

THEORY II: BEYOND WISH AND DEFENSE

SADISM AND MASOCHISM

Aim: The aim of this class is to consider the theory of sadism and masochism.

Reading:

Bach S, Schwartz L (1972): A dream of the Marquis de Sade: Psychoanalytic reflections on narcissistic trauma, decompensation, and the reconstitution of a delusional self. JAPA 20: 451-475.

Eric Fromm on Sadism and Masochism

By sadism we mean the drive to make another person or some creature a meek tool of one's own power, like "putty in one's hands." The particular form of sadism that forces the other person to endure physical tortures is only an extreme expression of this tendency, for there is no greater power over another person than torture: to make him suffer and force him to cry out in pain. Sadism is always tied up with masochism and Freud has from the beginning stressed this. Originally he inclined to regard masochism as secondary, as sadism turned inward. The masochistic tendency involves submitting to a power outside the individual conceived as overwhelmingly strong - whether another person or nature or God or the State or the past - and dissolving one's individual self in it. Here too, as in sadism, the impulse to be beaten, oppressed and humiliated, as is found in masochistic perversion or in masochistic fantasies is only an extreme expression of this general tendency.

Both sadism and masochism spring from the same human basic relation which we wish to designate as "symbiotic." We mean a relation characterized by the fact that a person in a psychic sense cannot exist alone, that he needs another to complement his own person, or better, to be the constant nutrition without which he cannot live. In masochism the accent falls on being, so to speak, swallowed by the other and in that way becoming part of him, in sadism on swallowing him and making him a part of oneself.

The sadist looks for a helpless object that he can tyrannize over boundlessly, that

he can incorporate into his tyrannous purpose. The masochist looks for a powerful object to whom he can surrender himself, by whom he can be swallowed, not so much to be annihilated as to be taken up by the powerful one and become part of him. Although sadism often resembles hatred or destructiveness and masochism love, they are fundamentally different. Destructiveness wants to destroy an object, sadism to keep it and rule it; love wants to make the object happy and give to him, masochism to dissolve in him and only extinguish the self

Freud on Masochism

It is of interest to quote a few passages of Freud's which were written during the period 1900-1920:

First of all, we may be permitted to doubt whether masochism ever occurs in a primary manner, or whether it does not occur rather regularly by transformation from sadism.¹

With the pair of opposites sadism-masochism, the process may be represented as follows: (a) Sadism consists in the exercise of violence or power upon some other person as its object. (b) This object is abandoned and replaced by the subject's self. Together with turning round upon the self, the change from an active to a passive aim in the instinct is also brought about. (c) Again another person is sought as object; this person, in consequence of the alteration which has taken place in the aim of the instinct, has to take over the original role of the subject. Case (c) is a condition commonly termed "masochism." Satisfaction follows in this case also by way of the original sadism, the passive ego placing itself in fantasy back in its former situation, which, however, is now being given up to another subject outside the self. Whether there is, besides this, a more direct masochistic satisfaction is highly doubtful. A primary masochism not derived, in the manner I have described, from sadism does not appear to be met with.²

There seems to be a confirmation of the view that masochism is not the manifestation of a primary instinct, but originates from sadism, which has been turned around and directed upon the self, that is to say, by means of regression from an object to the ego. Instincts with a passive aim must be taken for granted as existing ... but passivity is not the whole of masochism. The characteristic of pain belongs to it as well ... a bewildering accompaniment to the gratification of an instinct. The transformation of sadism into masochism appears to be due to the influence of a sense of guilt.³

Moral Masochism and the Superego

The last quotation, from 1919, shows Freud in transition to the theory that later dominated his thinking: the superego is equated with identification with the aggressor. The corollary of this is that the stronger the pre-existing sadism of the subject, the more sadistically the œdipal object will be represented (by projection), the more sadistic the internalized superego will become and the more masochistic the ego will be. This underlines the connection between "moral" masochism and morality. A typical formulation of this type is given by Bychowski.

Bychowski⁴ saw the situation of narcissistic mortification, as described by Eidelberg⁵, as the basis for masochism. Narcissistic mortification leads to the withdrawal of the narcissistic interest that has been lent to the object in the love relation, and provokes the release of narcissistic rage with the intent of destroying the object if it is still alive or reaffirming its annihilation if it is gone. His formulation underscores the close relation of his idea about the formation of masochism to the formation of a depression:

However, in keeping with the laws ruling the initial process of mourning, the original object is not abandoned but instead it becomes enshrined within the self. Bereavement concomitant with despair releases a fury of disappointment and continues to shake the ego with ... aggressivity. Narcissistic libido dammed up by the shock (or continuous shocks) of mortification serves to recathect the self and, more specifically, the internalized parental imago, which has been endowed with increased power and significance.

