. It is obvious in ordinary life for example the vertigo we may feel when approaching a window or the fear of throwing oneself under a train or the fear of letting one's child fall. It is obvious in love, where we love – not forever but for life against death. Freud discovered the death drive with complicated examples concerning animal reproduction or with repetition (Wiederholung Zwang). But repetition is not always driving to death it

can also liberate. Once discovered the death drive become obvious, and in fact Freud was knowing it since a long time. He had already wrote about in *Drive and their destinies* : « the drive destinies are to deny themselves » they want to self destruct, to relieve themselves.

I profit here to say straight away: they don't succeed in destroy themselves they cannot achieve it, they repeat themselves, they are in constant drive, they cannot achieve it on their own body, that is, they can't identify the body to the maternal phallus. And for this impossibility to succeed in oneself, that is the truly amazing invention of Freud : what the drives cannot do on their own body, they attempt to do it on the body of someone else, on the body of a sexual partner. It's catching the sexual partner thanks to the drive of hold. It's the first slightly serious definition of sexual love : this love is a negated drive which cannot be satisfied on its own body but which attempts to take another body, that means first to destroy it, to eat and so on : to realize the destiny of the drive.

It's an interesting definition, because there exists all kinds of love : a love of jam, of the family, of the mother, endogamous. They are very different from exogamous sexual love, for which we see at

once the first aspect : it is supported by the death drive. The drives attempt to relieve themselves and then to die. Eros is supported by Thanatos. Sexual love is at once supported by the destruction of the drive, which carries love. Sexual love is a love that kills, and what I'm trying to show is that in a love encounter, two murder attempts that are exchanged make a life, or rather the very life, the time make up on the primary repression. Two murder fantasies cancel themselves out and build a life and that is the love pact. It's true that we can understand the death drive more easily since Lacan gave us his reading of Heidegger with a dialectic of Being and Nothingness that is more clear to understand how love is build up on death drive.

But I will try to describe the problem from the birth of the death drive, from its moment of original subjectivation, because we will try to understand the exchange of death drive in life drive thanks to love. There exists a simple comprehension of the death drive, it's assimilating this drive to the desire of the maternal Other, a desire that consists of wanting to put the child in the place of her phallus. Indeed occupying the place of the phallus that the mother doesn't have is equivalent to annihilation : it's the fate of psychosis and a good way of

making mothers feel guilty. It is in face of this threat of annihilation through identification to the object of desire, identification of the « child-phallus » that there is a complete reversal of the original repression that subjectivizes the death drive, becoming something belonging to the subject that is at once sexual: so that death drive supports erotism. Now I will try to explain the reversal, this appropriation of the death drive by the subject.

What is the only way to free oneself from the annihilation of the identification to the phallus ? The only way is to go from to Be the phallus to Have it in the hand : it is masturbation : the child takes himself, a part of his body as he was taken in his whole self by his mother. Masturbation is freedom, but a sexual freedom with the reversal of the death drive as the starting point.

Second point I will try to show now that in love, this liberating death drive is metamorphosed into a parricidal wish and it is this parricidal wish which allows the lifting of repression and the liberation of the orgasmic explosion. In summary I will try to demonstrate in five points that the death drive, is sexual since it accompanies masturbation and is articulated to the parricide fantasy.

1, Indeed masturbation is guilty since it means abandoning the mother. (Not to be, but to have)

2, So it must be punished: it's the beginning of masochism which accompanies all human sexuality. The word « jouissance » is accompanied with an idea of suffering, that's why it is disgusting and why it needs to be relieved by the orgasm, which has quite a different origin than jouissance.

3, By whom is the « jouissive » masturbation to be punished ?  
By a father figure : the invention of a father-punisher. And here you will recognize the fantasy « a child is beaten » (Ein Kind Wird geschlagen),

4, As all the father's blows are accompanied by jouissance, that provokes a second fundamental fantasy, the fantasy of seduction. The father seduces because he beats the child.

5, Since this seduction is incestuous the third fundamental fantasy is the parricide fantasy. One kills the father instead of being killed by incest.

Each of these fantasies carries an internal violence because they are contradictory, for example the fantasy of seduction is at the same



time pleasure and anguish and it's the same thing for the others. And the only agent of the progress of these fantasies is the badness of the father who is blowing during masturbation : it's against him that we should relieve ourselves killing him, but love prevents it. And it is because of this desire to kill him that will occur the last reversing point, the point where the death drive is reversed in parricide fantasy on the condition that there is no inhibition by the father's love.

