

# Notes Upon the Acquisition of Knowledge\*

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An attempt to trace the origin of the desire to acquire knowledge from the child's wish to satisfy his or her sexual curiosity during early childhood. Following the theme of Rank's paper, 'Perversion and Neurose' (*Zeitschrift VIII*), that the query, 'Where do children come from?' covers the deeper problem, 'Can he himself bear a child?' a further question is raised. If the repression of the real wish of the child to give birth to an infant is the origin of the early curiosity, the subsequent gratification of this desire, in the acquisition of knowledge (which often occupies the first place in the life of the individual), leads back to the exclusion of the mature wish to have children. We find, therefore, the repression of the childish sexual curiosity produces either of two consequences, the successful sublimation of the component instinct Curiosity in scientific research and other investigations or the unsuccessful condition of Compulsion Neurosis – Doubting Mania – where all knowledge is discounted by doubts.

Those who abandon their original aim to bear a child, replacing it with the desire for knowledge, are found to be to a great extent homosexual, which keeps them from heterosexual relationships and the bearing or begetting of children, as well as the substitution of a mental creation for physical procreation, seen in the attempts of the alchemist of the Middle Ages to produce the Homunculus, and Nietzsche's comparison of himself with a parturient woman with his thoughts as the offspring.

At the commencement of 1924 two questions were attracting a considerable amount of attention in the English press. One was the problem of women's education, the other the banning of particular books upon the ground they were obscene literature. The view taken respecting the first point was that an extended education for women was a mistake, although some avocation other than matrimony must be found for them because their overwhelming surplus. The books banned as improper literature were those giving women advice upon the use of contraceptives.

Psychoanalytical research has taught us to recognize an unwonted show of affect as the indication of repressed conflict, and it seemed that the violence with which controversy upon these two points raged might have a similar basis. One felt also that it might not be without significance that exactly these two points should be causing such a considerable agitation at the same time. The conscious wishes expressed by the men who were raising the outcry were the same in both cases: women's knowledge must be limited. Behind this conscious wish it was possible some further unconscious desires might lie concealed which would yield to investigation by psychoanalytical methods.

We are familiar, through Freud's works, with the defence mechanism which shifts an emotion or affect belonging to one idea or set of ideas to another for the purposes of disguise; the real cause, which is painful, or inexpedient to retain in consciousness, being then banished into the unconscious and remaining in amnesia. An instance of this kind might be shown in the case before us. The wish is allowed this outlet in an attack upon women's education because it appears sufficiently foreign to the true difficulty to allow it to pass unrecognized.

Let us examine the various aspects of the question. First, the higher education of women is an attempt to synchronize it with that which men have long since enjoyed in all civilised countries, and which we believed was now taken for granted as the fitting preparation to enable women to be intelligent wives and mothers, or to fit them for a career. In the past, girl's education was inferior, because it was regarded as unnecessary, therefore a waste of money, the idea being prevalent that it spoiled their chances of matrimony, since men did not like clever wives. Another strand in the evidence of men's wish to limit women's acquisition of knowledge.

In early times education was commonly, even if not exclusively, in the hands of religious bodies, and one notices, for reasons we shall presently give, that they have bestowed more direct encouragement upon the education of boys than of girls, the chief interest attaching to the latter having been a purely negative interest, such as taking elaborate precautions for excluding them from rites and ceremonies, and even in some cases denying them a soul and forfeiting their right to immortal life. The further one penetrates into the history of the race, the more nebulous becomes the status of woman, the more she exists merely as the chattel of her husband or the property of the father of the horde (*Urvater*). Her point of view in these early times has not been preserved, nor have her reactions to her position been recorded in the written archives of the past; they are unknown, unless we include the relics that are to be found in dream and phantasy, in the symptoms and reactions of neurosis, that reveal the content of the unconscious, where all such strivings find a place. The pinnacle of woman's power was reached in Mother-right (*Das Mutterrecht*, J.B. Bachofen, Bale, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1897), one of the most primitive human institutions and existing prior to the acknowledgement of the father's identity. Woman was compelled to be monandrous by the *Urvater*, since he drove away all other males when they became adult and his possible rivals. We have no proof that she agreed to this, or that her wishes lay in this direction, any more than those of the *Urvater* himself.

We must also remember that in many primitive tribes men and women live or lived entirely apart, and that sexual intercourse, even between those who stand in the relation of husband and wife, is performed secretly in the woods, far away from the community. The children of both sexes are brought up with the mother until an age is reached when the boys are removed from her keeping, usually at puberty. At this time they undergo the initiatory rites and ceremonies, and then join the male camp. This stage on the one hand seems to express a homosexual layer in the stratification of human development, and may be compared with the habits of those animals which take a mate merely at the rutting season, or the prolonged educational period, in which it has been the custom to segregate the two sexes, until recently.

Even in this brief survey it seems clear that the bond between mother and child is phylogenetically more highly developed than that between herself and their father. In point of fact, it has been asserted by Frazer (*The Golden Bough, Adonis, Attis and Osiris*, Sir James George Frazer, Vol. I, p.99) that among the Aruntas no connection is recognized between the sexual act and that of pregnancy or childbirth, and that the woman first learns she is pregnant when she feels the quickening, and explains it by saying she has passed by a stone or tree in which dwelt the spirit of an ancestor who has now entered into her body to be born again. This was interpreted by Roheim, in a series of lectures given in Berlin after the Psychoanalytical Congress held there in 1922, as pointing to a repression of the knowledge of the facts of procreation arising from guilt, on account of the incest prohibition. Since if there is no recognition of the connection between these two events, the males of the

present generation are guiltless of any forbidden approach of the women, and the responsibility of the pregnancy rests entirely upon the ancestors. Even in totemistic times intercourse between father and daughter was not forbidden, so that the repression and legend serves the purpose of allowing the males the gratification they desire without incurring the concomitant penalty.