As a result of these processes, extended according to circumstances over a long period of time, a powerful introject is established within the ego ... The masochistic bond is established, with the accent falling more and more on the allegedly powerful, and in the last analysis, omnipotent parent whose love and protection can be purchased only at the price of permanent weakness and abject surrender. The person projects his own aggressive hostility onto the original object (or, to be more precise, onto its imago) and thus endows that internalized imago with attributes of cruel implacability. (To be sure, this is often superimposed on the parent's true, original rigid aggressivity) ...

As the internalized parental images continue to absorb increasing portions of aggressive energy and narcissistic libido, they cannot remain indefinitely within the defined ego boundaries. A process of externalization sets in, which I have described elsewhere as the release of the introjects. In this way, figures in the present environment assume the very same role as the original objects (which have been introjected). With these real, but obviously distorted persons, the ego develops relations repeating the original configurations.

Archaic mechanisms, characteristic of the primitive ego, are put into action with a predominant shifting from activity to passivity. Thus, the objects are endowed with great power, while the ego exhibits truly infantile weakness. In the course of the growing masochistic bondage, this attitude changes to abject surrender. It should be clear that this growth is fed by guilt, stemming from thrusts of aggressivity which the permanently disappointed ego directs against the original love objects.

Thus a paradoxical situation is established: the ego expects assistance and repletion from the very same person (or persons) whom it pursues with unrelenting loathing and accusations ...

The Love of the Unloving Object

In contrast to this, Berliner⁶ insisted that moral masochism is a mode of object relations defined by loving a person who gives hate and ill-treatment. He saw it as a response to real aggression in the real world. Masochism is a way of mediating the experienced conflict between the drive to be loved and the experience of hostility. In the history of every masochistic patient there is an unhappy childhood. The subject relives and re-enacts in interpersonal relations a submissive devotion to and a need for the love of a hating or rejecting love object. Masochism is the libidization of ill-treatment in the name of being loved. Berliner insisted that it should not be traced to the patient's own sadism. One's own sadism vented upon the ego produces not masochism, but compulsion neurosis. As authority, he quoted *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*, in which Freud stated that in obsessional neurosis, "we have the turning upon the subject's self without the attitude of passivity toward another ... Self-torture and self-punishment have arisen from the desire to torture, but not masochism."

It is the attitude of the original object which endows suffering with the ability to enhance the individual's sense of value as a love object, and allows the subject to feel "good" [cf. Sandler's contention that the parents' vision of the "good child" is the source of one of the three divisions of the ego ideal, and the psychological advantages that accrue to the child who identifies with this demand of the parents. This would apply equally when the parents will accept the child as "good" only when he accepts his role as the despised, hated, and rejected child].

The masochist wishes to please a hating parent, to placate or to ingratiate himself with the parent by being unhappy, by failing, or by being helpless and stupid. It is the wish to be loved by a parent who hates or depreciates. Berliner quotes a patient who said, "As a boy I took my spanking when I deserved it and then went for more. My parents paid no attention to me when I was good; they did so only when I was bad." This is the core of the beating fantasy: "A father beats a child, then he loves him very much". To accommodate a hating parent the masochist will make himself as unlovable as he feels the parent wants him to be: he denies his good qualities, he fails to exploit his opportunities, he confuses an irrational asceticism with virtue that earns love,

he "lives down" to the views of those who resent him in order to be accepted by them.

The majority of masochistic patients show aggressive attitudes as an essential part of the clinical picture. There are two forms of this aggression: masochistic provocativeness and self-righteous narcissistic rage. Masochistic provocation is aggression exercised in the service of a masochistic need for love. When the masochist aggressively "markets" his suffering with demonstrativeness or the exhibition of martyrdom he feels it gives him a claim for value and prestige. Being hurt makes him right above the others, he gains love-worthiness. In this way he recaptures the right to domination he abandoned in his submission to the object. Masochistic provocation is meant to pressure the object to give more love while at the same time elevating the self-esteem. Masochistic aggressiveness, when directed against the self, has the meaning of "You'll be sorry, if I am hurt it will be your fault" It is supposed to make the object concerned for the patient (and morally wrong if he is not). The masochist feels his own love-neediness as giving him the right to control and even punish the love object.

