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Feminine Eroticism: Its Structuration in Childhood, and its Manifestations in the Adult Woman

This conversation, held in Rome on June 7, 1997, deals only marginally with psychoanalysis. Yet, as in our previously published interviews with philosophers, it situates Rorty's appreciation of psychoanalysis in its philosophical context.

The pregenital conditions of the erotic investment of the girl's genital organs and her access to the oedipal position; the oedipus complex and its resolution

A newly born baby, whether of the feminine or masculine sex, is sensitive to surrounding affects from the moment of birth. Babies register as significant all that happens around them that concerns them and the emotional climate of their parents regarding them. The baby recognizes males and females even before seeing them; girls, whether from smelling or from hearing, are very sensitive to a masculine presence, particularly their father's. It is just the opposite for boys, who are sensitive to all feminine presences and particularly to their mother's. The girl is sensitive to the presence of her mother when she has need of her; when she is satisfied and has a feeling of well being, she is more attracted to the male than the female. The baby, up until speech begins, understands unconscious attitudes of the mother and the father or conscious statements which convey a symbolic weight in the way the baby girl constructs an image of herself, narcissized or not in her person and in her sex. She has an intuition of her sexual femininity, in accord or in conflict with, on the one hand, her mother's or father's pleasure or displeasure in her and, on the other hand, the pleasure which her sex gives her in the sensations of her body. If the mother is herself narcissized in being a woman and happy to have a girl, the child may invest her femininity and her sex in a positive manner.

When through her psychological development and her growth, the child attains the age of expressing emotions to communicate with another, she does so from what she senses to have value for those who surround her. This value is given to her from earliest childhood in a completely unconscious manner, both for the parents and for her.

A little girl is a female human being, but her femininity is granted to her as a value of language (this word signifies not only verbal language but also all the sensations and physical exchanges which permit communication with the human environment). The child has bodily contacts with this human environment, which take on a sense of emotional and ideational accord or discord in her relation with others according to the speech or the reactions of others. Introjection occurs, and the girl baby establishes the idea of her femininity from the positive symbolic values she has received from others concerning her being in the world, her body, her presence and her manner, her behavior.

In psychoanalysis we distinguish several stages as having marked the femininity of the girl, her feminine

narcissism, and the awareness of her sex, with a positive or negative sign.

First stage. Her reception in the world-“it’s a girl,” “you have a beautiful girl”-and the voice of the mother who responds-what joy!” or “what a pity! I would have preferred a boy!” To the mother’s reception, the father’s is added, then especially the given name, feminine or neuter. When a girl has not been anticipated or awaited, one does not have a name for her and naming her takes a long time. This marks the child. A case of a little girl: While her parents had told me their joy in anticipating her and in her birth as a girl, the opposite resulted from the child. Several weeks later, the mother, because of what the child communicated to her, told me: “I told you that she was welcomed, but that took several days; we had wanted a boy so much.” At this moment, as in parallel cases, it was very important to confirm to the child that her impression was correct, that her parents would have preferred a boy. And to the surprise of the parents, everything that until then had been the negation of her sex, which tried to show itself in the little girl as if it were neuter, disappeared. Her femininity could open up, only because with the correct words one touched a correct intuition which had not been spoken until then. In the course of the child’s reception, beyond the joy, the indifference, or the anxiety the birth causes in the parents, one must also consider their speeches concerning the baby’s look, her health, worries over her survival, and especially the agreeable or disagreeable ambiance the baby seems to drink up like a sponge and imbues.

Second stage. This is the role of the educator (if it is not the mother herself), making known to the little girl who her mother is, who her father is, especially if she does not know the man coupled with her mother, whether she lives with her or sees her from time to time. And even, perhaps especially, if the parent has left or is dead, or if the child is abandoned or destined to be adopted. I have seen children disturbed in their foster homes, children adopted between four and eighteen months, who are brought to psychotherapy and who drink up my words when I tell them the little one knows of their history which is true. To the surprise of those in the foster home, children thus led to the truth of their origin seem to find the means of healing what made them ill.

These two stages mean that the two roots of her symbolic life are delivered to the girl in words: the notion of the subject (her real given name, if she is given a nickname) and the idea of her filiation (the patronymic, when the child is legally recognized); but the idea of her patronymic is not given ordinarily in relation to the name of her parents. And it is as if she had not been given.

It is never too early to verbalize these two truths and repeat them frequently to the child and to other people in front of her. Every infant has the right to her truth. The adult who has the task of educating her thus implants bodily life in symbolic life.

Third stage. To hear talk about herself at the same time that her value as a girl is given to her, as for example: “You will become a big girl; you are like a lady,” etc. The phallic function of the libido means that all that has a moral and aesthetic value creates the exchanges of perceptions between the mother and the child: pleasant, unpleasant, nice, ugly, beautiful, strong, weak, not good, good, bad. It is also important to have a signifier for all the parts of her body and name them for her, and to have a signifier to name her sex, because what is not named is nothing. It is important that the signifier not be a word which will have a denigrating sense when the child will understand language. A little boy called his sex my sin: the name given to him for his sex. Often children are taught names that ridicule their genitals, but it is so simple to say “penis” and “vulva”. Or even if a nickname be given to children’s sexual organs, they should know the true signifiers, just as they know also their given names when they have nicknames.

From the time the little girl begins a motor autonomy in her behavior, it is important to signify to her that this behavior is in order, that it is good to want to act like mother, like a lady. At the same time, the little girl is very quickly attracted by her father and by men; instead of being laughed at, it is also good that she receives a word that signifies that her mother approves of that. At this age of observation and developing motility, the child naturally gives herself over to explorations of her body. It is important that these explorations be the occasion to name all the parts of her body and to name her sex without hesitation.

Fourth stage. The genital organs become eroticized early, accompanying explorations, but if no word is spoken concerning the sex, the erotic manipulation of the organ sometimes becomes compulsive. When the

child manifests a visible pleasure in such genital masturbation, when the mother sees it she should name to the child at that very moment the place where she visibly senses pleasure: "It is there that you are truly a little girl; you are like mother." Generally, this is enough to narcissize her, to give meaning to her perceptions and to impede the birth of a compulsive masturbation which would perhaps cause the child to lose herself in reveries and to lose interest in the external world. Once the child speaks, if she is confident, she states that she has a hole and a button. "That is true," the adult should respond, rather than becoming horrified. No child resorts to masturbation if she is not bored, except at the moment of falling asleep. Masturbation, whether it is oral (sucking the thumb), anal (the game of keeping or expelling excrements), or fingering the anus (playing with excrements), all these erotic games from an early age are substitutes for a more differentiated symbolic relation with the mother. The erotic zones are places of pleasurable exchanges with the mother, and if the child is not educated by means of psychomotor, verbal and gestural expression of everything around her that she finds interesting, she is obliged to fall back on the manipulations of her body and her erotic zones. The sexual education of the very young child, beyond the correct words for the regions of her body, including all the erogenous zones, consists in coordinating the feet, the hands, the body, the voice, the mouth. These activities are all necessary for the care of the child, for her nurturing, and, by helping her to develop drives transferred to objects, they avoid an untimely, continual return to the body which is dehumanizing for the child. The education of the sphincter must be totally abandoned. Telling her the correct words for the excrements, for changing diapers, for disposal is sufficient. When the child asks the adult "Where are you going?", the adult can explain that the adult too goes to the toilet "to get rid of excrements" – this is sufficient for the education of her sphincter. A true education does not stop the child from dirtying herself and does not enforce a regulation of waste products; rather it is the creation of the habit of motor control and mastery which by itself, because of the maturation of the central nervous system, leads to continence when it is not demanded. Only humans are able to remain incontinent of the sphincter much longer than their body requires; if cleanliness had never been made part of the relation imposed by the mother, they would be clean.

This fourth stage is then the training in motility and in autonomy, accompanied by proper language concerning all the child's activities and compliments for each success.

When everything has gone well in her development, the young girl, from twenty to twenty-two months, will be already a very capable person, with a very eroticized femininity; in any case, at thirty months all of that is acquired, and she speaks her maternal language very well. From that age, from twenty-four to thirty months, the function of valorization, whether it is implicit or explicit, allowed or prohibited by the environment, is dominant in forming a girl's healthy sensuality. All is in place with her sexuality once she spontaneously acquires control of the sphincter, once she feels at ease in her daily life, so that she will be already prepared for the healthy life of a not frigid woman.

Fifth stage. This is the discovery of sexual difference on the occasion of the observation of boys' nakedness. What is important at this stage is the valorization of the girl's correct observation and the explanation that is always given to her, as well as the reason why she is a girl. She should be told that her mother is made similarly. The girl then asks about her mother's breasts, and she must be told that they will develop also when she is twelve years old, when she will be a big girl, while she is shown the example of older girls she knows. At this moment, the little girl entirely forgets her momentary desire for a centrifugal penis. She is proud of her sex whose name she knows, which gives her pleasures that are not prohibited and, moreover, promises her a future as a woman.