Very early in the history of nations and languages do we find the idea of knowledge possessing a sexual significance, as well as the withholding of knowledge referring to the keeping of sexual secrets. In one of the earliest chapters of the Bible, for instance, we read, 'And Adam knew Eve his wife and conceived and bare Cain.' Here we find the word 'knew' used for cohabitation, just as the word conceived may equally well be used for a mental process, particularly one that constructs mature thought from material otherwise received. Many writers have called attention to analagous instances of this kind in numerous languages; yet the knowing is always the man's part; when used in connection with a woman, it is in the negative; for example, regarding the Virgin, we find, 'as yet she had known not a man.'

Following up the story of the Garden of Eden, we hear the account of the creation of the 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil' and the effect of it upon Adam and Eve. Levy, in his article in *Imago*, 1914, 'Sexualsymbolik in der biblische Paradiesgeschichte', writes that knowledge in this connection was undoubtedly of sexual significance, which was still further emphasized by the entry of the serpent into the drama. The legend, as told in the Bible, continues as follows: the serpent beguiled the woman with the temptation of knowledge and the woman fell, partook of the fruit of the tree and gave to her husband. It is interesting to note that the tree is again introduced, as in the belief of the tree-inhabiting ancestors from whom the Arunta women were supposed to conceive. Once more, as in the primitive repression, the accent of prohibition is laid upon the sexual act, the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge leading to the Fall. The immediate result of their action was to discover their nakedness, so that they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons, and then hid from the presence of God. Knowledge, therefore, leads first to a sense of shame, resulting in the actual covering of the genitals, the offending parts (covering has often the meaning of prohibition), and secondly, to a consciousness of guilt, which caused them to hide from the father imago. The Tree of Knowledge was equally forbidden to both; the legend, however, represents the woman as the first transgressor and the tempter of her husband at the instigation of the serpent, which leads us to suspect that there is a secondary meaning hidden in the symbolisation of this scene, which can be further surmised in the punishment, that takes the form of curses upon the serpent, the woman, the ground, and the man; two male and two female objects, the serpent and the Man, the ground and the Woman; Mother-earth and Cosmic Uterus and the Phallus. Afterwards the gate of paradise is closed and an angel with a flaming sword (another phallic symbol) bars return. With the acquisition of Knowledge comes the approach to reality and the exile from paradise, the mother-womb phantasy, as one might call it, where life was maintained without labour, where all drives were gratified and its inhabitants might wander unimpeded by clothing. In this case we find knowledge being used with the specialized significance we have already mentioned. Can it be the echo of this well known story that makes man desire to limit the further acquisition of knowledge by women, for fear of what she will do next? Hardly, it seems.

What more may we learn from investigation of the symbolism shown in this legend of the Tree of Knowledge? We find trees affording a rich and varied symbolism ('Der Baum als totemistisches Symbol in der Dichtung', D.A. Protze, *Imago*, 1971). They

are obviously phallic, and have generally the significance of the father, standing primarily for the home of the impregnating ancestor, or for the ancestor himself. Some of the totem clans claim a tree as the being from which they were descended, and we find also the survival of tree totemism in the badges of the clans of the Scottish Highlands. Even where at first sight we would imagine a tree, especially the hollow tree, used in initiation rites, to signify the mother, yet upon further investigation it would seem to be an attempt to show a rebirth of the neophyte through the father, a symbolic breaking away of the boy's connection with the mother, the aim of so many other initiation rites. To escape the unwelcome attentions of the gods, many nymphs, Daphne, for instance, have turned themselves into trees. The serpent is a familiar symbol representing both the phallus and knowledge with a widespread topographical range, and it is interesting to notice what a large number of these phallic symbols are believed to be endowed with magic power for divining mysteries or foretelling the future. In many parts of Europe peasants and others would plant a sapling at the birth of an infant and read the child's future from the growth of the tree. Sticks, in one form or another, have been symbols of power from time immemorial. Kingly scepters, magic wands, wizard's staves, and witches' broomsticks; the pointing-bone of the medicine man, the baton of the field marshal, or the drum major's staff – all signify power and may be regarded as phallic symbols. To mention but one instance in detail, the custom which in some parts still exists until the present day, that of finding water with a hazel twig, called in England 'dowsing'. The Twig is held in front of the body, pointing downwards; the presence of water is indicated by the upward turning of the hazel twig in the hands of the expert (the erection) when the hidden thing is found. This magic power for finding hidden necessities, water, and sometimes in Australia, gold, which is bestowed upon the dowser's twig, like a conjuror's wand, is probably because woman has been regarded as the great mystery, for more than one reason, the hidden thing of most importance, because of the secret position of her genitals in comparison with those of the male, and also with the additional mystery (to the child) how she, like a conjuror, produces the baby, as he does the rabbit out of the hat. Yet, on the other hand, we find representations of the Sphinx, the arch enigma, with a penis, corresponding with another of man's unconscious wishes, the woman with the penis, about which we shall say more later on in this paper.

As in so many other cases, we find the child using the magic rites or the weapons of his ancestors for his games and playthings, so do we find him treasuring a stick as one of his most treasured play things, and putting it to a thousand uses. The infant, even before speech is acquired, will clamour for every stick within reach, and the toddler puts it to still more numerous and various uses. One case especially comes to my mind.

I had the good fortune to witness the following incident in the early spring of 1922. The principal actor was a little boy aged six, a child whose abnormal curiosity was connected with his many other neurotic traits. He frequently came into my room to look for anything new I happened to have there. One day he came in, an old top hat of his father's on his head, a short stick between the brim and his fore-head, projecting downwards over his nose. He walked up to my table, bent down and bobbed his head over everything on it, saying, in reply to my query, what he was doing, 'I am so inquisitive, I'm looking at everything with my long nose.' The symbolism was obvious and unmistakable. He went on to explain that he had taken his father's little conducting stick for the purpose and that he had been playing at being a chimney sweep all the morning.