The second form of aggression, which alternates with masochistic behavior proper, is the identification with the hating or punishing love object. This usually emerges when sufficient self-esteem through suffering and deprivation has been established according to the formula, "Even I deserve to be treated better than this." This feeling of entitlement temporarily overcomes the fear of rejection which identification with the sadistic object usually produces. The drive to punish is associated with a feeling of righteousness. In punishing the object, the masochist feels he is doing the right thing according to the sadistic object whose love he craves: he is enjoying the self-esteem that comes from expressing aggressive trends which copy those of the object. In these moments he is being like the admired and loved sadistic object and therefore is pleased with the nature of his aggressive behavior which is superego syntonic.

Masochism as the Necessary Prerequisite of Paranoia

Bak⁷ also described masochism as the result of cruelty in the parent (without introjection into a cruel superego). Freud's theory of paranoia, demonstrated by means of Schreber's autobiography, had proposed that 1) the libido was withdrawn from the loved person, 2) love was turned into hate, and 3) the withdrawal was undone by projection, which re-established new, narcissistic object relations. Bak noted that this paradigm left open the main question, namely, why the love object should be transformed into the persecutor. He further noted that, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud supplemented his theory, stating the paranoiac does not directly transform the personal relationship from love into hate, but that the ambivalence has been present from the beginning: the transformation is achieved through a reactive shifting [n.b., actually, it was in *Instincts and their Vicissitudes* that Freud decided love could not be turned into hate].

Bak illustrates this ambivalence with the following historical vignette from the treatment of a paranoid patient:

He turned to his father to be loved and appreciated by him. The father was a withdrawn, cold, strict, hard-working farmer. It was impossible to get in his good graces. The patient remembered often, with tears, how unappreciative his father was of him. As a child of six, he was helping his father gather hay. He worked diligently the whole day, and driving home from the fields he asked his father if his work that day was worth fifty cents and if so whether he could have it. The father ignored him completely. He pleaded, and finally in desperation asked if his work was worth at least a nickel. His father brushed him off as before ... Not being loved and particularly not having had any physical contact as a token of love, caused him a great deal of suffering. He felt very much moved when a neighbor's son put his arms around him. He felt a strong desire to go hand in hand with his father and for many years resented that the father did not play with him and did not teach him to fight. "Together with father" he would have been strong, powerful, and a member of the male group. But instead of the close relationship and gentle physical contact he was beaten by the father for the slightest mischief. If he got into a fight with his brothers, which they started, he was nevertheless beaten by his father, being told he was older and should know better. Sometimes he waited for hours in a cold sweat for the threatened beating. The beatings, with a stick, were ruthlessly sadistic. He was always found to be in the wrong and was never exonerated. He fantasied though, with great clarity, picking up a shovel, or getting hold of the stick and attacking his father. After one beating he vowed that when he grew up he would beat up his father.

One part of [this] aggression remained in fantasy, and developed into manifold sadistic reveries. He daydreamed, for instance, that women were stationed in stalls like racing horses. Every woman was set and alert, bent forward on her toes in the stall. The patient, the boss, was beating them using his penis as a rod ... [He connected the beatings his father would administer with his father's sexual excitement] ... The experience of being beaten by the father became libidized into being sexually abused by him. The yearning for affection was regressively debased into masochistic degradation ...

[When he had grown up] one of [his] prominent strivings ... had been the ambition to be recognized by important, outstanding men ... He dreamed that he went home, resolved the differences with his father, and at the final reconciliation they both wept. In his daydreams he became the favorite son as a reward for his successes and achievements.

Bak insists that the establishment of a masochistic relationship with such a figure is "an essential feature of the paranoid reaction, and constitutes the *first* defensive action of the ego." The establishment of masochism "constitutes the prerequisite of a paranoid development." In support of this he quotes Freud (from *A Child Is Being Beaten*):

People who harbor fantasies of this kind [i.e. beating fantasies] develop a special sensitiveness and irritability towards anyone whom they can put among the class of fathers. They allow themselves to be easily offended by a person of this kind, and in that way (to their own sorrow and cost) bring about the realization of the imagined situation of being beaten by the father. I should not be surprised if it were one day possible to prove that the same fantasy is the basis of the delusional litigiousness of paranoia.