One moment is delicate: this is when the girl, perceiving that babies are in women's bellies before birth, imagines that women make babies from the anus. Babies are magic shit for her. This is an important moment because an erroneous fantasy like that must not, once it is noticed, be left in the mental etchings of the child. She must be told: "But you are mistaken; it is from the front that the baby is born. The question follows very quickly: "And how does it get there?" Then, for example, she may be answered, "Your husband, when you have one, will tell you." The child will continue to ask questions from day to day; when a child does not continue to question, one doesn't have to give answers she doesn't demand. The answer should always be partial and right and should leave open the possibility of other questions which will be answered from day to day as they come until the time when this series leads to the idea that it is from the encounter of the sexual

organ of the male with that of the female that the child is born.

At this moment, Oedipus is very much involved, because her father is the object of the girl's thoughts, dreams, and fantasies. It is useless to dissuade her from it if she does not constantly verbalize her hope, for she is asking an implicit question. It is enough if the mother tells her "You think so? But I am not married to your grandfather; he is my father." This answer sometimes may liberate the child, sometimes not, if her sensuality is very engaged. A day, when she is courting her father more than usual, she could hear the liberating words from him, and not from her mother: "But I will never love you as a woman, since you are my daughter." This completely simple verbalization of the incest prohibition relieves the child, and she will speak of it again to her mother. The mother should tell her that all little girls are like her and that they believed at first that they would marry their fathers.

Following that, despite the fact that there will never be any sexual contact coming from the father, what ensues is the magical idea and the fantasy that she will nevertheless have children whose father will be her father. The instruction in the incest prohibition lasts between six months and two years; when it is thus provided, from day to day, by chaste parents who don't amuse themselves by ridiculing their child, the oedipal resolution occurs very easily for the girl, since generally she has many suitors of her own age around her with whom she begins to make plans. This is a delicate moment for the father, for he must not show himself to be jealous. The oedipal resolution is a decisive moment for the girl's future, and it must be accompanied by the prohibition of incest with her brothers.

Sixth stage. The girl's curiosity awakens more and more, and she wants to know more about the intimacy between her mother and father. If instead of being blamed, the girl is encouraged to say what it is she is looking for (to know what her mother and father do in bed), her curiosity should lead to a true response concerning the relations of love and the physical contact between mother and father. She should be told that life will lead her also to these relations when she will be older, and in particular she should be given the idea that it is due to her mother's love and desire for the father that she was born. The primal scene's fantasy of her life's origins which is thereby given to the child, when it is spoken within a good environment between the child, the mother, and the father (this conversation can include several), produces in the child a definitive liberation from her incestuous relation to her father, insofar as it is heterosexual, and to the mother, insofar as it is homosexual.

Feminine narcissism experiences a deflection when the baby teeth are lost. If the Oedipus is ready and dealt with through words, the Oedipal resolution occurs when the permanent teeth come in or when the little girl looks in the mirror and discovers that her smile has become that of a young woman. All her dreams and fantasies thus become fantasies of the future. But the stage of physiological latency arrives, and it is in culture, in society, with her friends, in activities of all sorts that all her drives find their sublimation. For this child, everything has been given that will sustain her feminine narcissism.

Seventh stage. The girl's puberty is sometimes a surprise when her mother has not prepared her. The appearance of blood on the vulva is always traumatic when it is not anticipated as the sign of an advancement, the sign that she has become a young woman. This advancement may sometimes be traumatizing when the mother speaks of it to the father who himself speaks of it to the girl. It seems to me, in my experience, that at the moment of puberty the young girl's menstrual cycle should not be the object of the father's curiosity. The problem is complex when the father is a doctor, for it is always traumatic for young girls and even more when certain male doctors do not understand their daughters' modesty. In ordinary cases, at the inauguration of her periods, the girl needs especially complicity with the mother; afterwards it no longer has importance, because the situation is established after a few months.

The young girl's modesty is, in effect, modesty of feelings. It is only at the beginning of the installation of her femininity that she touches herself. This is not a reason that her parents should not continue to show modesty towards their daughter or that they should not educate her in corporeal modesty at home. Just as one teaches the child not to destroy the possessions of a neighbor, not to steal, even the family, in order to get the child used to social life, in the same way one has to prepare the child for public life. The neglect of this formation of femininity by means of behavior that valorizes it (and modesty valorizes femininity) is a failure of the mother's education.

Girls' masturbation may continue after puberty, but it also may not exist, which is not a sign of a lack of sensuality. The eroticism of the young girl, with or without masturbation, gives her voluptuous sensations due to dreams during sleep or the fantasies she has concerning the young boys she sees, whether she knows them well or has just seen them. Education also plays a role in this romantic ardor, which sometimes overwhelms the young girl's sensibility. Rarely does she speak to her mother about them, but it is not rare for her to speak about them to another woman, friend or relative. The simple fact of speaking about them and of hearing a response, such as "That's normal, we have all been like that," brings everything to order. Otherwise, masturbation can establish itself, supporting the reveries the young girl considers more often to be shameful or unhealthy rather than shameful and abnormal. This is because an imaginary erotic life does not seem as normal to a girl as it does to a boy.

We know little about the young girl's erotic investment in the genital organs, and what we do know we know especially from the retroactive speech of women. It is not certain that women remember their youth that well, because when we are adult we project present sensations and feelings into the past.

We know more about the effects of a narcissism which has not invested the genital organs. These are somatic troubles which accompany menstruation, or which accompany desires for babies out of jealousy of the mother when she gives birth. I once saw a 13-year-old girl, who already had her periods, who very quickly had bleeding for which she was taken to a male gynecologist who, unable to examine her, sent her to a female gynecologist who, also unable to examine her, but believing her to be psychotic or at least very neurotic, sent her to me. This was, essentially, a child who had intensely experienced jealousy at her mother's giving birth. The youngest little brother was born who revised all the oedipal position and complex. In this family, nothing was explained. The very grave condition of the young girl, as much organic as psychological, dissolved in three weeks, that is, in six sessions, during which my words permitted the child, from behind a miserable, unnarcisized mutism, to rely on me and to talk about the murderous desires she directed to her little brother. These murderous desires had started the bleeding. In fact, it was not the young brother she wished to destroy but the object of her mother's pride. This young girl was not informed of the paternal role in conception.

From the moment the little girl has accepted (and even with pride) the characteristics of her sex, if she knows the role of the father, which is not barred to her in fantasy and in language, even if it is not explained in detail, the girl's genital libido is awakened towards the phallus and the desire for its future intromission. This is why it is very important that the idea of erection, which makes penetration possible, is explained to the young girl. In default of such an explanation of the erectile functioning of the penis, the girl's intuition has no corresponding signifier. On the other hand, when she feels in herself the excitement of meeting young boys, she may feel that she is constantly in danger with them, since desire in the young girl stirs up a mistrust of herself. For children and for young girls, the desire for a child is always linked to the idea of love for a man. And the desire for a child is as intense as it is feared. Their logical capacities make them understand that they are not ready to raise a child, and the fantasies of rape which excite the femininity of the young girl from the oedipal age get mixed with the possible reality of rape in any social encounter with a young man. This completely impedes the girl's social life, which is otherwise healthy. She is thought to be neurotic. In fact, she lacks information.

Just as when she was little, it was language that gave the girl the idea of her femininity, so when she enters puberty it is the verbal exchange with a trusted woman, or rather the mother, if she is experienced and lacks both voyeurism and an authority that restrains the freedom of her daughter, which can give the girl all the information in due time, during the months which follow the start of menstruation. That is not done ordinarily. This sexual education comes by chance from the girl's conversations with people she trusts. It is surprising to hear women speak of this period, to see to what extent girls are defenseless when boys "come on" with them in order to penetrate them, in a coitus that has no sense on a symbolic level neither for the boys nor for them but only for the "little experience," as they say. Whether this is spoken about or not, it is thus that boys and girls, and girls especially today, are solicited for the realization of the sexual act much more often than in the past, and this before they have a desire of it.

Today it is important that girls narcisized as feminine, conscious of the value of their person and their sex, receive educational information that tells them they don't have to give in to the pressures of boys when they are not attracted to them. Nowadays the sexual instruction of girls comes from their school mates. The

school now gives information but not education. Formerly in school there was only repression, which was called education, and ignorance, which was a moral value for young girls. Happily, this has changed. But nothing is done to establish in them the feeling of their own value and, in relation to sexuality, nothing to incite them to think by themselves rather than let themselves be led by mass media lifestyles which emphasize the enjoyment of the body for commercial purposes rather than the symbolization of feminine values.