The long nose calls to mind the English expression for curiosity, 'sticking one's nose into other people's business', or the name for an inquisitive person, 'Nosey Parker'. But the idea of the child, that he could see with his long nose, is interesting. It may be borrowed from the snail's eyes, and is surely connected with the similar theme, the eye at the end of the penis, that is to be found in such diverse sources as Greek mythology and modern comic papers. I have certainly seen it upon Greco-Roman vases in the Berlin Museum, as well as finding it in the dreams and phantasies of neurotic persons as a gratification of curiosity, and their desire to know more about the inside of the mother's body, and to find those hidden mysteries and secrets which they feel are being withheld and resent so heartily. One knows countless instances of children dissecting dolls to see what is inside, besides that of Kleiner Hans, in the delightful account of the 'Analysis of the Phobia in a Five-year-old Boy', that Freud has given us (*Collected Works*, trans., Vol.III). But neither are they all boys who have this habit. One finds little girls equally anxious to see inside and not content until dolls and all other toys are in fragments. Recently a little girl patient of mine produced many such recollections, closely connected with the questions, What are things made of? Where do babies come from? Where did I come from myself?

If we assume that the desire for sexual knowledge is one of the real motives of this desire for knowledge, this brings us to acknowledge that a gratification of this curiosity may lead to the apparently opposite extremes of scientific investigation on the one hand, and insatiable inquisitiveness about trifles on the other. Curiosity, we have remarked, is to be found equally in children of both sexes. Freud constantly points out in his works that primarily there is no difference in the unconscious of the boy or girl. Both therefore desire the same knowledge, and to both it is denied equally. It is the individual result of this denial into which we must probe further and see the consequences of repression and the return of the repressed instinct to gain satisfaction in another way.

Let us sum up this position. The child feels limited by this deprivation of knowledge; it believes that its narcissism has received a wound, and observes the advantage of possessing knowledge by the comparison of its parents superiority in this respect over itself. 'Knowledge is power' says the proverb. 'The penis stands for power, too' replies symbolism; and consequently the withholding of knowledge may become unconsciously regarded as a castration equivalent. In the child's mind desire for knowledge and the belief that in this way he will obtain the additional importance and power he craves, we are reminded of the small boy's envy of his father's big penis, and his feelings of inferiority when he compares it with his own small one. The attitude of the little boy to his parents is ambivalent, and this question of the possession of the penis occupies an important position in it. We know that he is envious of that of his father, but the fact that his mother is without this much envied organ leads to still further complications.

In a recent paper upon 'Jealousy, Paranoia and Homosexuality' (*Collected Papers*, trans., Vol. II), Freud represents again that one of the boy's deepest traumata is the discovery that his mother has no penis, and that his early turning away from her to adopt a homosexual attitude may often date from this moment. It signifies that the boy cannot tolerate a love object with this deficiency which arouses in himself castration fear, of being made a woman, yet, as the result, we often find the boy adopting the feminine attitude towards the father, in identification with the mother, to gain his aim, the love object with the penis, the Sphinx. In another part of this same paper Freud gives an example of the rival becoming the love object in the case of homosexuality. This may also apply to the reverse difficulty of the man not being

prepared to take women, either as his love object or his rival, in some cases where he is engaged upon the pursuit of knowledge.

We have learned that quite another usual attitude of the son, arising from the Oedipus situation, is the degradation of his former love object and his regarding her as a prostitute, not a very highly educated woman as a rule. Yet, whence comes the expression, mother-wit? Wit certainly used to be the common term for knowledge; mother-wit signified intuition, that deep knowledge springing from the unconscious. One wonders whether the ancients, from their own unconscious wisdom, felt that woman was nearer to those vast stores hidden in the unconscious than they were themselves. It is interesting to observe that witches have survived wizards, and wise women the alchemists. From wise woman, it is but a step to the French, *sage-Femme*, the midwife, who, like her prototype, in a transitional stage, was probably required to prepare the equivalent of a love philtre, a charm or remedy for sterility, an abortifacient, or perhaps even a contraceptive. The various duties were handed on from one to the other, different means being used to produce the end in view.

One might almost say that it is a modern development for men to interest themselves in obstetrics, the subject of childbirth and all its contiguous lore having formerly been regarded purely a woman's province, possibly because the parturient woman, like the dead, was generally considered unclean, and for that reason shunned by men. Only in rare cases, and then as a consultant, because of some peculiar complications supposed to have been caused by evil spirits, was the medicine man called in, either in primitive times or among savage peoples to-day (*Sexual Life of the Primitive People*, H. Feblinger).

In the struggle for the acquisition of knowledge man must either exclude woman or admit her as a colleague or rival. In the past he has exerted all his energy in the first direction.

We must not leave out of reckoning the mutual stimulation provided by denial and desire. It is both similar to and doubtless connected with the doublesided penis-pride and penis-envy. One may well ask, What precisely are the kinds of knowledge women have most zealously sought, and who have denied them to her? As a child she, equally with her brother, desired sexual knowledge which was refused by her parents. In primitive times she was excluded from religious ceremonies, in fact from all life in common with men. 'Bull-roarers' were used to warn and frighten her from assemblies, and should she by chance see any of these forbidden things her life was forfeit. Seeing meant, of course, gaining knowledge of. It was not unusual for women to have their own language, and they were prohibited from using that of the men, even should they know it. The priests were instrumental in guarding these secrets from women.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the problem of higher education for women broke in earnest over Europe, in a way not to be compared with earlier attempts. The universities were asked to extend their benefits to women equally with men, and they refused. The request was put to the schools of the Church, every door was closed against them. Women had also attempted in the past to get in to the army and to become Freemasons. In the old days instances were on record of women having lived as men in the army for years without recognition, and one was actually made a Freemason. She had hidden herself in an empty clock case in order to witness the proceeding of a lodge in her father's house; she was discovered and compelled to become a member of the craft (Brewer's Reader's Handbook). There is something

especially childlike and interesting in the story of this girl, while it gives us another fragment of evidence about the desire and denial of knowledge, reflecting misty recollections of the *Urzene*.