A Note about Sequence

If Bak is correct and paranoia is dependent on the prior formation of a masochistic bond to the object, and if Parens is also correct that sadism makes its first appearances around the fourth year of life, then Melanie Klein cannot be correct when she calls the primordial stage of mental development the paranoid position. Klein equates Freud's purified pleasure ego (in which all the objects are hated as evil) with paranoia. Bak insists that aggression and hatred are not enough to explain paranoia, that there must first be a masochistic tie to the object. This insistence would seem to fit the material we have read from Schreber: the masochistic love relation with God Himself (a Father beats a child, then He loves him very much) is quite evident. Bak's viewpoint has the additional heuristic advantage that, by moving paranoia up the epigenetic sequence, it theoretically renders paranoid personalities more accessible to analytical investigation and influence.

Paranoia and Masochism in Jean-Jacques Rousseau

In his *Confessions* Rousseau asserted that his sexual desires had been conditioned by a spanking at the hands of an attractive woman that he had received as a boy. Later, he would go into the courtyards where the maids were doing the laundry and lower his pants, hoping to be slapped on his naked buttocks.

At age 58 he began public readings of the *Confessions* in order to force people to acknowledge his moral value. Failing in this effort, he put himself on trial in the *Dialogues* in which *Rousseau* (as an advocate of Jean-Jacques) and a *Frenchman* dispute the innocence or guilt of *Jean-Jacques*. Both the defender and the accused are emanations of his own self - it is the accuser who is the outsider. *Rousseau* says, "I have read the entire works claimed by Jean-Jacques several times, and the total effect on my soul was always to make me more human, more just, better than I was before. Never have I concerned myself with these works without profit for virtue. I am sure that the effect they produce on me would be the same on any decent man who would read them with the same impartiality." [Compare this with Freud's relationship with *his* book] When the *Frenchman* denounces the behavior of *Jean-Jacques*, *Rousseau* describes the effect of this attack on his love for himself, "One man alone, thinking like me, nourished my confidence, one sole truly virtuous man made me believe in virtue, moved me to cherish it, to idolize it, to place all hope in it; and here it is that in depriving me of this support you leave me alone upon the earth."

Rousseau goes to visit *Jean-Jacques* and decides that *Jean-Jacques* is not really "virtuous, because he does not need to be, and for the same reason he will be neither vicious nor wicked." He was morally neutral because he did not need anybody but himself, having "imaginary friends." His only vice, masturbation, "harms no one but himself." (In a draft of the *Rêveries* he commented, "it is true that I do nothing upon the earth, but when I have no more body I still won't do anything, and nevertheless I shall be an excellent being, more full of feeling and life than the most active of mortals" (4:1186)). The *Frenchman* having read *Jean-Jacques'* books declared, "I believe [him] innocent and virtuous, and this belief is so much at the bottom of my soul that it needs no other confirmation." The two agreed in hoping that the memory of *Jean-Jacques* "will be rehabilitated someday to the honor it deserves, and that his books will become useful through the esteem due their Author. Let us add to this hope the happiness of seeing two honest and true hearts opening to his. Thus let us temper the horror of that solitude where they force him to live amidst the human race."

He attempted to lay this manuscript upon the high altar of Notre Dame Cathedral, with a note addressed to God. Prevented from doing this, he took to the streets of Paris, distributing to sympathetic-looking passers-by a leaflet entitled "To all Frenchmen who still love justice and truth." In it, he demanded of the French, "How have you changed toward a poor foreigner, alone, at your mercy, with no support, no defender, toward a man without pretense, without bitterness, an enemy of injustice who endures injury patiently, who has never done, or wished, or repaid harm to anybody, and who for fifteen years has felt himself weighed down with indignities unheard of until now in the human race, without ever being able to learn the cause!" (1:990).

He knew that he could not be guilty because his intentions had always been good, but his enemies were actively evil, "They are not unjust and wicked toward me by mistake but rather willfully: they are wicked because they want to be" (1:986). Talking about himself in the third person because "I wanted to know what I would look like if I were someone else," he described his anguish, "By a decree which is not mine to fathom, he must spend the rest of his days in contempt and humiliation."