In my consultations of young girls in a state of confusion, this resulted always from sexual relations which had no sense for them from the moment when they let themselves be taken in by the mockery of their male friends directed at their reticence at giving themselves, even though they experienced neither desire nor love. Finally, they let themselves be had so as not to seem stupid, and also because young girls fear being frigid. Now certainly they place themselves precisely into the condition of becoming frigid if they give themselves when that has no moral, aesthetic, nor symbolic sense for them. Certainly for them, as always, the fact of giving themselves for the first time has value by the very fact of giving themselves; their abandonment by the boys, who besides did not promise anything, provokes a crisis of narcissistic depreciation in the girls. The girl fears being frigid and she believes now that she has evidence of it. Moreover, it is out of a concern with frigidity that all young girls come to consult psychoanalysts. Such psychotherapy is very interesting for analysts, because it allows them to meet women of an age with whom we have not had contact in the past, except for those who presented obvious trouble for society; we have not had the opportunity to help them develop autonomy.

The existence and the permissiveness of birth control methods have resulted in the appearance of two feelings among young girls. The first is the fear of being ridiculed for not having slept with a boy yet, even without love, and the second is that, after a few intercourse without sexual feeling in the conditions I have described, young girls stop taking the pill out of the desire to have a child. Not to take care of or to raise one, but, since they think they are frigid, to be sure that they are at least women, as conceiving proves they are. Recourse to abortion is then easily taken. That is not the case for everyone, and a necessary abortion, given a situation of total immaturity, as much social as personal, is a shock, not for the girl's conscious psychology but for her unconscious.

The libidinal erogenous image of the girl's body and sex; the resulting aesthetic and ethical symbolization

We may schematize the following stages in the process of a girl's sexual development:

1. The passive oral and anal stage. Everything that concerns the functions, the needs that are always linked to desires, and the desires intersecting those of the mother make it nice, and good to eat "well" and eventually to eat "too much." It is ugly and anguishing to vomit. As for anal erogeneity, the stools must be nice, but the mother who seems so happy to take stools from the child's toilet when they are nice and who shows anxiety when they are not, provokes an initiation in aesthetic feelings which consists, once the child can act with her hands voluntarily, of playing with food and with her feces. From this moment, that partial object which was "good" when swallowed is "not good" when it is touched. The other object, which was nice when mother took it, is not nice when it is the child who takes it.

2. The oral- and anal-sadistic stage, which is interwoven with the first phase, follows once there is the possibility of prehensile and throwing activity, because the hands are the places for transference from the oral and anal erogenous zone. What is done with the mouth and the anus is transposed to what is "well" done or "badly" done with the hands.

At the time of these two stages, in linguistic communication with the mother and intimate others, the child's desire that is transposed to motor expression is established through language and the reactions of others. Here the very complicated gradations of values cross and annul one another. When the child's taste is not satisfied by a food, she rejects it: that is bad. But then if she rejects something that is hot with her hand, that is good. When something is good and she wants to touch it, that may produce a catastrophe, and there are bad things that are pleasurable to touch. This is why, at this anal-sadistic phase, the gradations of values are structured, values that are contradictory to the desire and pleasure of the child, who is alienated in the desire

and pleasure of the mother. It is good to cry when one is uncomfortable, but bad from the point of view of the parents. At this stage a propensity to lie is incarnated in an infant whose libido is strong and who receives an education that contradicts what seems good to her and may also be opposed to her rhythm of mictation and defecation and to the rhythm of sleep. According to her spontaneous rhythm of sleep, the child is not sleepy: she must sleep, she must be quiet, she must remain in darkness, and she has no toys. All of this distorts desire in its realization, which is neither “good” nor “bad” but which this type of education makes “bad.” For children of both sexes, a masochistic morality may install itself at this age, in order to remain in harmony with the parents.

3. The phallic stage already began in the valorization of the nipple, a partial phallic object, both attractive and engulfing for the erogenous oral zone, and of the anal object which is the fecal stick, valuable, expelled, and given to the mother who is glad to take it, with a moral and an aesthetic in contradiction with the mimics of the mother.

But the phallic stage, as to the genitals, leads to the observation of sexual difference. It is more or less belated, when girl children before five or six have never had the occasion to see boys urinate. What adults must keep in mind is that sex does not yet exist for the infant. What is at stake are voluptuous erotic regions altogether and-what is especially erotic but occurs unrecognized for both the child and adults-the feelings sensed in the vulva, and perhaps the vagina, for the little girl, and the erectile excitements of his penis for the little boy. The phallic phase is thus urethral. The first time she sees the boy’s penis, every little girl wants to throw herself at it, saying “That is mine; give it to me, I want it.” This provokes hilarity in the boy and resentment in the girl when she sees the boy does not feel bothered. She returns to her mother: “Why don’t I have that like him?” This is where the mother’s speech may change the girl’s aesthetic and moral sense via the right words that identify her body with her child’s. And, correlatively, the boy’s body with the father’s body. Immediately what is phallic in the mother, her breasts, introduces a question for the little girl: “Why not me?” And the only answer is “When I was little, I too didn’t have them, and they developed when I became a young woman. When you are big, you too will have breasts.” It is necessary to speak the right words to little girls.

I knew one little girl of five who called her mother’s breasts “her big bellies,” which tells us much about the signifier of the stomach for the little girl, this stomach so important later in the psychosomatic problems of women, if they develop genital frustrations.

From this age of primary castration, the difference between boys and girls is obvious. Little girls take everything they can find to put or hide in bags, in secret corners, while the boy takes phallic objects and hides them in places (which are always the same) where one must seek out keys—especially what enters into holes. This proves how a spontaneous aesthetic sense and a spontaneous morality are at play in the two sexes, even when the girl or boy has not received any explanations.

Linked to this unconscious morality of the two sexes, there is, in French, an incompatible sense of the French word *tirer* for a girl and for a boy. For a girl, it is to draw or gather to herself; for the boy it is to shoot, “bang, bang.” There is a centripetal dynamic related to the word for the girl and a centrifugal dynamic for the boy. At this age also games that involve throwing balls begin, differently for each sex. The girl throws a ball with the hand away from the body. The boy receives a ball with the hand away from the body (a gesture transferred from orality) and throws a ball with the hand facing downward. Girls are ahead of boys in oral sublimation. Girls have a “well-oiled tongue,” so to speak. The boy, assured of having a penis, is not in a hurry to have language. Girls like to push a container in which they have put things, while the boy displaces objects for the pleasure of displacing them, certainly more than girls, but he prefers to be in the vehicle which is pushed more than pushing it. For girls this is already an identification with the mother, while the boy prefers to remain as the partial object of the mother.

From the moment the girl has accepted to be constructed sexually as she is, this provokes a symbolic development in her more quickly than in the boy. She shows curiosity, the desire to perform, the desire for the partial object represented in magical compartments or in the dolls as her father’s penis. Those around girls think that they behave like little mothers, which is not wrong, but they are oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic mothers, not mothers like their adult mothers.

When a boy at this age also plays with dolls, he does not demonstrate the need to have a father nor even a

mother for the dolls, while the little girl calls herself mother and says that her father is the doll's father. From the anal-sadistic phase and the phallic phase, the boy continues a dual situation in which through his behavior he represents his mother as much as his father, and the objects he cherishes, fluffy animals, for example, are an image of himself as being the image of the mother.

The girl, on the other hand, is struck, launched into a triangle situation of people in her imagination. Not to have the phallus allows her to symbolize the third object, this partial object the boy has between himself and his mother, and to symbolize it through many things which have the value of the partial phallus for her. Her curiosity about her body and the cleverness she has developed allow her to invest in her vulva and to make very exact tactile observations about it, observations that demonstrate her security and not called "bad." If it was called "bad," she continues to find it good, but she believes it is also bad, because mother called it so. Once I gave a little girl a doll and she immediately turned it upside down, tore away the little panties, hit it, and said: "She does not have a button; she is not interesting." The clitoral and vulval phases are confused at this moment. It involves the aesthetic and moral valuation of hollows, secrets, hidden compartments, the concern for veils, for folds, the devaluation of false folds as ugly. The love to sew buttons anywhere, no matter how many, is also a sublimation the little girl enjoys, because what is nice in this is to place breasts and clitorises everywhere. Concealing things in hollows, but not in exterior holes as a little boy does, or in a bag she won't part from, means that the valorization of the phallus leads the girl to a centripetal dynamic.

4. The continuation of the anal-vulval investment in the early Oedipus. Cleanliness of the sphincter in girls, which is established much more quickly than with boys, demonstrates that there is no longer confusion for her between the urethral, the anal, and the vulval, that is, the sexual. The desire to attract those who carry the phallus is demonstrated in an identification with the mother in housekeeping, when the mother is a good housekeeper, and the identification of her body with an object bearing signs that make boys notice her, or at least, make her imagine their attention: bows in the hair, even when they're not fashionable, necklaces, bracelets. And she is full of ingenuity in fashioning for herself all these baubles which overcompensate for the absence of her penis, but which also demonstrate the centripetal dynamic of attracting the look and attention of men to herself.