It is not surprising that the chief opposition to women's desire for knowledge came from institutions which Freud, in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (trans., James Strachey), points out are based upon their homosexual tendencies, and consist of groups of men bound together by strong links of tradition, common interest, common purpose, like the men's societies of the primitives, the *Männersbünde*, which Heinrich Schurtz (*Altersklassen and Männersbünde*, Heinrich Schurtz, 1902) regards as the prototype of all higher institutions; seeing in the men's huts, club-like assemblies and secret societies, the foundation upon which all others have been based. In the previously mentioned work by Freud, upon 'Homosexuality', we find much to help us in solving this riddle concerning the exclusion of women from the institutions. We read: 'The typical case (of homosexuality) is that of a young man who, after being strongly mother-fixated, turns away. Often at puberty, and having identified himself with his former love object, now seeks another of his own age whom he may love as she loved him. The inclination to a narcissistic object choice hides another of quite exceptional importance: the high estimation of the male sexual renounced. The despising of women, the feeling of horror for them, nay, even of repulsion, usually arises from the early discovery that the woman has no penis.' This point has already been referred to, but if we turn our attention to the attitude of the heads and instructors of these homosexual institutions which we have just mentioned, in connection with this choosing of the new object of the same age and sex as the self, the significance of the preference of young male students becomes clear. Neither can we afford to overlook the habit of university men of referring to their old college as their alma mater.

Again, in the case of the man of homosexual tendency, the woman being without a penis was debarred from becoming his love object. In later paragraphs of the same article we find: 'One often discovers in the history of homosexuals that their turning away took place after the mother had praised another boy and held him up as an example. By this means the narcissistic tendency was aroused and after a short phase of temporary but keen jealousy the rival was taken as the love object. This is to be found where the inclination to homosexuality does not exclude all heterosexual tendency.' We are now led to wonder whether this same reason which prevents her becoming a love object in this case also disqualifies the woman from being a rival.

One cannot ignore the fact that the acquisition of knowledge is both now and in the past very closely connected with homosexual manifestations. The first persons in all stages of culture to turn their attention to it have always been the priests or medicine men, and the duties of the two often overlapped. Knowledge, in this way, became intimately connected with and surrounded by taboos. Those persons set apart to be the recipients of these mysteries had to undergo many initiatory rites, frequently of great severity. The South American medicine man, for instance, was obliged to accustom himself to snake poison by small doses until able to drink a bowlful with impunity. Not all may aspire to this calling of wisdom. We also find the condition of celibacy imposed, sometimes even of castration. The acquisition of knowledge thus becomes a channel for the libido, which is easy, since, it is one of the vehicles of an important component instinct, Curiosity.

In a paper on the perversions (*Perversionen und Neurosen*, Dr. Otto Rank, *Zeitschrift*, 1922), Rank demonstrates that the pervert is 'fixated at such a level of

libidinal development that he desires pure narcissistic gratification of individual component instincts with the elimination of their sexual aim. As the only scar of this radical repression remains the feminine libidinal attitude of the pervert, a mere gesture of wishing for pregnancy by the father.' ... 'The homosexual appears to insure himself against his guilt consciousness by the inward plaint, I won't have anything to do with the Oedipus libido and the child from father, on the contrary, libido fixated upon a member of the same sex and no child.'

Earlier in the paper Rank recalls how Freud has repeatedly asserted that the unconscious of boy and girl is identical, having similar tendencies and the same wishes. Among these, says Rank, can be recognized the inclination to 'identify with the mother and bear a child by the father', as actually the libidinal aim of children of both sexes, which often only timidly makes an appearance and is soon and deeply repressed.

The same little boy who produced the phantasy of seeing with his nose was evidently at this stage. One day, when a friend was telling the fortunes of the family by cards, he ran out of the room, crying delightedly to his old nurse, 'Lisa, Lisa, in seven months I'm going to have a baby!' without anything of the sort having been mentioned. Here was the wish and it was taken for granted under no repression. In the same child, again, we find intense curiosity side by side with a wish for the child. He was characteristically enough trying to solve the problem, 'Where do babies come from?' too; the question having been suggested by the porter's wife presenting her husband with another not too welcome infant. I happened to be present one day when he asked his mother where babies did come from. She repeated the stork fable with the usual embellishments, looking at me slyly the while, which the little fellow's sharp eyes must have noticed. Again he asked, if the stork brought them in his beak, how was it that he did not bite them. Again the mother lied: 'He's too careful; it's the poor Mutti he bites in the leg, so that she must stay in bed and keep the baby warm.' 'Did I come like that, Mummy?' 'Naturally, dear one!'

Then followed, to me, a graphic description of his birth and what she had suffered, how many stitches the doctor had put into a ruptured perineum. The little boy, usually so pale, sat there with bright cheeks, his head on his hands, thinking. He had many food idiosyncrasies besides; meals with him were psychologically most instructive. Often, after a few mouthfuls, down would go his spoon. Threats, bribery, caresses, every sort of attempt to make him eat failed. He resolutely shut his lips and presented the back of his head to his patient nurse and her proffered spoon. It was the habit that his child, when tired of feeding himself, was spoon-fed, and had stories told him at the same time, which regularly produced all the signs of infantile sexual pleasure in that earliest oral gratification, suckling – rosy cheeks and bright, shiny eyes. The reason he gave for not eating was always the same. He felt too fat, and he would swell himself out like a pregnant woman. If he went on he would – but he could not finish his sentence; he was too frightened even to name the dread. One of his fears was that the doctor would have to come and take 'It' out. Once, when I was alone with him, he became confidential. He related another, to him, terrible incident, when the doctor came and gave him an enema, and he turned round and pointed behind him, looking very much embarrassed. He wasn't popular, that doctor, chiefly on this account, and because he always used to take the child's temperature per rectum. Even talking of it made the little boy blush.

That his '*dicke Bauch*' was pregnancy phantasy I think may be concluded without any overdriving. The child was to be created out of food, sadistically delivered by the



doctor cutting him open with the carving knife, which the child always used to flourish demonstratively. This phantasy was connected with a severe attack of constipation from which he had been relieved by the doctor with an enema, and with having his temperature taken per rectum. The little boy, we must remember, had always slept in his parent's room, and had listened, not once, but many times, to his mother telling how many stitches had been put into her after his birth.