"He is absolutely alone and has only himself for help," "such a singular position is unique in the existence of the human race" (1:765). "Who would believe that I would be considered without any doubt a monster, an assassin, that I would become the terror of the human race, the plaything of the rabble, that the only greeting passers-by in the street would offer would be to spit on me, that a whole generation would agree unanimously to bury me alive?" (1:996). "They enjoy themselves burying him alive" (1:743), ""they have shut him up alive in a tomb" (1:1055), "they have erected around him walls of shadow, impenetrable to his eye; they have buried him alive amongst the living" (1:706). The plot was "universal and without exception" Since he knew that mankind was, like him, good, he was forced to the awful realization that the creatures who treated him so heartlessly were not really people at all: "I would have loved men in spite of themselves. They could avoid my affection only by ceasing to be men. Here they are then, alien, unknown, in a word nothing to me, since they wished it so" (1:995), he realized that, "my contemporaries were but mechanical beings in regard to me who acted only by impulsion and

whose actions I could calculate only by the laws of movement" (1:1080). He consoled himself, "at least it is not my fault and I will bring before the Author of my being, if not the offering of good works which they would not let me perform, at least the tribute of good intentions" (1:1004). Finally convinced that even the little children in the streets were looking askance at him, he was reduced to searching "among the animals for the benevolent glance henceforth refused [him} among men" (1:1089).

He began to believe that his suffering was a divine trial of his innocence which would end in a divine justification,

This universal agreement is too extraordinary to be completely fortuitous ... all wills, all destinies, such a striking coincidence, like a prodigy, leaves me no doubt but that its outcome is written down in the eternal decrees. A large number of private observations ... convinces me ... to consider what I had up to now regarded as the fruit of man's wickedness henceforth as one of heaven's secrets, impenetrable to human reason. God is just. He wants me to suffer, he knows I am innocent ... my turn will come sooner or later" (1:1010).

As he said in the *Confessions*,

Let the trumpet of the last judgement sound when it will; I shall come, this book in my hand, to present myself before the sovereign judge. Eternal Being, gather round me the innumerable throng of my fellow beings: let them listen to my confessions, let them groan at my indignities, let them blush for my misfortunes. Let each of them in turn reveal his heart at the foot of your throne with the same sincerity and then let a single one tell you, if he dares: I was better than that man [1: 5].

Whosoever, even without having read my writings, will examine with his own eyes my nature, my character, my morals, my penchants, my pleasures, my habits, and can believe I am not a decent man, ought to be strangled [1: 656].

In these last years of his life he lived quietly in a Paris suburb, wearing a long skirt that he described as an Armenian costume, "It was not a new idea. It had come to me at various periods in my life, and returned often at Montmorency where, as the frequent use of catheters condemned me to remain alone often in my bedroom, I preferred the advantages of the long robe". When not inserting urethral sounds into his penis, he took up a woman's mode of existence, "I learned to make lace ... and, like the women, I went to work before my front door and chatted with the passers-by."

The Role of Narcissism in Moral Masochism

Bernstein⁸ was impressed by the narcissistic personalities of the masochistic patients he treated. After describing three such patients, he noted:

It can be seen from the above descriptions that these patients were primarily interested in themselves - their appearances, their physical conditions, how they looked or sounded to others - and their relationships with others were governed by their attempts to gratify such narcissistic needs ... The patients here described were loved or felt loved predominantly according to their narcissistic fixations and the resultant strivings.

He felt that an important cause in all these cases was the parents' narcissistic attitudes to the child which prevented adequate resolution of the Œdipus complex. Despite this, he ended by invoking masochistic submission to a sadistic superego as the origin of masochistic behavior:

Part of the child's primary narcissism is ordinarily gradually transformed into object love and contributes to the formation of an ego ideal. The renunciation of complete narcissism occurs when the child is loved by mature adults in accordance with the child's needs. If, however, the child is made to serve the highly narcissistic needs of the parental objects, the child regresses to its own narcissistic satisfactions whenever the object becomes disappointing, i.e., cathexis of the object is interfered with.

From earliest childhood these patients had reason to feel they were instruments of their parents' narcissistic needs. Such relationships lead to defective development of the ego, abnormally dependent (symbiotic) parental ties, and strong oral fixations or regressions. Under conditions of actual or threatened loss, introjection of the object takes place, with a merging of the images of self and the ambivalent object.