5. An alert bearing, a physical skill and grace develop in girls, contrary to boys who develop strength and agility. Girls develop grace and dancing skills. When girls and boys hear music, boys are moved by a kinesthetic rhythm of their skeleton organs, while girls are moved by undulatory motions and shakes of the pelvis.

6. Disguise. Boys like to disguise themselves in that which gives the impression of impressing others. They would like to be policemen, soldiers, presidents of the Republic, truck drivers, conductors; girls want to be mothers, ladies, wives, they want to surround themselves with veils, to put on jewelry, nailpolish and lipstick, even when their mothers don't use any.

7. The stage of entry into Oedipus is shown aesthetically no longer in the desire to make jewelry for themselves but to receive jewelry she doesn't have; but also she tells stories, she identifies with the heroine, and the heroine has a gentleman who gives her rings, necklaces, or cars. Now that women conduct themselves like men, girls like to have a little car among their various objects, but they don't play with the car as do boys, who make the car go back and forth. The little boy identifies himself with the strongest one, while the girl takes care of her own body as the sign of being the special object of the male.

Motor games are much more static for girls than for boys. Girls prefer to jump rope in place, to turn in a circle hopping on one leg, for two girls together to throw a ball without changing place. It is the opposite for boys. When one sees a boy play with a stone, he throws it as far as possible and doesn't retrieve it. If the girl throws a stone, she likes it returned or she will go to look for it. She likes to keep something and to play with what she keeps. Her ethics is as much anal as it is vaginal.

The girl begins to invest in favored boys. She calls them "boy friends," she tries to be kissed, she gets the boy to pull her hair before he says "let's run away". She does it for a minute, but she is not really interested: what she wants is to know that she is his favorite. What the boy wants is to play with her in games involving movement.

At the same time, the imagination of childbirth is different for the girl and the boy. When a little girl talks about “when she grows up,” she likes to think that she will have children with a husband and that the girls will be hers and the boys the father’s. When the boy, on the other hand, imagines the future, he generally will have only one boy, but he doesn’t know about the wife, he doesn’t dare say that it’s his mother, and besides he doesn’t think that she would be his mother. He will be the father and the mother.

When the family’s pediatrician is a woman, the boy doesn’t like to play doctor, unless he’s drawn into it by girls and the game allows him to be a little sadistic, as the woman doctor is. When the doctor is male, girls and boys like to play doctor, and the girls identify with the role, whether it’s male or female. Boys identify with the person.

The differences are very remarkable also when children play at shopping in games of exchange in which the one who plays the merchant gives a commercial object and the pretended client gives money and pretends to carry off the object. Girls don’t play at being a butcher, they only play at roles women can take. When there are not roles women can take, the girl would rather be the client. The boy plays the role of the merchant or of the client, but never the role of the female client or female merchant. This shows to what extent children involved in the oedipal stage are concerned mainly with identifying with roles but also, and especially, with the person who plays the role.

Let’s look at children who attend preschool. Girls coming home will play at being the she-teacher, but never boys. Sometimes boys amuse themselves by redoing at home the little tasks the she-teacher gave to them, and they play school in their own way. When very little boys have a male teacher, which is more and more rare, they like to play the teacher with other boys. Their toy animals are never girls but always boys.

During the Oedipal stage, which can last until six or seven years for the boy and longer for the girl, the girl’s ego libido is gratified by the lack of worry about that precious member, the penis. The boy’s narcissism is involved in the necessity of protecting the erect, agile, adroit, formidable body of his, while the girl who has accepted her sex seems to have nothing to fear, except the aggressiveness of those who don’t please her. As well, she develops caution, prudence, economy, a sense of conservation, and the disguise of her treasures.

The risky act is a boy’s thing. When the erogenous zone is exposed to everybody, as it is for the boy, he risks a lot. Jealous of his father’s penis, he projects on adults a jealousy of his. He is afraid of being attacked by adults. At the same time, he wants to provoke them in order to disguise his fear. When the girl fears a boy’s attack, she cries out loud, for she is not at all afraid of showing fear. When the boy feels his erectility, he must leave for war to risk it, to exhibit it, to show off. His role is to assert himself and to swagger in order to affirm the security of his person, despite the lapses of his erect penis. These bits of bravery and of soldierly bearing, when they are echoed in the admiring comments of those around him, allow him to breathe during depressive times. He can hope then that his prowess in sports and in battle protects him from the verification of his genital potency. Strangely, boys are much more delicate than girls are. This is to say that at the smallest attack on their bodily integrity, the fantasy of the supposed aggression which girls have undergone returns as what might happen to them.

The boy and the man must overcome his passive oral and anal drives, for they are not only threats of castration but of anal rape as well. He does not dress in veils or give importance to seductive details or enveloping movements—that would be much too dangerous. In addition to his own body whose integrity he maintains, the boy must also maintain and protect his exposed goods, his penis and testicles, and moreover protect and defend and keep the obligations he has undertaken. Here what often comes into play in a complicated way is masculine masochism, for he must refuse a maternal regression which is tempting at the same time and often necessary for the recouping of a fragmentation to which he is much more subjected in his fantasies than girls. Girls are at ease; for there is nothing more in them to cut off. In effect, the boy really risks a castrating fragmentation of his body in face-to-face battle. He risks it imaginatively in erectile fantasies of sexual conquest, since they are always followed by the flexibility of the penis. He also risks it symbolically in his name through his wife’s infidelities, in the failures of his brothers or his descendants, who carry his name.

As to the relation to his father, if he sketches it out in his body and not in his fantasy or culturally through symbolic mediation, he may be dominated by the affects that proceed from the jealousy of the success he projects on his father, his insufficiency in relation to his father. And when he is in an inferior position, for whatever reason, and he approaches his father to make himself cared for, a liminal fear is always present,

that of becoming again a baby; or if the father is very strong and speaks powerfully, the boy fears to tell him his weaknesses out of fear of being ridiculed.

The dilemma of masochism and narcissism is much more important in the childhood of boys than in girls'. It is strange that this critical libidinal condition has until now passed unnoticed and that the fate of boys has been seen as enviable by many psychoanalysts, especially male psychoanalysts.

For the girl, reasons for anxiety exist only when she disobeys the mother, and she may think the mother will tell the father, and he will degrade her. But she can keep her head very easily in relation to the mother, if she can at all pretend to be in accord with her. As to the father, she has learned to know by what means she may disarm him. For one, it is through crying; for another, it is by making him laugh; for another, it is by being sweet—thus girls escape anxiety. The boy is not able to escape it. He must not cry, nor must he play with dolls, since that is a little girl's behavior. And many boys need to play with dolls in secret in order to affirm themselves as mother and father, that is to be strong in relation to himself.

If the male does not show himself erectile, turgid, indifferent to sarcasm and attacks, before girls, before women, before the father, before rivals, he is judged to be weak, and he will be an object of compassion or rejected. This would destroy his masculine pride. Through what difficult condition of constant testimony to his doubly phallic form—in his body and in his sex—may a man have the right to consider himself the bearer of his sex?

His female partner, rich in what she hides, composes emotions no one witnesses in continuity, a rhythmic physiological stability according to the immutable rhythms of her period. Certainly the woman, always sure of her maternity while the man may only know paternity through his wife's speech, does not need to give her name to the child. The child knows who is the mother, but as to the father, she only knows him through the mother. To be a woman, a woman does not need others constantly telling her about it. To become genitally mature, she needs a man who loves her. She is better supplied than man by narcissistic chances.

The genital erogenous sensations of the woman; orgasm

The different kinds of feminine orgasm are knowable both objectively, through the testimony of men, and subjectively, through the testimony of women.

In their endogenous origin, the drives exist in relation with the female organism. Whatever its obvious provocation by the occasion of an exogenous, sensorial cause, desire, once it is signified to the woman's senses, focuses on the genital region. She experiences the sensation of clitoral erection and of vaginal turgidity, accompanied by heat and by the secretion of fluids and by pleasure excited by growing intensity to a maximum, the orgasm. This overwhelming pleasure is sometimes accompanied by the emission of fluids more than during the stage of increasing pleasure, but sometimes not. After the height of turgidity and voluptuousness, the feeling of excitation diminishes more or less quickly, until a complete calming of tension is reached, characterized by the detumescence of the erogenous zone and the end of the process of fluid secretion and by the need for rest, which makes any attempts at external manipulation painful and sometimes grievous. After orgasm a woman feels a general bodily relaxation which often brings about sleep, more or less long.