But to return to the general wish for a child by children of both sexes. Rank asserts that the perversion is a component instinct which eliminates the wish for the child, the sexual aim. Often we do see the savant pursuing this course. Often he is not married and has no children. He will take no interest in the society of women and devotes himself to the gratification of the component instinct of curiosity, manifesting itself in the pursuit of knowledge. Let us ask, Why? Rank also shows: 'The child appears biologically predisposed to the adult sexual aim long before it can possibly grasp where children come from and that it is incapable of producing one. The question, Where do they come from? is merely the expression of this conflict from which arises the negative attitude towards existing brothers and sisters, proving that the child denies the right of existence to anything the origin of which he does not know.'

Here then is our answer: The child, disappointed in his or her wish to bear a child, represses these phantasies and wishes for the child from father, the sexual aim, but retains the curiosity belonging to the question covering this wish, Where do they come from? The child falls back, as it were, upon the gratification of the component instinct Curiosity. In the pursuit of knowledge, which thus becomes more nearly allied to a perverse gratification than a real sublimation, because the component instinct usurps the position of the sexual aim. It is also defence against both the incest-wish and the disappointment when this wish is denied. We are told that the neurosis is the negative of the perversion. If the pursuit of knowledge, therefore, fulfills the condition of a perversion, can we find any corresponding unsuccessful perversion, as Rank calls the neurosis? This, I think, may be recognized in the obsessional neurosis, with its prevalent symptom, called variously '*folie de doute*', doubting mania, and '*grübelnsucht*', by means of which all knowledge is discounted by doubting.

Curiously enough, the boy maintains his feminine attitude to the father, who has disappointed him and denied him the child; whereas the girl, in her disappointment, turns from him to homosexuality, and by identifying herself with him seeks her love object anew in the mother. The boy, after first turning away from the mother, because of her penis-lack, identifies himself with her and has the wish for the child from the father as compensation for the mother's lost penis, which he therefore by identification has also lost. This wish also failing, he has recourse to the perverse gratification of the component instinct Curiosity, which previously masked his wish for the child, or halts on the way in some form or other of obsessional neurosis with doubting mania, which is thought to be more prevalent among men, except those women with pronounced masculine trend, and which constantly appears allied with homosexuality, paranoia and jealousy. In several cases of obsessional neurosis given at length by Freud, the wish for the child and the *Urzene* also figure. Doubts which have reached an intolerable pitch are described by Strindberg in his brilliant masterpiece, '*Der Vater*', which culminates in the man doubting whether he is the father of his own child. This, Rank concludes, may often be found amounting to a trauma second only to the realization that he himself cannot bear a child. The doubt in the child's mind whether he will or can produce a child must be quite shattering

when the certainty begins to break up before the establishment of full knowledge. The boy, homosexually inclined, identifies himself with his first love object and proceeds to seek another from the sex which afterwards dissapoints him in his wish for the child. But here again do we meet another problem. Where does the child realize the father's part in procreation? Children appear to follow the primitive pattern and are most likely at first, without any distinct recognition of the father and his functions, they for a time are ignorant of the sexual act and do not connect it with pregnancy or childbirth, unless some intuitive knowledge of racial memory exists concerning fundamental functions. If this should be the case, then the apparent ignorance on the part of the child would be entirely due to repression. It is hard to determine from evidence to be gained which is the case. If the child has witnessed the sexual congress of its parents, even at an early age, we would wonder to what extent it realized the significance of what it saw. Much would naturally depend upon the age of the child, and yet some psychoanalysts seem to believe that children are always in possession of some sort of knowledge of the facts of procreation. A great deal of repression undoubtedly centers around this subject in the mind of the child, and together with repression we find a highly developed sense of guilt, which attached itself to the watching of an action as well as the action which is being carried out in secrecy. One knows the French expression, '*assister a quelque chose*', with its meaning, to be present at, and the English legal phrase, 'accessory to the act'. The passive witness also bears his share of guilt, like the primitive woman who forfeits her life should she see any secret ceremonies. The fear of the child should in connection with the sexual intercourse of its parents is generally that of castration, and reminds us of Peeping Tom and similar legends. One must also remember that in many primitive tribes it is customary for men and women, having the relationship equivalent of marriage, to hide in the woods for cohabitation. One may compare this with the remark of a young patient of mine, an obsessional case, whose outstanding symptom was 'doubting' and the sense of unreality, that he felt he would never, even if married, be able to have intercourse with his wife without a feeling of guilt, but that it would improve it because it would make him feel so daring. A reflection of the incest-wish, no doubt, but also, one felt, something more. His father had died when the patient was between three and four, and he had always slept at the foot of the parental bed. His guilt was enormous and deeply repressed. Many were the indications of some primal scene having the most extensive results, but unfortunately the analysis being interrupted from external reasons, no actual memory of this scene was recovered.

Most children, like the little boy first mentioned, seem to have had some theories of impregnation by food or of self-impregnation at an early age, such as are described in '*Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexual Theorie*' (Prof. Sig. Freud), which compel us to question whether these theories are primary or if they are the outcome of repression of the real facts of the case and so serve the purpose of disguise.

Should we glance backward over the typical scholars that the world has known, one gains a composite picture of the recluse, the man living for the acquisition of knowledge; alone, shunning the society of women, if not also of fellow men; accepting only that of a favored few, students perhaps, men younger than himself, like the beautiful young pupils of Leonardo da Vinci. From the earliest times men of these tastes have lived apart from the rest of humanity or among their chosen colleagues. In the ancient English universities this was strictly observed. Residence within the college precincts was compulsory, and should one of the fellows marry he was obliged to seek accommodations elsewhere. We call to mind the alchemists of the Middle Ages, whose lives were not only devoted to the discovery of the

Philosopher's Stone, but also to the production, by artificial means, of a human being the 'Homunculus', described at length by Paracelsus. The alchemist, that is, brought all his science to bear upon the problem of attaining the wish of his childhood, and at the level of hermaphrodite procreation. Their formulas and instructions for its preparation are detailed and highly symbolic. Silberer has written a most interesting paper with this title and upon this subject in the *Imago* of 1914.