The Œdipal disappointment is felt both as a narcissistic and oral trauma with feelings of loss, helplessness, and rage. The tremendous access of aggression threatens the ego with destruction of the object representations. The combination of the heavy investment of narcissistic libidinal cathexis with the weakness of the ego prevents adequate neutralization of aggression, leading to regression. Renewed introjections of the object occur, followed by regressive splitting of the object and the ego representations, accompanied by defusion of feelings of love and hate, aggression and submission. The object representations and ego representations are split into 1, the idealized, good parent-child with all of the love and aggression embodied in the superego; 2, the bad parent-child with all of the hatred and devaluation directed toward it as the object embodied in the ego. As the superego becomes more aggressive and sadistic, the ego becomes correspondingly submissive and masochistic. In this manner, the child-parent relationship is regressively restored.

In resolving the œdipal conflict, the child resorts passively not only to the same methods it employed to resolve pregenital conflicts but, in an active way, also what it has experienced as the object of the parental narcissistic and sadistic attitudes toward it.

What follows in the world of reality consists of a repetitive compulsion to repeat the original narcissistic trauma of disappointment, rejection, and humiliation. It is progressively experienced, however, with increasing conviction as a result of the unconscious connivance of the individual. It becomes also a source of a sense of power and gratification, rather than of helplessness, as it becomes the fulfillment - for want of a better one - of his own libidized masochistic fantasy. The last process, the externalization, is analogous to the secondary efforts at recovery designed to lead the libido back toward an object. The sequence may thus be summarized schematically: 1, imposition of narcissistic and oral attachments followed by 2, exaggerated disappointment with feelings of helplessness, loss, rage, and sadomasochistic fantasies, leading to 3, endopsychic restoration of the object relationships through introjection with splitting, and 4, externalization of the fantasy with efforts through repetition to master the trauma and restore the lost object. Viewed in the light of the foregoing, the acting out of these fantasies in masochistic behavior may be considered to be, in part, a defense against the traumatic feelings of loss, helplessness, annihilation, or castration.

It may be noted that the dynamic formulations for masochism are, to some extent, the same as those for depression: introjection of the object and a regressive splitting of the object and self-representations into the idealized good parent-child with all of the love and aggression embodied in the superego and the bad parent-child with all of the hatred and devaluation directed toward it as the object embodied in the ego. Clinically, all three of these patients had periods of depression; possibly their masochism helped to avert even more severe depression. It is possible that masochism may occupy a mid-position between depression and paranoia. When the ego employs more introjection, the masochist becomes more depressed; if the mechanism is more projective, he will become more paranoid.

Some Agreements and Some Disagreements

Bak, Berliner, and Bychowski agree in locating the origins of masochism in the sadism and cruelty of the parents. However, in response to a challenge by Stein, Berliner admitted that overt and severe cruelty in the parents was not the rule in these cases and, indeed, may not be the most pathogenic background for masochism. Much more important, he then asserted, is the parent who enjoins ill-treatment or neglect on the child under the guise of love. Bernstein focuses not on

cruelty but on narcissistic attitudes in the parents who use the child as an extension of their own egos.

Bychowski, Bernstein, and Bak agree that there is a heightened cruelty and sadism to the introject and that, in the masochistic relationship, there is externalization of that introject and an attitude in reality which is modeled on the internal relationship. This is in accord with Fenichel⁹, who in discussing obsessional neurosis, said:

In defending itself against the demands of the sadistic superego, the ego may use a countersadistic rebellion as well as submission (ingratiation), or both attitudes simultaneously or successively. Sometimes the ego seems willing to take upon itself punishments, acts of expiation, and even torture to an astonishing degree. This "moral masochism" appears to be a complement to the "sadism of the superego," and this submission may be performed in the hope of using it as a license for later instinctual freedom. The ego's "need for punishment" is, in general subordinated to a "need for forgiveness," punishment being accepted as a necessary means for getting rid of the pressure of the superego. Such a need for punishment of the part of a compulsive ego, however, may become condensed with masochistic sexual wishes. Then, in the words of Freud, morality, which arose from the Œdipus complex, has regressed and has become Œdipus complex once again.

It is only Berliner who sharply distinguishes masochism from obsessional neurosis.

All four authors also agree that masochism lies half-way between depression and paranoia, between full internalization and full externalization of the hating introject.

Children with Beating Fantasies

After examining the cases of children with beating fantasies in the files of the Hampstead Clinic, Novick and Novick¹⁰ concluded:

Masochism is the active pursuit of psychic or physical pain, suffering, or humiliation in the service of adaptation, defense and instinctual gratification at oral, anal, and phallic levels ... the database of the definition is the transference and counterreaction of the analytic situation. The patient's persistent search for pain or humiliation will be figured forth in the transference, often in subtle responses to interpretations. The counterreaction of the therapist may provide the first clue of an underlying masochistic fantasy in the patient. The therapist may feel the impulse to be sarcastic, impatient, or teasing. Less subtle reactions may

take the form of being late, forgetting appointments, falling asleep, forced termination, etc. The epigenetic layering of masochism and its multiple functions emerge within the transference relationship, and must be dealt with in that context ...

