

# SINISTER DEXTERITY

## *Remarks on a case-study by Masud Khan*

*by Gerry Sullivan, November 1992*

In the final few pages of his seminar 11 on The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, Lacan broaches the question of a destructiveness fundamental to the human condition and in particular to the modern era dominated by the science emanating from the Cartesian instauration. He relates this destructive potential to the place of the *objet a* in the structure of the subjective relation and in particular to the relationship between the *objet a* and the body of scientific knowledge;

We will not appreciate the full implication of this corpus of science if we do not recognise that it is, in the subjective relation, the equivalent of what I have called here the *objet petit a*. (Lacan, 1973: 265)

Lacan argues that there is another side to the dynamic of historical evolution to that emphasised in histories based on the emergence of Reason or the growth in productive potential;

There is something profoundly masked in the critique of history that we have experienced. This, re-enacting the most monstrous and supposedly superseded forms of the holocaust, is the drama of Nazism. I would hold that no meaning given to history, based on Hegelian-Marxist premises, is capable of accounting for this resurgence - which only goes to show that the offering to obscure gods of an object of sacrifice is something to which few subjects can submit succumbing, as if under some monstrous spell. Ignorance, indifference, an averting of the eyes may explain beneath what veil this mystery still remains hidden. But for whoever is capable of turning a courageous gaze towards this phenomenon - and, once again, there are certainly few who do not succumb to the sacrifice in itself - the sacrifice signifies that, in the object of our desires, we try to find evidence for the presence of the desire of this Other that I call here (the dark God. (ibid. :274-275)

He had earlier shown, from an examination of chapter six of Freud's Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, that the fascinating effect of hypnosis is derived from a confusion at one point of the ideal signifier in which the subject is mapped, the Ego Ideal, and the *object petit a*; and that this is also the formula of collective fascination. He proceeds to an examination of the way Spinoza tamed the virulence of the object cause of desire through a faith finally based on the reduction of the field of God to the universality of the signifier. He concludes, however, that this position is not tenable for us;

Experience shows that Kant is more true, and I have proved that his theory of consciousness, when he writes of practical reason, is sustained only by giving specification of the moral law which, looked at more closely, is simply desire in its pure state, that very desire that culminates in the sacrifice, strictly speaking, of everything that is the object of love in one's human tenderness - I would say, not only in the rejection of the pathological object, but also in its sacrifice and murder. That is why I wrote Kant avec Sade. (Ibid. :275-276)

I have argued elsewhere that the modern period, that dominated by the capitalism of the bourgeoisie, is associated with a persona whose symptomatic characteristics

justify the hypothesis that an obsessional structure is in place, c.f. Sullivan, 1992. If one links this position with that advanced by Lacan, noted above, of the destructive potential associated with the return of that which the stance of the man of science has struck with oblivion in the subjective relation to the corpus of scientific knowledge, then we are led to pose as a problem the relationship between knowledge, fantasy, and morality; and, in particular, the negative judgement embodied in the concept of the existence of evil.

## THE CASE

A clinical case study by Masud Khan offers an ideal vantage point from which to consider these questions, since he uses the examination of this particular case as a ground on which to muse on the absence of the concept of evil in the general moral judgements of modern Western culture. The case, which he entitles *The Evil Hand* (cf. Khan, 1973), concerns a sophisticated middle-aged man who came to Khan's consulting room with the declaration: 'I am an evil man and there is no cure of that'. This damning verdict, as Khan puts it, was associated with an acute depression of three months duration prior to the consultation and an inability to work. Furthermore, he was reluctant to undergo treatment and was persuaded to meet Masud Khan only on the urging of his wife, a professor who had read some of Khan's work. It transpired that he moved in the same social circle as Khan, although they did not know one another personally and remained rigorously distant.