This brings us to the question of Faust. In the beginning of the first part of the play we find him in his loneliness, complaining that he has studied and exhausted all the sciences without finding any end to his quest or any satisfaction to his craving. This is to be understood in the light of the perverse gratification of curiosity taking the place of the sexual aim, but not being entirely successful. The component instinct tries to take the place of the genital primacy but does not succeed. In the second part we are introduced to the laboratory again, with Wagner left in charge, to watch over the phial from which in due course the Homunculus is delivered, hailing the person who liberated him as 'Little Father'. The interlude of Faust and Gretchen is only too familiar, a short romance ending in tragedy. Faust chooses a simple girl of the burgher class without any great amount of knowledge or education, who marvels that such a learned man can find any interest in spending his time with her. Yet not even Gretchen gives Faust any lasting satisfaction. Each new quest fails, leaving him as unsatisfied as before. The mechanism is identical with that of the case of Don Juan (*Don Juan Gestalt*, Dr. Otto Rank, *Imago*, 1922); the real object that is being sought is unattainable. In the case of Faust the wish is to bear the child; in that of Don Juan, an incest-wish directed upon the mother. At the end of the first part of Faust we find the wretched girl in prison awaiting death for the murder of her child. Faust makes a half-hearted attempt to save her, but finally leaves her to her fate, lest he be discovered and suffer also for the his murder of her brother Valentine. *'Mein kind hab' ich ertrankt'*, Gretchen confesses, reminding one of the frequency with which women will dispose of unwanted children in this way.

In the case of Leonardo da Vinci one has yet another type of seeker after knowledge, an exception to the rule, in that he was no recluse. His life, full and interesting, has been illuminated for us by Freud's analysis of his childhood's memories (*Kindheitserinnerungen von Leonardo da Vinci*, Prof. Sig. Freud). Not only was he an artist of outstanding genius, but also an architect, and a military engineer or exceptional talent. He was a designer of and performer upon all the chief musical instruments of the day, a scientific investigator of no mean parts, and as interested in alchemy as the other scientific men of his day, as well as in airstrips, like our own Roger Bacon. In Leonardo's notebooks much is to be found concerning his opinions upon men and things. The idea of the sexual act he declares repugnant to him, and it seems doubtful, says Professor Freud, whether he ever embraced woman in affection. As master of his art, he surrounded himself with beautiful youths; the last of these, Francesco Malzi, accompanied him to France and became his heir. Among the memories of his childhood stood out that which has formed the chief theme of the book, the day dream of the falcon, that pressed its tail to the child's lips, which has been interpreted as a homosexual phantasy. We find it again repeated in his picture of the Holy Family in the Louvre, in which the Virgin is seated upon the knees of St. Anne, with the infant in her arms, where the drapery of the central figure, Pfister discovered, introduced the same motive of the falcon with outspread tail closely pressed to the lips of the child.

I think that it is not altogether out of place to mention here that Dr. Jex Blake, the pioneer woman in medicine in this country, had the most extensive and interesting

phantasy life as a child. Some of them have been given in her life which was written by her friend, Dr. Margaret Todd. Among them was that of owning a kingdom, of which she was the sole ruler and possessor. She explored its recesses and its surroundings. It was at height in her thoughts during adolescence, and the history of it is contained in a little book, written in neat schoolgirl writing, we are told. It so happened that while I was reading this book I was obtaining, in the analysis of deeply mother fixated young patient, similar phantasies of kingdoms he had ruled and possessed, first in early childhood, later in pubertal recrudescence. There was an interesting difference to be discerned between the two. In the former phantasies the wish was to live in a dog kennel, or something so small that no one but himself could get in. Later it crystallized into a kingdom underground, owned by a creature that was oval, with a head at one end and flies' wings like an aeroplane. It was that shape so that it could more easily slip into the hole that was its home. It had a place to lay its eggs, and another to live in, etc. It had no name because he could never think of anything that was quite right. He invented this phantasy when as a boy he had been 'run down' and obliged to stay in bed for several weeks. Being 'snuggled up in bed' made one feel one could dominate the whole world from there. 'Being in bed is a very important thing. When you are warm you become part of it or identify yourself with it, and feel quite safe and free from danger. As a child I used to sit in the bathroom and imagine I was controlling some vast organization from within by means of dials and levers. A very little movement made a big difference. That was scientifically applied force. I always loved taps.' In the recrudescence period of puberty the phantasy kingdom became islands which moved about and were connected with caves at Eastbourne, consisting of an outer one leading into a larger one right inside the cliff, and joined to a vestibule cave and the outside of the cliff by a winding, upward sloping, narrow passage. All were significant. During treatment, as a passing symptom, he developed an abscess of the neck, which necessitated incision. It proved, moreover, the expression of an old pregnancy phantasy. As a child he had identified himself with the hens, and had tried sitting on eggs, being intensely disappointed when they did not hatch. He also experienced severe annoyance at not being able to produce an egg. The night before the operation he dreamed about it thus: 'The gland had been opened. There was a red gash and in the middle a little white thing that looked like a pea. I was afraid it might drop out. Asked if the gland had been taken out and was told it was not.'

The associations were as follows: 'Gland engine attached to a big one to help the weak parts, a parasite; you may think you have all the strength to yourself, but you haven't. A parasite is a swindler, something inside you, like a baby being fed by its mother. The little thing was grayish white, like a slug. If the gland had been out I shouldn't have liked it. Wanted to give it another chance. Don't want to be without that bit. Each bit must have its own use and one must miss it if isn't there.'

A few nights before he had dreamed he was with a tiny boy, who seemed to have no other parent beside himself. In his associations to this dream he also returned to babies, said he had 'never been stuffed up with the stork tale', and thought he would never have believed it. He imagined they just materialized, but had never worried about it much. He also thought the faint line down the center of the body opened to let the baby out, and that it was comfortable.

These instances seem to show the wish for the child, repressed; sexual knowledge, repressed, and finally the desire for knowledge also repressed by the neurosis and the doubts, but reappearing in the wish to instruct others, especially little boys, to gratify their curiosity instead of his own. He was hoping to be a schoolmaster.