In our view, not only are derivatives of each phase discernible in masochism, but the pain-seeking behavior which starts in infancy alters and is altered by each subsequent phase, including the œdipal and postœdipal. Postœdipally, masochistic impulses are organized as conscious or unconscious fantasies which are fixed, resistant to modification by experience or analysis, serve multiple ego functions, and take the form, although not necessarily the content, of the beating fantasy. In the fantasies the subject is an innocent victim, who achieves through suffering reunion with the object, defense against aggressive destruction and loss of the object, avoidance of narcissistic pain, and instinctual gratification by fantasy participation in the œdipal situation. Suicidal pathology, masochistic perversions, certain forms of hypochondriasis and psychosomatic illness, and moral masochism have in common an *underlying fantasy structure*. In our view, this fantasy structure is the "essence of masochism" [NB as Freud said about the beating fantasy].

However, four years later¹¹, these same authors advanced to the thesis that the crucial element in masochism was the delusion of omnipotence. Fantasies of omnipotence are fantasies of total control over others, relentless denial of and refusal to accept reality constraints, validated by overt or covert hostile actions. They referred to a database of 30 cases and said:

We have found that all our masochistic patients, child, adolescent, and adult, exhibited the ego defect of a pervasive delusion of omnipotence. By the time they came for treatment the unfused primitive hatred and overstimulated, excited libidinal impulses of these patients had interacted with a fragile defense system and a deficient superego [NB deficient, not overpoweringly sadistic] to produce the delusion that only they themselves were powerful enough to inhibit their omnipotent impulses, and then only by resorting to severe masochistic measures such as killing their feelings, provoking attack, or attempting to kill themselves.

They review the ways in which ordinary infants develop a sense of competence and self-regard by interacting successfully with the environment and eliciting appropriate responses. The masochistic patients were, in contrast, ineffectual. The major contributor to this was depression or anxiety in the mother [NB not sadistic cruelty]. Unable to be competent with these mothers, the children "turned away from their inborn capacities to interact effectively with the real world and instead began to use the experience of helpless rage and pain magically to predict and control their chaotic experiences."

When they became toddlers, their assertions were experienced by their mothers as aggressive,

their attempts at self-reliance were labeled as stubborn battles for control, and through externalization and physical intrusiveness the mothers took charge of their bodies. These maternal behaviors elicited "ever-increasing spirals of rage, guilt, and blame, so that in the end these children were made to feel omnipotently responsible for mother's pain, anger, helplessness and inadequacy". Feelings of intense rage were defended against by omnipotent fantasies of control, rescue, and potential destructiveness.

As nursery children, they experienced their œdipal conflicts as creating unbearable narcissistic hurt. They remained exclusively and anxiously tied to their mothers, with the feeling that safety and survival depended solely on their mothers. Fathers were usually absent [NB see Freud's original speculations about the absent father in the Leonardo case] or too disturbed to function as alternate objects. Œdipal exclusion was experienced as yet another failure to evoke the wished-for response from objects and revived all the earlier failures, leaving the child in a helpless, terrified rage. Their major defense was denial maintained by omnipotent fantasy in which everything painful was turned into a sign of special favor, uniqueness, and magical power. These parents could not set limits or refuse inappropriate demands. They could not "contain" the child's aggression. They therefore colluded with the child's need to deny œdipal exclusion, providing the child with an "effortless" triumph which led to the conviction that things should come easily and hence to the devaluation of anything that required time and effort. This, in turn, became a significant component in the formation of the ego ideal.

None of these patients had a normal latency period. For them, the gap was not between the real and the ideal self, but between the real and the ideal mother-child relationship. Fantasies were aimed not at enhancing the real capacities of the self, but at denying and transforming the pain and inadequacy of the mother-child relationship. Unable to make use of real capacities to elicit appropriate responses from the mother, these children fell back on omnipotent fantasies of control to maintain their self-esteem.