One may distinguish:

- * clitoral orgasm
- * clitoral-vulval orgasm
- * vaginal orgasm
- * uterine orgasm.

Uterine orgasm is wrongly confused with the preceding orgasms, especially with vulval-vaginal orgasm, because the woman does not feel it consciously and thus never talks about it. I think it should be distinguished, as much for objective, descriptive reasons as for reasons that concern psychoanalytic theory of the libido.

These orgasms may be felt in isolation or in a chain, one calling forth the conditions that bring about another, but they may not be distinguished in the woman's pleasure. And at each level of the progression of pleasure, the process (as in the stages of libidinal evolution) may be interrupted, repressed, denied, or

replaced with a symptom.

The length of time necessary for the realization of orgasm, its intensity and quality, are very variable, even for the same woman. The period of rest between orgasms, allowing them to be satisfactory, is also variable. All these factors depend not only on the woman but also on the couple she forms with her partner, in general and in the moment. Once orgasm is felt in the course of coitus, it is always repeatable with a quality and an intensity that may vary without falling under a level of minimal pleasure. Differences in the emotional and sensual intensity of orgasms obtained with the same partner are the most specific characteristic of the genital sexuality of the woman.

Clitoral excitation leads to vulval-vaginal secretions and to the anticipated and demanded pleasure of penetration. These secretions make penetration voluptuous for both partners. Excitation of the nipple is comparable to clitoral excitation, but it may not exist, just as clitoral excitation may not, or on the contrary it may exist in compensation for the narrowness or absence of the clitoris; it cannot bring pleasure beyond the moment when the excitation of the vagina enters the next phase. There are also primary vaginisms for virgins which are caused only by the prolongation of masturbation of the breasts and which are the limit of sexual activity with lovers who delay penetration too long.

Clitoral excitation cannot be sustained for long by itself and its orgasm, when it comes before the unlocking of other pleasures, is deceiving, dissonant, ambiguous, contradictory to the vulval pleasure it otherwise unlocks. This fact is perhaps due to the correspondence of the erectility of the clitoris with the muscular skeleton, which is the mediator of the organization and conservation of the kinetic body image. A woman's orgasm is full only when accompanied by the loosening of all the muscles, excluding the perineal muscles, serving to grasp the penis, muscles whose motility is not experienced consciously much, and by the loosening of the abdominal muscles, which had not to be invested in the relation to the object during the phallic phase. On the other hand, the clitoris may have been invested during the archaic oral phase as a tongue or a tooth whose protrusion accompanies secretions. But its exclusive importance did not lead to differentiated feelings.

Contrary to what men think, many women do not have their desire willingly focused on the clitoris or, in any case, not in a constant way, while many have their desire focused on the periphery of the vulval-vaginal cavity from the start of coitus, and the pleasure of the clitoris is as if accessory to the moment of maximal vaginal enjoyment. This may occur perhaps at the moment of arousal of the cervix—which is an ambiguous organ, pricked up as a phallus at the end of the vaginal cavity, the tactile sensitivity and even the existence of which women often don't know before they have got pleasure from it in the course of coitus. In brief, clitoral orgasm on its own cannot allay sexual tension.

This evidence is not better known among men, because generally they want to give a pleasure to women that seems to be exciting only because men understand something about it, and also surely because this pleasure of the partner's little penis is fun for them, less dangerous than the desiring hole of the vagina which is sometimes imagined as an abyss, and even as an abyss with teeth.

Vaginal excitation involves voluptuous sensations of the swelling of vulval-vaginal mucous membranes and of circular movements in a progressively undulatory rhythm, from the outside to the inside of her body. Given certain intensity, these sensations absolutely demand the penetration of the penis whose representation imposes it as the only object adequate and desired. The undulatory coaptation the vagina performs on the penis necessitates a minimal tonicity of the perineal muscles. The back and forth movements of the man, along with the peristaltic vaginal movements and the pressures of the vaginal walls from the perineal muscles, enhance this sensuality for both partners. The woman feels this motility in her pleasure, but it is not completely governable; it is, in part, a reflex of pleasure. During the phase of vaginal sensuality and from the moment of penetration, a modification of the general muscular tone is produced if the woman is not frigid. There is a relaxation of the locomotive muscles of the body and a parallel relaxation of auto-observation and auto-control. With the corporeal possession of the penis, the unconscious or preconscious idea of the other's phallus is surpassed and external references of the bodies disappear. The rhythm, the intensity, the quality of the perceptual-motor exchanges of coitus are linked to both the physical and emotional understanding of the partners.

Some conclude from these observations that sexual pleasure may derive from an anatomical-physiological strategy by a kinesthetic therapy. The penis's simultaneous contact with the clitoris and the vaginal tract may release an orgasm that has previously been withheld, but it is more about the masturbatory and fetishistic component of sexual relations, maybe satisfactory at the level of pleasure, than about their genital components and their symbolic effects in the relation between the partners.

Disagreement in the coitus may derive from the incompatibility in the size of the organs, or the partners' rhythmic contractions, or from other discordance, but they must also be linked to discordant mental and affective representations, which by themselves deny a positive value to the intercourse.

In the case of an understanding between partners whose rhythms are harmonious, the circular undulating movements of the vagina spread unconsciously through the vaginal walls which hug the penis and provide a swelling of secretions from the cervix; if the penis's impact or contact reaches cervix, it provokes to the point of maximal vaginal sensation the vaginal spasms whose effect is spermatic ejaculation, at the maximal moment of feminine enjoyment. The woman who was active and aware up until this moment of voluptuousness, can now only be passive, completely invaded by receptive sensations, and especially the erotic participation of the cervix provokes a truly satisfying orgasm. The relaxation of tension it brings is not however as long lasting as what is brought about by the association of the vaginal orgasm with the orgasm of the uterine walls. The insufficient resolution of sexual tension through the vaginal orgasm alone may, with certain women whose orgasm is achieved very quickly, involve a vaginal orgasm of the vulval sphere for a few minutes, more rarely a spasm of the anus which is sometimes painful; these are the signs of a remaining erotic tension due to the lack of the involvement of the uterus in the movements characteristic of orgasm. The involvement of the uterus and of the tissues in coitus is generally motivated by the tactile excitation by the penis on the cul-de-sac at the rear of the vagina, that is, on the cervix, or by the spermatic inundation of the cervix.

The uterine orgasm [orgasme utéro-annexiel] is characterized by the movements of the uterus which sway back and forth with a certain rhythmic articulation of the cervix on the uterus. The undulatory movements of the uterus continue those of the vagina in a kind of suction-intake, to the point that sperm is ejaculated into the tubes in a few seconds (without uterine orgasm, the course of the sperm takes much longer). The movements of the uterine orgasm are completely due to reflex, and the woman is very rarely, and then very little, aware of them. This orgasm brings the greatest enjoyment, one both secret and silent, a pleasure so vivid that it is not compatible with woman's sense of existence. The woman's partner is the only witness of it. Just after the end of this organic and psychic revolution the woman regains the consciousness she has momentarily lost, and she remembers having been carried away by her enjoyment to the last point of vaginal impact, profoundly carried away as if by a ground swell, at the same time that she experiences an intense feeling of well being and of gratefulness towards her partner.

The uterine orgasm is always completely satisfying for a woman, as much emotionally as physically. It is never followed by painful spasms, nor by passive or active vaginism as a reaction. Its effect of energetic rejuvenation is felt in all psychosomatic and emotional areas.

The beneficial effects of sexual orgasm pushed Aldous Huxley, in his novel *Brave New World*, to fantasize the social organization of obligatory orgasmic satisfaction. One also understands the theoretically justified, rational motivations of certain psychoanalysts, like Reich, who sought a psychotherapeutic technique to "lead" the subject to orgasm. Nevertheless, the total absence of any critical sense, as much on the part of the patient as the analyst in the course of these "exercises," makes reading about these labors very deceiving.

The scientific Ego Ideal that emerges, the ideal of a blissful and therapeutic fornication, is a perverse ideal that involves a dangerous pseudomystique of psychoanalysis or its fetishistic perversion.

The value of orgasm in the union of two people linked to each other by a relation of love is entirely different. Their coitus is then symbolic of the reciprocal gift of the attentive presence each brings to the other and of the existence each senses in the other. The ephemeral imaginary power they reciprocally promise and give each other to accede to the phallus in the reality of their bodies focuses the meaning of their desire, that is, of their complete being. The most chaste loves find the representation of their happiness in the close embrace of bodies accompanied by orgasm.