The type of girl who sets her face towards the pursuit of knowledge is one who, to a great extent, has put aside her childish wish for a child by father that normally returns, but without the incestuous condition, as the adult sexual aim. Freud, in 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman' (*Collected Works*, trans., Vol. II) ascribes this turning away from both heterosexual aim and object to supreme disappointment in the father, that he had not bestowed upon her the greatly desired wish and sign of his love. Out of the intensity of the desire comes the opposite corresponding stern renunciation. No child, no heterosexual object, and the pursuit of knowledge springing from the same source as the boy's take its place, plus the question, 'Why does the mother have the child and not myself?'

Curiosity concerning the cause of life means the desire to control it, also curiosity about death and power over it, often linked with death wishes, the feeling of guilt attaching to them and attempts at self-punishment for them. The whole sequence of what Freud for the first time in his '*Bemerkungen uber ein Fall von Zwangneurose*', referred to as Omnipotence of Thought, is never far to seek in a case of obsessional neurosis. In *Totem and Taboo* more is explained about its mechanism and early stages shown in primitive beliefs of animism and magic, the ceremonies compassing the death of an enemy, etc. So tracing the phylogenetic root, do we find the duties of the magician, the sorcerer, the wise-woman, and later the mid-wife with her superstitions about the unborn and newly born child. All are closely allied to the child who thinks that its thoughts and wishes can injure parent or playmates. In his article on the case of female homosexuality, which we have mentioned above, Freud states that she attempted suicide, and explained that in the action she identified herself with the mother when pregnant with the younger sister, who was the baby she wished to have had. He continues that in his opinion every suicide, by the mechanism of identification, contains a murder, and all murder comprises an element of suicide, as self-punishment. Following out this line of argument, we may perhaps be able to discover the unconscious motives of the woman making use of contraceptives, or why she should have an abortion.

In this way she deprives her unborn child of life, identifying it with what that she wished to have had and was dissatisfied over when her rival, her mother, bore it instead. Upon the other hand, there may be the second motive: the father gave her no baby, therefore she will not bear one to another man; or again the incest-wish and its repression may have once been so strong that by means of identification of this child's father with her own father, and replacing herself by her child, the death is her own, as self-punishment for the guilty wish; or, further, she by her action, removes proof of cohabitation and the manifestation of her guilt. A woman patient suffering from conversion hysteria, who, during adolescence, was troubled with phantasies of having a child by her father, used to say she always thought if she were married she could not bear the thought of having a baby, as then everyone would know what she had been doing.

All these motives must be kept in mind in connection with Gretchen's infanticide in Faust. In the prison she tells her lover she has ruined her mother and drowned her child. She gives him directions where to find the pond and begs him to save the infant. Her mother, we are told later, had borne another child, after the death of her husband, whom, owing to the mother's wretched state of health at the time, the girl had brought up – her phantasy child from the father. This child had also died, and Gretchen drowned her baby. Rank, in his book, *On the Birth of the Hero*, connects the child being exposed to danger of death by drowning by its parents with the European legend of the pond where the babies are before birth, from which the stork

or some other creature fetches them to the expectant mother. If this is so, the mother, in drowning her child, reconstructs the pre-natal state, and, should the birth symbolize a castration-equivalent to her, replacing the child once more in symbolic amniotic waters may cancel it.

In his paper, 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes' (*Collected Papers*, trans., Vol. IV), Freud touches upon Destruction as a primary impulse, and again, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (trans. By C.J.M Hubback) and *Das Ich und Das Es*, in connection with procreation. He also refers to an article by Spielrein in the *Jahrbuch* of 1912, 'die Destruction als Ursache des Werdens'. Here she mentions the lowly organisms to which procreation mean death and the Ephemera, who bring offsprings to life at the cost of their own. These may be regarded as female creatures; but in the case of bees, it is the drone who dies after the impregnation of the queen. Among some primitive religions we find, besides a mother goddess, those who are destroying agents, in the same way that there are not only guardian but destroying angels. The act of birth is a symbol of the death of the child as well as that of the mother.

Spielrein emphasizes this point, drawing an analogy between the widespread religious idea that the parturient woman is unclean, similar to the dead, and may not mix with others until certain rights have been performed. Since childbirth signifies death, so also does defloration, the sacrifice of virginity, as it appears in countless myths and fairy tales, the maiden sacrificed to the monster, the story of Jephthah's Daughter and many others. It signifies death and also castration. Therefore, the prevention of birth or the conception may be a defense against these on the part of the woman. Spielrein points out that Nietzsche represents creation as destruction (*Jenseits von Gut und Bose*), and moreover identifies himself with and speaks of himself as a parturient mother, offering the same creation-destruction symbolism, in reference to his thoughts, which he puts in place of the child. Another case of mental creation taking the place of physical procreation.

In his article on 'Der Dopplegänger', in the *Imago* of 1914, Rank quotes several instances of women refusing, from narcissistic motives, to bear children. In Lenaus' poem, 'Anna' and in the ballad of 'Die Kinderlöse' by Frankl, is found the same theme. The wish to remain always as young and beautiful as on the weddingday is gained at the cost of childlessness and loss of her shadow, that narcissistic adjunct which is interestingly explained in the same paper. An interpretation of the narcissistic value of the child is given by Freud in his article upon 'Narcissism, An Introduction' (*Collected Works*, trans., Vol. IV), showing how to some the loss of the penis is made good by the gain of the child. But as the nipple being lost from the mouth of the suckling, the feces from the child's rectum, are symbolic or equivalent of castration, so is the loss of the child from the uterus. Thus, to kill the child in utero, may thus be an attempt to retain the foetus as the feces of childhood, even if only temporarily, or to expel it violently, in defiance. Again, the use of a contraceptive may be the resolve to deny the act of motherhood entirely, either from narcissistic motives, revenge, or guilt-consciousness arising from the original incest-wish for the child from father.