Khan noticed that he had a crumpled, damaged right hand. This became the basis of the first substantial element of the analysis which is reported, and it subsequently transpired that it was a key element in the dynamic which resulted in the state of dismay which led to his appearing in the consulting room. Although Khan had alluded to this defect during the first session he waited three months, until the final session before a long summer break, to receive an account concerning it. He considered it to be an especially apposite application of a general principle that this particular case took its pace development from the client's own rhythm of disclosure. He later realised that the reticence to communicate on the part of the client was a combination of a self-defensive move on his part to contain a compulsion to confess and a ruse to make 'the other' an unwitting accomplice.

The damage to the right hand turned out to have been the result of an accident in which the client had slid under the wheels of a car while cycling, resulting in the crushing of the whole of his right arm. His convalescence involved six months in plaster at home and a long period undergoing specialist treatment in the Swiss Alps when it was realised that the bone was not healing. The end result was a partial recovery in the use of the right hand.

The client, Mr X, brought a dream alluding to this cycling accident to the first session after the break, which Masud Khan invited him to deliver from the couch. It is reported as follows;

I am cycling in a country lane – I'm not sure which country – and two young girls overtake me, racing each other. As they pass me, I spank the one nearest me with my right hand, on her bottom.

Khan did not press for elaboration at this point, but the client turned up to the next session tired and anxious after a sleepless night, remarking that his wife had suggested that he should take up the dream again since it had upset him so much. Khan took the opportunity to remark to him that he had done two things in the dream

which he was now incapable of doing, i.e. riding a bicycle, and smacking with a flat right hand. He also indicated that he could not decipher the meaning of the dream since he knew so little about the client.

This led to an unfolding of the life-history, and the central place of the accident in it. Prior to the accident, he had grown up in an affluent country house environment, the middle child of five, two older brothers and two younger sisters. He was dreamy and lazy, which his parents tolerated since they considered him a late developer, although his siblings were bright and clever. Further pieces of the life history emerged after a brief break in the sessions. Mr. X returned rather dejected from a visit to his parents during which he had gleaned additional detail on the aftermath of the accident, which happened when he was fourteen years of age.

Firstly, his mother told him that he had borne the accident and the ensuing operation very well, up to the point when the nurse attempted to feed him, when he burst into tears with the realisation that he could not feed himself with his left hand. His mother took over the feeding role. Secondly, he would not permit the nurses to wash him and the family butler took over this role, subsequently accompanying him to Switzerland. Thirdly, all he could recall of this was a sense of humiliation at being so helpless and dependent on others. His mother elaborated upon this in telling him that, on returning home from the various operations, he had begun to spend more time on his own and shied away from playing with his siblings and cousins. This was accentuated when he stayed with the children of his father's friend in Switzerland, who usually spoke a German/French patois.

His first experience of a regained 'freedom' was in learning the use of a silver gadget given to him by the Swiss surgeon. This permitted him to eat by pushing food, with the gadget held in the damaged right hand, onto a spoon held in the other hand. His next experience of being 'unbound' or 'unimprisoned' was when the surgeon sent him to an old painter who gave private drawing lessons, following upon the failure of physiotherapy to give much mobility to the damaged hand. He took to the teacher, learnt well, his hand became more supple and he could use it for small tasks in ordinary life, such as eating with the fork in his right hand. He also learnt the language of the children, became somewhat more sociable, yet remained more reticent and controlled than before the accident.

At Christmas time, the surgeon decided that he could return home, as he now needed care rather than further treatment. In the last week of his stay, a decisive event took place, which he related in analysis, again in the last session before the Christmas break, with evident effort:

He was walking to the chalet from the drawing lesson on a sparkling, snowy winters day, when two girls cycled past him, racing each other. They were wearing tight white shorts, sweaters and socks. This sight had excited him in a curiously intense way. On reaching home, he drew his first doodle of a girl on a cycle. During the night he had a startling dream, which he felt had changed the whole course of his life. He had dreamt that two girls in white shorts were racing past him, and with his flat ruler [used for drawing], which he was carrying in his right hand, he playfully smacked the nearest one on the bottom and she turned her head and winked at him. The dream had awakened him and he found that he had had a nocturnal emission - his first. From this dream onwards, he started to doodle cycles and girls on cycles, and a fantasy began to evolve compulsively.