The fruit of the complete vaginal and uterine orgasm a woman experiences in coitus is triple: the relaxation

of all tension, a nirvanic beatitude, and the conviction each time of an happiness never experienced before. She feels tenderness and gratefulness for her partner, whose total person, the only human witness to her existence during a discontinuity of time and consciousness in her orgasm, may justify her own “slit”, which would be unjustified without him. The person of her lover is associated with her sensation of rejuvenation. Emotional resonance of a particular quality is added when coitus has the chance, even if minimal, of impregnating, especially if each partner is socially prepared to assume this outcome. This is especially true of the woman’s genital orgasm. Is it because there is an echo of the archaic desire for the paternal penis, replaced in early infancy with the fetishistic doll? Is it because of the opening onto the future of an act which is totally a-logical in itself but is nevertheless marked for the woman by her greatest acceptance, since the future child situates that act in a triangular dialectic of fertility, signifying the living perpetuity of the lovers’ understanding beyond the ephemeral, dual encounter?

Coitus is truly a surrealistic act in the full meaning of the term, a deliberate act in a suspended time, in a place where two bodies become derealized by the loss of their common and complementary penile reference to the phallus. The point where an impersonal phallic power manifests itself, born of their abandoned narcissism, is for each person in the couple the height of life drives’ confrontation (with their organic, circulatory, and respiratory rhythms, whose amplitude is intensified as far as cardiac acceleration) with death drives, in their silent, total, and profound loss of “conscious” consciousness, that is, the enjoyment during the orgasmic achievement.

The attainment of her desire in orgasm demands a total participation of the woman in the emotional and sexual encounter with her partner. This creates a problem regarding what is phallic in her narcissism, regarding the freedom this narcissism grants her to be open to a man’s reception and acceptance in reality. Her narcissism ignores the gift of a woman to the man, whatever may be her fantasies about her partner and however emotionally positive she may feel about him. Without the actual presence in reality of the man’s body, of his action in the meeting of bodies, in foreplay and in full coitus, her narcissism through disturbing reverie will drive to a failure if, once the man is there, her phallic narcissism is not situated in his reality here and now.

Orgasm also operates in a surrealistic field when it brings with it—once self-consciousness returns—a satisfaction that is iridescent with the prism of the libido linked to its genetic evolution. In effect, one may analyze in the effects sensed during orgasmic enjoyment a sensation of ethical and aesthetic plentitude, of satisfaction, in the sense of a pacified oral libido, of the elimination of all muscular tension, in the sense of a renewed anal libido, of gratitude towards the other, his body, her own body, towards the world, for the complete annihilation of anxiety about life or death, for “the restoration of the integrity” of the whole person, a putting into order of the narcissism that was eclipsed for a moment in a zero time and an absent place.

Does not each coitus phylogenetically involve the primal scenes of each partner, bringing them in an imaginary ontogenetic regression to the basic triangular feeling of each human being: two beings start from a desire and a love that joins them and thus sign their harmony with a triangular destiny of desire? This total confidence of the subject, in perfect adjustment with her body and in a relation of total trust in her partner, is a personal and impersonal confidence, like the conformity with the laws of creation of the species, which are themselves in conformity with cosmic laws.

Additional excitation, sometimes the loss of frigidity resulting from the sadistic verbal, gestured, or bodily behavior of her loved partner, may be understood by means of the narcissistic danger for the woman of feeling herself become nothing. This is because during coitus she places in the man all the phallicism coming from the pregenital stages and everything in the active drives that dominates the passive drives. Almost painful sensations coming from other than the genital regions would be a token of the other’s anal interest for herself, so that she no longer senses the limits of her body but, thanks to the other, feels herself to be a lasting object. The wish to be constrained, to be led to submit to the sexual act which makes up part of the pleasure of some women might be explained by the impossibility to escape from the danger associated with orgasm which adds to the recurring danger of oral-sadistic, anal-sadistic, and urethral-aggressive investments of the whole body, as well as the danger from the passive investments of all the phases, including the genital phase, on the place of the female sex. Her genitals are over-valued as being promoted eventually to a fantastic catastrophic rape, which all the more engages the Ego in submission. The pleasure these women, who ask their partners to engage in this mode of excitation, get is even more intense in the

enjoyment after orgasm that reveals the woman the power she exercises over the man by accepting his power over her.

Frigidity

If males are usually gratified by their desire and by the pleasure of sexual performance, why is it that women are so often deprived of such satisfaction? Is it really due, as one so often hears, to male egoism, to the demands of a woman's prolonged enjoyment before the orgasm which men do not grant to them? I do not think so. Male awkwardness in the initial deflowering intercourse is common, and this may besides be averted if fathers fulfill their educative role for their sons and mothers for their daughters.

The powerful impetus of genital desire in a healthy and loving woman may remove the fears and inhibitions produced by a coitus made painful by an awkward partner.

It happens that frigidity will disappear with a woman's brief adventure with a more skillful man which reassures her narcissism and allows the partners who loved each other but had not yet found a mutually satisfying relationship to find one. If love exists between two people, sexual harmony follows. However, even in the case where the male partner triggered the woman's frigidity, her cure and often the recovered harmony of the couple depend on the woman alone. Besides, one may discover, analyzing the relations between the woman and her partner, that it was the woman who introduced the initial failure, especially when her partner was well known and valued as a good lover before the couple got together.

I have as testimony the cure of frigid women, which is unknown to their husbands or lovers. The cure brings on the transformation of their subjectivity in sexual relations and, as a consequence, their partners discover the pleasure in giving them pleasure, even though they were beginning to give up giving pleasure to their women. It is not the husband or the lover who changes, it is the woman who, in the sexual encounter, becomes again receptive to her man's reality, after having expressed in the psychoanalytic cure and having brought back to their origin (long before her genital life and her meeting with the partner) the inhibitory unconscious processes which her partner only actualized.

The mutual narcissistic valorization of the partners in foreplay and in the exchanges of words of love after orgasm is always important in the genital dialectic, but it seems to play less of a role for a man than for a woman for whom her narcissistic valorization is fundamentally necessary, especially if she is not sexually experienced. The male partner's ignorance of this leads to a frigidity which becomes an habit in a woman initially capable of orgasm and still capable of it, one who has entered into the beginning of the oedipal situation, when the little girl wants to identify with the mother, and whose first sexual experience was neither precocious or traumatizing.

Erotic ignorance in some women does not always originate in the repression of genital drives, but in their still undiscovered presence and in their latent investment in still virginal areas. Sometimes the man, who is loved for himself and as a phallic representative, invests insufficiently the woman as an object choice or (because of an insufficiently sublimated homosexuality or a fixation on his mother) is unable, without the danger of a return of castration anxiety, to valorize his partner's sex by his words, which is still for her a hole whose circumference alone is known and sensed. In this case, she risks of not investing narcissistically the internal mucosa walls of the vagina nor the subtle emotions linked to profound sensations. If the woman is not recognized in the valuable gift of her sex to the man, her consciousness will ignore her sex, even if this will be present by its cultural, sublimated, productive effectiveness.

A woman's sex is also engaged in love, independently of sexual success, because at all levels of the libido love is sublimation in the idealization of the person she loves, a person whose desire, whatever may be the drives involved, makes her lacking to him in the sense that she represents for him all the points of reference of narcissism. When a woman is in love with a man and feels desire for him, if coitus did not give her an orgasm complete for her, she does not understand that it is through her sex that she is fastened to this man, and she is not, as to her own narcissism, freed from permanent worry about him instead of a woman whose partner has "awakened" her, who requites her love and knows how to lead her to orgasm. The effects of orgasm on a woman in love are symbolic and mutative. They lead her to genitivity and its sublimations. Just as phonemes, pleasant auditory sensations, must be assembled in an organization human encounters constitute as language, so in the encounter of the sexes emotions should be exchanged in an emotional

mediation expressed in words so that erotic plays become a language of love between the partners and not simply stereotypic or acrobatic figures of copulation which are meant to have a hygienic effect or a fertilization effect.

Erotic or amatory dissatisfaction and repression

The sexual and love relations between two partners who have reached the genital stage lead to a reciprocal knowledge in a shared bodily dialectic which only themselves can tell in words. But the absence of a physical accord does not necessarily signify the absence of creative understanding, at least for the woman. There are very variable kinds of coupling which satisfy and use her libidinal possibilities without repression and neurosis, involving only transitory reactive symptoms whose enjoyment (in the unconscious sense of drive relaxation following the unconscious pleasure principle, which may be accompanied by conscious displeasure) appeases the woman's narcissism. These are psychosomatic problems in reaction to a lack of orgasmic enjoyment, which are not always a sign of neurosis nor always accompanied by neurosis. The plasticity of women is very great. I attribute that to the weaker repression in the woman than in the man and to a less precocious Oedipus being structured in girls, which permits the involved drives to remain labile longer than in boys.