A primary impulse to destroy may be as truly a feminine instinct as that of man to create. Freud, in his book *Das Ich und das Es* discusses this problem at some length, concerning the death impulse, and seems to give the bias to the death impulse being passive and female, while the life impulse is active and male. It needs conscious material to produce convincing evidence, but from the points already

brought forward, it seems that the simplest motives for unconscious infanticide by the woman, or her use of contraceptives spring from: possibly her narcissism, certainly her reactions to the Oedipus situation, and the denial of her wish for the child during childhood. The more powerful was this wish and the stronger had been the repression, proportionately great, naturally, will be the reaction and sense of guilt, all of which play an important part in infanticide. It can also represent both suicide by identification with the child to be or spermatozoa, and thus a murder of the rival's child.

To return once again to the man's point of view. Rank asserts that the chief ambition of children of both sexes is to bear a child, the boy therefore suffers the same emotional shock as his sister, when they both find not they, but their mother, has the baby. But the boy also learns that he will never be able thus to identify himself with his mother and bear a child, although he may play an important part in its procreation; whereas his sister in due course may attain her wish. This is a reason for envy of the greatest intensity to be directed by the boy against the woman, which probably, through that disguise and defense-mechanism, transformation into the opposite, sees an attempt on the part of the male to readjust things more in line with his true wishes in the primitive custom of the *Couvade*, described by Reik, in an article of the same name in *Imago*, 1914, when the man goes to bed after the birth of an infant and accepts the gifts and congratulations of admiring friends, whilst the woman goes back to her work in the fields. The efforts of the medieval alchemist to produce the Homunculus were but another attempt in the same direction, of course. The same motive appearing in stories such as the Frankenstein Legend, or that of Pygmalion and Galatea, and reappearing in popular tales such as 'Bootles Baby' or the film 'The Bachelor's Baby'. One knows, that to the child, one of the greatest attractions in the world is to carry out the actions of the grown ups we admire. The boy is an eye-witness, if he should have any younger brothers or sisters, that it is the mother and not the father, who is the center of attraction, so to say, after the new baby itself, the father on such occasions playing a very minor part, as Barrie pointed out in his 'Little White Bird' from which the story of Peter Pan was taken. To the boy's narcissism, this is not a pleasant prospect for the future, and thus his narcissism having received a double wound, it becomes more than usually sensitive on this point.

It has been already shown that the question, 'Whence comes the baby?' may develop in extreme cases into the man's doubt whether he is the father of his own reputed child or not. It is a fact he cannot prove. The fear lurking behind it is, of course, has the woman borne a child to his rival, the father. This is an outcome of the Oedipus situation, where the boy, wishing to take his father's place with the mother, finds the mother bears his father's child and not his. It is a regular stage in the history of the Oedipus complex to regard the mother in the light of a prostitute, that is, to doubt her faithfulness to one man, arising from the son's incest wishes to share her with the father. Hence, the doubt that now appears should read, 'Am I, or my rival (my father), the father of this my reputed child?'

Disappointment upon disappointment follows the man, and the origin of his reaction-formation of considering himself so immensely superior to all woman is now becoming clear. He learns that he cannot himself bear the coveted child, that he can never occupy the important position of a woman who has brought a child into the world. He learns that he cannot even know whether he has begotten a child, until the woman tells him, if, when, how, she pleases, whether she tell him true or not, he cannot be sure, all this repeats the old situation he resented so bitterly in the past

when his mother withheld sexual knowledge from him. When these reasons are considered it is not surprising to find that men in their turn, strive to deny women gratifying their desire for knowledge, when the whole subject is bound up with such strong affect, and so much unconscious conflict on the part of the man. Again, the man learns that unless woman also desire to bear a child, his wish alone is futile to have offspring. Her unconscious negative reaction may cause either sterility or abortion, or she may resort to the use of contraceptives. Truly, it is not strange that man has reacted as he has in this outcry against books giving women still more information.

Man would like to be the controller of life and of childbirth, in the same way that he wishes to control all the other forces of nature. Indeed, his desire to do so is but the outcome of the primitive desire to have the child of his own, and if he cannot, to be in complete command of the one who can. At different stages of the world's history birth-control and infanticide have been the subject of legislation, with a view to the fear of depopulation, on the one hand, and the counter fear of overpopulation, on the other, when food conditions were poor. Primarily laws prohibiting onanism and homosexual practices, were probably framed to keep up the birthright, in the same way that feticide on the part of the mother has been at times and in places more severely dealt with than others. Among primitive tribes this is subject to wide variation. Yet, whereas laws have almost constantly been most severe respecting infanticide on the part of the mother, meting out to her the death penalty for this action, to expose a child if unwanted or sickly used to be the prerogative of the father, at various times in the world history.

But in spite of his power over the infant post-natally, man knows that the fate of the infant, pre-natally, is not in his keeping but in that of the mother. However much he may desire a child, countless eventualities may prevent his attaining the wish, chief amongst them being the woman's unconscious attitude to child bearing, the original Oedipus wish for the child and her reaction to it, as well as her other unconscious wishes motivating her conscious and unconscious behavior during the pregnancy.

Woman's conscious knowledge may urge her to learn about and use contraceptives, with or without her husband's knowledge or consent, and she may supply conscious rationalizations for doing so, but it is her unconscious reaction to the childhood's wish for the child, which after all is the dynamic force which puts her knowledge into action, just as it is her repressed infantile curiosity concerning the origin of life which urges her to acquire other forms of knowledge, her penis-envy which makes her try to rival her brothers in examinations.

In the same way, it is the man's conscious reaction which condemns books upon contraception as obscene, with other rationalizations, such as we constantly read in the newspapers. But the dynamic force behind it comes from his disappointment that he too cannot bear a child; that he cannot know when and if he has begotten one until he is told, by the woman; that he has no control over its life or death, except in the limited way that he may murder it after its birth. The knowledge denied to him by his own mother may again be denied by the mother of the child he envies. He has banished this painful wish, transforming it into a desire to acquire knowledge. Naturally therefore, does he wish to deny to woman his own substitute and compensation for the very thing she may enjoy in reality but does not seem inclined for. This appears again in a reversed form when he wishes to forbid her preventing herself bearing a child by the use of contraceptives, just as vigorously as over the question of the perverse gratification of the component instinct of Curiosity, instead



of her normal sexual function, so that she adopts the man's way of escape from his dilemma, the acquisition of knowledge and homosexuality.

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