At the close of this session Mr. X communicated that he specialised very successfully

in designing and making furniture, and that he had his own workshop. He said that he would explain how he became a designer after the holiday break. However, after Christmas it transpired that he had been offered, and had accepted, an arrangement which would involve himself and his family living abroad for a year from the following autumn. Therefore, a date of termination for the analysis determined by the summer break was agreed upon. This induced a sense of urgency into Mr. X's presentation of material, although Masud Khan was aware of a taunting and tantalising element, the evocation of an arena of contest concerning knowledge being introduced into the therapeutic space.

The story, as it evolved, involved a shift in Mr. X's educational focus from humanities to sciences, in the context of private lessons which he received upon his return home. At something of a loose end, apart from his tuition and the companionship of Tom, he one day came upon one of his sisters' bicycles leaning against a wall. He drew it, upon an impulse, since he had not been drawing since his return, and was pleased with his efforts. Thereafter, drawing bicycles, and later furniture, became his pastime. He could not do still life drawings and could very seldom find accommodating subjects upon whom to develop his life drawing skills.

His vocational orientation was decided during the same period, when, following a brief stay at the nearby farm of his godfather (who was a carpentry enthusiast) he fixed upon the *métier* of carpentry and design, initially under the godfather's practical tutelage. He purposefully followed this pathway through college and into a successful career.

The first bicycle drawing, which had taken many weeks, led to his noticing a mood of strange excitement in him which would prompt him to draw cycles. It was after the first visit to his godfather that he achieved his first proper drawing. Over a period of many months, a fantasy began to crystallise associated with the drawings;

He is cycling in a country lane. It is summer, and a beautiful sunlight day. A girl in white shorts on a bicycle overtakes him. He races to catch up with her and a conversation starts. Gradually, he persuades her to visit him one day soon. They agree on that. The girl visits him for lunch on a Monday, when all the family are away. By various clever and tantalising ruses, he persuades her to see what he makes in his studio. There is a bicycle carved in wood by him. It has wheels that don't move and the seat is noticeably higher than the handlebars. He tells her that he is at college, learning crafts, and it is a hobby of his to make 'cycles' and other wooden objects, in all sizes, for his family and friends.

It took many years, when he was about nineteen and already at college, before the fantasy reached its full potential as a masturbatory reverie. Masud Khan details it as follows;

Mr. X's final fantasy ended with his tantalising the girl to try sitting on the cycle and his saying: 'Bet you can't touch the pedals.' (The pedals in the drawing were horizontally parallel.) The girl accepted his challenge and teased him, saying: 'By shifting on the saddle, I shall certainly succeed in touching one pedal.' This no girl succeeded in doing. Then he introduced another tantalising provocation: 'If you fail next try, I will give you one stroke with this stick.' He had the stick handy and never gave more than five strokes. In his fantasy he could see the welts from the five strokes under the shorts.

The drawings and the fantasy became the real but hidden centre of his affective life. While still at college he married a girl he had known since childhood and they had

three children together. He was very successful in his career. Nevertheless, Masud Khan surmised that he had never lived a full life with others.

This situation continued for many years until a chance encounter with a young woman reporter at a conference led to the enactment of the fantasy, with devastating consequences for the life he had constructed. Masud Khan reproduces verbatim a large section of the relevant case material, substantial portions of which we will quote to conclude our resume of his paper;