So long as a woman entered Oedipus in childhood and developed well up to and including puberty, if she is still inexperienced or if she encounters a relative impotence in her partner or even a perversion, she organizes her investments according to the exigencies of the man she has chosen and whom she loves, sometimes because of the sole fact that he had chosen and thus narcissized her. Women are far more tolerant of orgasmic frustration than are men but much less tolerant of frustration of love. One may even wonder whether a genital organization of the libido is not compatible simply with signs of esteem from the object of love in chaste contacts, where her belief in the loved person would be the main point for a woman. One must note that many narcissistic women who are phobic, obsessed, manifestly homosexual, hysteric, or even psychotic are not frigid and may experience not only clitoral but vulval-vaginal orgasms as well. Nevertheless it is doubtful if they reach uterine orgasms. In any case, the fact of feeling voluptuous sensations in the course of heterosexual relations or the ability to know how to respond in erotic play is not in itself a sign of psychic equilibrium.

It is better not to speak too quickly of neurosis when one is before a frigid woman who asks for the help of a psychoanalyst when no other symptom manifests itself, and she feels attachment to her mate and to their common life, which gives her life a full meaning. Many men report that women, who say they lack any need or desire for sex but submit to coitus without displeasure, may nevertheless feel a general sense of well being after coitus, although they deny any conscious pleasure without, for all that, feeling any displeasure. Their partner perceives in these women the manifestations of their profound genital organs, and the involvement of the uterus, as it happens in the most complete orgasms, remains unrecognized by these women. These are silent clitoral and vulval-vaginal orgasms, without the consciousness of enjoyment.

The problem of feminine enjoyment is not yet theoretically resolved. The absence of sensitivity in the anterior genital organs (the only conscious sensitivity) is probably related to the ethical organization of her libidinal drives, whether the woman is neurotic or not. There again her cultural plasticity appears. She lacks conscious sexual desire but she feels well being after coitus even without consciously experiencing orgasm with a partner she loves and who loves and desires her; on the other hand, she does not manifest neurosis, her emotional accord with her mate is excellent, she shows efficacy in their common life, intellectual openness to his work, respect of the father of her children, she motivates love in them and she creates a good ambience at home. The emotional impact on her children's training and on their oedipal resolution is good. All this is proof that her genital drives are in order. All this makes us think about women's enjoyment of conscious frigidity and poses a theoretical problem still unresolved.

After having discovered the existence of unconscious feelings of guilt because of their effects, is psychoanalysis facing here another manifestation of the unconscious life and its dynamic in unconscious feelings of happiness? I won't go so far as to say that a woman who enjoys sexual relations is an infantile woman who doesn't know she is one, or rather a frigid woman in sexual relations is a model of sublime tenderness. Nevertheless, if her partner does not drive her to the partial desires of her erotic zones by

awakening her eroticism, her esthetical and ethical values regarding her own person may direct and sublimate so much narcissistic libido into work or cultural activities, so that she is not sufficiently motivated to seek out genital satisfaction. She does not project on the penis, nor on its erectibility (so indispensable for the narcissism of every man), nor even on pleasurable sensations of her sex, on what in her desire is authentically genital. This desire has invested and awaited the complete person of the man. And when such a woman finds or believes she finds the man's love, representing the phallus in his complete person, she may—out of love for him and through the proofs she gives him of her love—express and symbolize all her genital drives to maintain her love without intercourse.

Her sex as a girl, since the oedipal castration, went through the failure of her first genital desire, deprived for a lifetime of the pleasure of conquering the favors of the paternal penis in an incestuous fecundity.

The oedipal resolution, if it was completed, left in the girl's sex some depths she does not know, except for the vague sensations coming from the passive drives of the uterus without a partial object where to localize them. She is devoted to her wait for future "development," for a feminine destiny outside her family. If the oral and passive anal drives joined with the passive genital drives at the moment of Oedipus were also marked by oedipal castration, all her drives were henceforth invested otherwise than in her sex in the access to creative and cultural values. Her sex remained silently invested with passive genital drives, like Sleeping Beauty.

Puberty, the constant tension her menses awaken, the cyclical vitality of her genital organs, the phallic appearance of her breasts excite her consciousness of becoming a woman along with a rivalry with other women and, simultaneously, a complicity with them in regard to men, while her libido again arouses a growing unconscious investment in her feminine organs by means of passive genital drives. But she also knows herself as a person, thanks to which she invests her body with narcissism by means of her drives. She also knows herself through the feelings of all her sensitive being because of men's approach and attention. This is because she knows her genitality is the mediator of access to the body of the man, she feels agitated and ready for love, and she knows as well that she is promised to maternity through her genitality.

She precociously feels a desire for maternity from puberty due more often to the death drives than to passive genital drives as a feminine subject. By death drives I refer to her feminine position in the human species as an object which may prevail in a girl when during Oedipus the oedipal resolution has not marked her sex with the castration of oral and anal drives, which would thus be liberated for sublimations in the service of the subject. This desire to give birth would represent the residue of her oral and anal drives. Then when she enters puberty and is moved by the desire to give birth and by associated fantasies, she fears its realization as well as not being sure of having found a completely trustworthy love object. Thus she remains reserved about the gift of herself in a meeting of bodies to which her genital drives and her love push her, and perhaps, without her being settled on a man, her fantasies of pregnancy are sufficiently involved in death drives to provoke some of them to the realization of this desire of pregnancy in coitus. The desire for a child is not evidence that the woman has reached the level of adult genital drives. This desire exists in little girls at a pregenital age. But it is possible that a girl who does not impatiently wait being a mother has few means of investing her genital organs and is ignorant of their eroticism as long as a man has not revealed it to her.

On the other hand, a woman who has great sexual satisfactions, especially if they are precociously pregenital and then genital, is much more narcissized than another. She introjects the desire she provokes and, living off feeling herself an object for another, because of this fact she perceives herself less than another subject and she is less driven to invest her desire in cultural values, to express it and to satisfy it in sublimation and in creative, verbal, social encounters. Submitted to more intense genital drives as an adult, she is probably less driven to strengthen the differential object libido which characterizes female subjects who have become conscious of their sexual desire, that is to say women who are more evolved genitally and engaged in cultural sublimations.

In short, there is a contradiction between the richness of cultural investments in a woman and the narcissistic investment of her sex and even of her search of a man for sexual satisfactions. A woman who never experiences sexual satisfaction in her encounters with a man and in coitus does not exist.

The woman's sex as an area of her body—a sensitive cavity made responsive by the play of love which may awaken the woman to eroticism and thereby allow the discovery of the intersubjective language of the sexes in her encounters with her partners—may remain a place of misrecognition for her without its being

insensitive. The total absence of masturbation among many girls after the oedipal resolution is a real fact, as surprising as this may seem to women who remember giving themselves up to masturbation at a late age and to have known pleasure, guilt, or disappointment in it. This absence of masturbation is not in itself a sign neither of health nor of neurosis. It may be due to the absence of a partial image that fits the intuition of her desire; this desire, directed no longer to the partial oral or anal object, as it was in the pregenital stage, nor at the paternal penis nor the incestuous child—in reality the imaginary object of a gift from her father—reduces her sex to silence but only because of the lack of an interlocutor in her real present.

In any case, whatever the presence of masturbation in the girl or its absence before defloration, the value given to the characteristics of the man's penis in the love a woman has for him is rarely essential. This is always a surprise for the man, so proud of his sexual prowess and so critical on account of his virile part. I have known some men so convinced of being disadvantaged by nature when they compare their sex to that of other men that they understand nothing of the satisfaction and the fidelity of the women they love and who love them. The narcissism of men and of women is very different, as much in its elaboration in the course of their lives as in its maintenance in adult life.

Most women can reach forms of satisfying, orgasmic sexual relations with their body lovers, if they love them with the heart, and if speech concerning that heart and body are exchanged with them.

The only women who lack a favorable prognosis are those who were sadistically deflowered after a marriage about whose bodily contract and erotic implication they were ignorant, that is, after a sexual act they did not desire with a man they did not choose. And also women who were raped as children by respected men who were invested oedipally, especially if the unlawful seduction contaminated the little girl with the shame her violator felt at not having controlled his perverse act and with the constraint he imposed of never speaking of what happened between them, which completely blocks all the girl's symbolic life in relation to sexuality.

The traumatism is even more severe if the rape consisted of anal coitus or of only passive submission to the masturbatory practices of an incestuous adult. Rape in childhood by the intermediary of an animal is severely destructive, because it results from the girl's promiscuity with a perverse and even psychotic adult.

Rapes before a witness—even if the rapes are only fantasies, as are spankings in a sadomasochistic scene in which the child feels being “the thing” of her parents in public, excited by the so called correction—are also traumatizing. It is also sexual traumatism for the girl to be submitted to repeated washings by her mother.

This signifies the compulsive anxiety of a mother who doesn't know she is perverse, to whom the child submits from compliance or fear of reprisals, reprisals which are even worse in the idea she has of them.