Many of these children were initially referred because of being bullied or teased. They seemed inhibited and exhibited a host of obsessional rituals, primitive religiosity, and compulsive symptoms. This was an attempt to defend against rage and death wishes experienced as omnipotent. Adult patients described similar obsessionalism in middle childhood. In the children, these defenses broke down soon after the start of treatment and they were "swamped repeatedly with overwhelming rage":

The apparent discrepancy between the wild behavior of the children and the relatively well-functioning or overcontrolled behavior of adult masochistic patients described in the literature disappears when we examine the latency of our adult masochistic patients. As noted, our adult patients described similar obsessionalism in middle childhood, but they usually also presented a picture of childhood in which they were innocent victims, unfairly treated by peers, siblings, and adults. We suggest that in many cases this view of their childhood is shaped

by the power of their adult masochistic fantasy in which it is essential that they be seen as innocent victims of sadistic attack. The reality of their latency was probably similar to that of the children seen in analysis during school years where obsessional rituals alternated with periods of wild behavior and hostile thoughts.

The literature on reanalysis confirms these views. R.L. Tyson reports the analysis of a twenty-eight year old graduate student who appeared depressed, stymied in a relationship with a girl, and blocked in completing his thesis; he frequently blamed himself for everything bad. Sylvia Brody had analyzed him as a child and was struck, on reading the case, by the patient's omission of reference to his extreme impulsivity in childhood. [At that time] he showed disturbed behavior and functioning ... He was wild, uncontrolled, greedy, sadistic, and enuretic; at kindergarten, psychological testing indicated that his impulsivity carried the threat of psychosis. A similar account is given by Ritvo of the reanalysis of Frankie, whom he describes as a withdrawn, joyless adult with severe limitations in his capacity for love and a fixation to his infantile relationship to his mother. Bornstein, who analyzed him as a child, describes how Frankie was swept by waves of wild, uncontrolled behavior in which he would attack people ...

An example of this type of behavior is given in the earlier paper by Novick and Novick. Mark, an 8½ year old boy, who later developed a fixed beating fantasy, fluctuated between grandiose delusions of omnipotence and a sense of abject worthlessness. The first two years of treatment were marked by wild and uncontrolled behavior and there were long periods when his analyst could make no contact with him. He would charge into the treatment room with a pellet gun, shout, "Alright, I'm going to kill you!" and fire the pellets at the analyst. One moment he would be lying on the table, licking his snot, and complaining he had no friends and the next moment he would shout at the analyst, "You fat pig, you'll die for this!"

A further distortion of memory determined by the operation of masochistic fantasies in our adult patients is that things were probably not as bad in childhood as they would like to imagine. As noted earlier, their parents were sometimes caring and giving, although intermittently so, and usually in response to their own needs rather than the child's ... most relevant to our topic is that by the time these patients were in latency, they had become so firmly established in a magical omnipotent system that any achievement, display of talent, or positive parental action was interpreted as due to their omnipotence ...

For those children analyzed during latency and into adolescence, the formation of the masochistic fantasy represented an achievement. The authors feel that the masochistic fantasy (in form, if not necessarily in content, a beating fantasy), with its omnipotent component, is probably not consolidated until adolescence. It has a stabilizing effect and permits adequate early adolescent functioning. Despite this, all their patients went on to an extremely disturbed later adolescence.

Beating Fantasies and Anna Freud

Perhaps the most famous analyst with prominent beating fantasies was Anna Freud. She was first analyzed by her father, at a time when she seemed to be in a late adolescent "neurasthenic" breakdown. Probably two of the cases in *A Child Is Being Beaten* are drawn from Freud's analysis of his daughter, and her own first paper, *Beating Fantasies and Day Dreams*¹², is clearly a report of her own analysis. She later entered a second analysis when, after becoming an analyst herself, her masturbatory pressures had grown so great that she was masturbating (with derivatives of her beating fantasy) between patients. Her biographer, Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, began her book with the conviction that her subject's relationship with Dorothy Burlingham was lesbian, but was forced to conclude that this was not the case, that Miss Freud never had sexual relations with anyone in her entire life¹³. Her most striking trait was her extreme, nun-like asceticism (cf. the chapter on *Asceticism* in her *The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense*, probably at least partly autobiographical), and her devotion to the cause of her father's psychoanalysis. With Mrs. Burlingham she achieved an almost total fusion of sensitivities, and with Mrs. Burlingham's children she assumed an active, caring maternal role. Her biography is worth reading as an exploration of the possibilities open to someone with a personality molded around beating fantasies.

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