But beforehand, we have to examine a really important fact, that is produced during the progression of the fantasies : it's the gender choice. The choice of gender – masculine or feminine – is a major moment : it's the first consequence of the father's desire which is translated as I said by the violence of the punishment.

I try to explain : at the beginning, each subject who masturbates is at once masculine and feminine because in one hand castration is a « feminizing » and on the other hand that is exciting the subject and masculinising him. But as the seduction of the punishment is an incestuous danger, each subject has two choices : either he fights against the father and chooses the masculine side rejecting the feminine or other choice : he accepts the seduction and chooses the

feminine side, rejecting the masculine. The feminine first accepts the paternal seduction, then refuses it in face of the incestuous danger. The feminine always, at least in part, stays in the father's seduction. This is why I said in the beginning that only the feminine is subject to orgasm, the orgasm is a last minute betrayal. Deceit and treason in the midst of the battle of love, that is the principle of the orgasm. There is a moment of vertigo and hallucinatory duplicity without which it cannot occur.

But before talking about this final flash, I will go back to the last scene of the progression of the fundamental fantasies : two events are produced at the same time : the choice of a masculine or feminine gender, and secondly the necessity of a fantasmatic parricide. So that the sexual relationship always takes place in the presence of this third person, this ghost that is the dead father. The sexual act always takes place under the eyes of God, that's why he is the sexuality ask to be hid, that's why love takes place at night, the door closed, the lights out or the eyes shut, eyes wide shut while visualizing the progression of fantasies, imagining a violence that we give, the blows given or received, with the thought that we shouldn't be doing it, that we are

attached, violated. Or by keeping quiet or by declaring the contrary to all these fantasies, with love declarations making Eros speak and hiding Thanatos behind these great declarations. In this sense each orgasm is the cenotaph of the dead father. The orgasm is an empty tomb of the Spirit of the father.

This is what gives the truly unique character to Freud's text on *Taboo of Virginity* : in certain tribes the virgins are deflowered by witches because the Spirit of the father is too dangerous for ordinary men and for the future husbands. It is said that in Sicily this defloration by an ancestor continues to be practiced.

Do I have the remotest clinical proof of what I'm saying or have I invented it all ? I have a terrible evidence with the life and works of the writer Heinrich von Kleist ; it's a very convincing evidence of what is produced when the death drive is not reversed in parricide, like in the metamorphosis that I have just described, metamorphosis specific to the sexual act, a reason for why sexuality is such an obsession for human beings. As it is a metamorphosis of the death drive, erotism becomes their reason for living. Love is a guarantee of eternity.

I will give as proof the suicide of the Prussian play writer Heinrich von Kleist who when very young was diagnosed with melancholia ; maybe it was, but it was at least a kind of psychosis that he suffered from. Very rapidly in his life he looked for a woman with whom he could die. He has often proposed to a loved woman, who was not even his mistress, to kill her and then to commit suicide. This double death is exactly the contrary of the schema of the orgasm that I talked about earlier: first the woman is subject to an orgasm, then, as a result of this her lover has one too. In Kleist's psychosis, everything occurs on the contrary of the ordinary neurosis ; the real death replaces the orgasm. It's a scene who occurs on the back side of neurosis that we find in many plays written by Kleist. In the play, *Penthesilia*, the Amazon queen kills the man she loves, Achilles before committing suicide. In the play *The Marquise of O* everything is inversed: the Marquise is at first pregnant without knowing how without knowing if there is a father. Locked up in her father's citadel she ignores who made her pregnant. The fruit precedes the flower. Then she searches for the father of the future child by classified advertisements. It's a return back in time to the first incestuous

seduction scene. Kleist's has played his theatre scenes on the other side of the going back in time. Still more striking, in the play *Amphitryon* the hero's doubts directly touch the question of erotism. He asks how his wife could be mistaken on the identity of the dispenser of her « jouissance » with whom did she have pleasure, with him or with the person that I designated earlier as the father who accompanies all the love scenes? Amphitryon cries out in the last scene « If she is capable of recognizing him as her husband, I will not ask more who I am : I will greet him as Amphitryon. » He is disappearing in front of the ghost of the father, as Kleist will commit suicide.

In the reality now, in the scene of his double suicide, Kleist dies as well in a reverse way, instead of the father who dies in the orgasm. Suicide is a palliative of foreclosure. At thirty six years old, he meets Henriette Vogel and kills himself and her in an inn in Wannsee (Doppelselbstmord) Kleist showed the other side of a truth that the spectator sees without understanding ; the spectator is used to see his life on the right side when love replaces death : but the spectator feels

still *Eine Sehnsucht, die jeder kennt*. A nostalgic desire that everyone knows.