I have seen the inhibitory effects on sexuality of a narcissism traumatized by the complete unclothing in public imposed on a little girl during hospital consultations. An illness or a deformation is something abnormal—why does this concern the eyes and hands of young men and women who touch it while involving themselves in and talking about the child's body without talking to the child herself? These social situations,

in which she was robbed of her quality as a subject, exacerbated her narcissism, which may lead to a difficulty in her genital relation when she becomes an adult. In effect, in order to invest her person as genitally desirable, a woman must be sure that her body is felt as alluring through her beauty, that what is feminine in her person encourages the man to speak with her and to know her subjectivity better, but eventually leaving her with the means to escape, to evade the look that doesn't please her. In the public consultations in which the girl was stripped naked, this value was inverted. The curiosity directed to her illness or deformation made abnormality the cause of her becoming an object of sight, of touch, of speech, and of interest. Parents don't understand these painful experiences, scolding and lecturing their children who refuse to completely undress; traces of ambiguous eroticism remain in children who have such repeated experiences in their childhood. This complicates their access to erotic genital sexuality. These are perverting “exhibitions” imposed on young patients by doctors, who remain unaware of their effects. The same necessity in the name of scientific interest has no neurotic relevance for adults or sexually active young women.

There is an antinomy for every woman between the narcissism of her body—in the care she takes with it and in the appearance she likes to give with her clothes and her bearing, which are language for the other—and the narcissism of her sex which is not visible, an antinomy whose mode of integration specifies the personality in each case. After oedipal castration, the girl may, through displacement and eventually disinvestment of her sexual hole, not sensitive outside coitus' chances, secondarily invest her entire body as

a phallic representative, because it is the body which, from a distance, involves men in desiring her.

Secondary frigidity

When for a more or less justified reasons a couple harmonious and happy until then sees its sexual ardor disappear, and the partners do not dare to talk about it between themselves or with a doctor or a therapist, after a number of failures it becomes very difficult to change the situation, as much for the woman who is disappointed, hopeless, or silently resentful as for the man who is humiliated and silently resentful as well. With the reawakening of castration anxiety, the man has neither the inclination nor the courage to approach what he thinks is a wall or a panther. He keeps thinking about his failure and he fantasizes out loud of other affairs—for compensation or revenge—and either he does it or he becomes impotent. He tells her: “You will never again make love; you are too old. Besides, you were never made for it.” He regresses to feelings of oedipal inferiority: “nobody” loves him, because she has no more desire for him. He comes to want his woman to have a lover, as his mother once had his father. Or else he imagines he is one too many at home. He thinks himself unworthy of being anything but a wet blanket with his children, he punishes them, whom he nevertheless cherishes. He tries to get absorbed in his work, but he lacks energy, dissatisfied with himself because denarcissized in his sex. He may regress into drinking or psychosomatic illnesses. The vicious circle is thereby established. Denarcissized by her husband’s declarations that she is not longer desired, the woman masochistically retreats into her misfortune and domestic, maternal, or social activities in an obsessive way that excuses her of incompetence before her genital Superego. But a latent regression to emotions of oedipal inferiority is established and leads her back to being the derisive object she was for her father. He seems to her to repeat that role.

There should be a solid social regard and a long, earlier period of sexual harmony for such couples to stay together, becoming little by little a friendly couple, falsely chaste, where one of the two passively admits to what s/he believes to be his/her genital impotence while the other suffers from what s/he believes s/he provoked more than did the partner, without wanting to admit it. In psychological consultations about children, one sees such couples who may be very good culturally and socially. The child was in his very being, generally at the time of Oedipus, the revealer of the parents’ genital conflict. Something doesn’t work in the child’s oedipal resolution, although neither one of the parents has clinically developed neurotic symptoms. It is the effect of the mother’s jealousy on the boy which he was not conscious of. The parents suffer, and the child develops a neurosis.

The tolerance of such sexual situations may endure a very long time without symptoms up until a libidinal spur linked to an adulterous temptation for one of the partners, which elicits symptoms in the wife, the children, or the husband if it is repressed. This is even if the person tempted has not given in and nobody knows what this person is up to. If the adulterous temptation is not repressed, it provokes an emotional crisis in the couple, but the easing of sexual tension is immediate, for both the unfaithful partner and for the children. It allows the regression to stop and the couple to talk. Often after the crisis has passed, they rediscover their sexual equilibrium and, even better, discover each other again, more in harmony than before. In secondary frigidity, the momentary emotions during coitus play a diffuse role, which colors the emotional climate of tenderness or animosity, erotic plays or aggressive gestures. This sensitivity to the emotional climate may make coitus non-orgasmic for the woman, which is taken by her partner as a sign of rejection, which it isn’t. It is a sign of the woman’s transitory inhibition. But this absence of orgasm in a woman who usually has it denarcissizes her mate, especially if they can’t talk about it.

Feminine masochism

The sentimental modulation between partners may, through an intensity of aggression, introduce frigidity in a woman who was not previously frigid. Active (sexual and emotional) anal and oral components are reactivated and overflow the welcoming genital attitude towards her partner. This ambivalence, effect of the fact that the heart relations are parasite to the body relations, may involve a conscious or unconscious appeal to the partner’s aggressive, sadistic, behavior. The goal of such a fantasy, which is associated with a simulacrum of execution, is by means of a muscular control symbolically suffered to annul the beginning of an active phallic defense that accompanies a woman’s desire to give herself and gets in the way of her

obtaining the muscular resolution that is the indispensable condition for the priority of an erotic vaginal investment and especially of the complete uterine orgasm. These fantasies, no more than the responsive behavior which allows them to begin to be realized, are due neither to a masochistic structure in the woman nor to sadistic behavior of the man. They are auxiliaries to the intensification of passive genital drives, which may appear in secondary frigidity.

The masochistic perversions are another thing altogether. Here the pain of contusion or of breaking provokes an orgasm, even without coitus. It is characteristic of homosexuals, or at least latent homosexuals, in a body that is narcissistically invested as the partial (fetal or anal) phallus of their mother, submitted and abandoned to an active erotic object playing the role of a phallic mother (or father), in an imaginary situation of cannibalistic consumption or anal murder. It may happen that all these preliminary activities lead into coitus, but this is not always the case in masochistic perversions. The treatment the body undergoes, insofar as it is phallic, is enough for these women's enjoyment, and their partners are often impotent men. One rarely sees them in psychoanalytic offices coming for themselves, but they come to consult about their children, who have different problems of development due to the impossibility of structuring their oedipal libido. The weakest symptom is enuresis and especially encopresis in boys. The girls are marked after puberty with emotional retardation and with an absence of narcissistic admiration for their bodies. The children, both girls and boys, have difficulty in differentiating themselves sexually.

Vaginism

I have seen only a few cases of this. At first sight, one may think vaginism is an exaggeration of frigidity. On the contrary, in all these cases I have seen, a symptom of major repression of the libido in all stages, but especially in the genital stage, is involved. Guilty repression stemming from intense, precociously heterosexual desire in a woman is imbricate in an aggressiveness without a known object or one whose imaginary object is endowed with a terrifying magical power. It is a phobic neurosis. Vaginism is never the only phobic symptom, even if it presents itself as her only sufferance, and the woman speaks about her other phobias only in the psychoanalytic cure.

Vaginism is very often associated with a compulsion to suck the thumb, either in conscious life or in sleep. In addition, in their usually very feminine outlook, seemingly incapable consciously of defensive aggression, these women are full of charm, sweetness, and tenderness for the men they love and who seek them out. It is at the moment of coitus, which they want consciously, that penetration is stopped because of an unconscious muscular contraction that makes penetration physically impossible. The cases I have seen were associated with the aftermath of rape by the father or by a father substitute before the age of possible fantasies of matrix maternity. The dreams of these women are dreams of elementary, cataclysmic danger—furnaces, explosions—which induce phobias after awakening and are scarcely verbalizable. Overall, one has the impression that an “essential” vaginism shows itself in women who present psychotic enclaves in their psychic organization. Vaginism is a neurosis that is more easily cured by psychoanalysis if the psychoanalyst is a woman. It is one of the rare cases when the sex of the analyst seems to be important. Is it because one finds here the always unconscious precocious fantasy of a disemboweling rape by the mother, while the little girl, very precociously eroticized even before primary castration, desires the father's murderous rape? That constitutes the nucleus of vaginism. When the analyst is a man, it stops the woman from speaking about herself, truly speaking. This forces her to be silent or flee, since such women have a very strong sexual desire for men, both consciously and unconsciously. Gynecologists generally treat them. Psychoanalysts only see failures, not only from diathermic but also from surgical treatments. The success of a gynecological treatment by diathermy always aggravates the other phobias of the woman, when it does annul the effect blocking the introduction of the penis. Vaginism is thus totally distinct from frigidity, from a clinical as much as a psychoanalytic point of view.

Translated from the French by Janet Thormann