... One of my colleagues knew her and introduced her to us. She said on introduction that she knew of me and had seen my work. I really didn't take much notice of her until she got up to get something. I noticed that she was wearing very tight white trousers and a loose sweater. She had a slim, 'boyish' body. While I was thinking how to tell all this to you, I was startled to recall that - seeing her from behind, with her young bottom squeezed into those white trousers - I had begun to feel the same excitement as I do before starting my 'girly-cycle' drawings.... As I left it was pouring with rain, so I waited for it to ease up a little.... I must have been waiting for a quarter of an hour when a small car pulled up in front of me. It was that young woman and she asked me whether I was waiting for my car or could she give me a lift. I accepted her offer because it was very windy and cold. As we drove she talked on, and said she would very much like to visit my workshop.... As soon as she entered my studio, which is always kept locked, she saw a fullscale wooden cycle (like the one in the drawings you have seen) in one corner of the room.... It was the second object I had made in the studio. The first was an object that I gave as a gift to my Swiss surgeon.... The next thing I saw was her seated on the cycle and I heard her say: 'But I cannot reach the pedals.' I said blandly: 'You are not supposed to.' 'Then what is the point of putting them there?' she replied. Thenceforth, everything went berserk and I really can't recall the sequence of events exactly, but I found myself petting her as she sat on the cycle. She teased me by saying: 'Men are strange. They all think only they have perverse sexual desires and fantasies. You know, women often lead them on, without them realising it.' So I challenged her to tell me her fantasy of lusty sex, and she unhesitatingly replied: 'I like being beaten a bit before intercourse.' I asked: 'Would you like it now?' and she said, 'Yes!' I replied: 'So the contest is on!'

By now, I really felt like a man possessed; I was in a tense maniacal state of sexual excitement. It was quite a new experience for me. I went downstairs to find some suitable object to beat her with but couldn't find one: so I rushed out to the small garden, broke off a small branch from a tree and tried to smooth it down hurriedly, before coming up.

When I returned, I was really quite taken aback to find she had completely undressed herself and was seated naked on the cycle. She asked me with a trembling, excited voice: 'What posture shall I take? Please tie my hands to the handlebars.' I felt she was taking over my initiative.... I told her again: 'This is a "contest". If you fail to touch the pedal, I will give you one stroke per failure with this branch/stick.'... she couldn't touch the pedal and I gave her one stroke. She tried again and again and I realised I had beaten her nearly ten times. I had also taken off my clothes by now. It was not so much an orgy, as being possessed, without any awareness of her or myself. What really horrified me was to see her bottom bleeding a little, because I had not quite smoothed out the branch. Also, I had no experience of this before - fantasies are all right but action and practice are different. She insisted that I 'fuck' her. She used the word and I did it with a diabolical ferocity of lust and vigour. I wasn't aware of her pain or discomfort at all; she had groaned a little but had neither complained nor tried to stop me.... Afterwards, we said little and she drove me home.... I recall nothing more of that night... After breakfasting, I went asleep again and woke early the next morning

with the 'statement', 'I am an evil man', vivid in my mind as if I had dreamt it.... I felt that I had lost all self-respect and wasn't worthy of anyone's affection, and that my work was an alibi to distract myself from becoming a total and criminal pervert: in short, it was evil in reality as I was in myself. I was in this mood of apathy and self-accusative absent-mindedness when my family returned. From that moment, I collapsed into total silence and retired to bed. My wife gently tried to inquire what had upset me but didn't persist. When this condition had lasted for a week, and I was still refusing to eat solid food, she called the family doctor, and that led eventually to my coming to you.

## COMMENTARY ON THE CASE

What is of interest to Masud Khan in describing this case is the awareness of evil on this man's part. This is teased out by Mr. X in relation to the question of whether he has done an evil deed or whether he has not in fact been proved by this deed to have been intrinsically evil. It is the latter judgement which is arrived at in the immediate wake of the traumatising events. He feels that all his measured life and his self-control are a sham and that there is a core of evil inside him.

This judgement is mitigated considerably over the period of therapy with Masud Khan and by the end one has the feeling of a reconciliation on Mr. X's part to the occurrence as an isolated event rather than as a damnation of his persona. However, Masud Khan is anxious to emphasise that while it is difficult not only for psychoanalysis but for all forms of modern social and cultural thought to contemplate the existence of evil as a positive entity, there is nevertheless a widespread belief in evil and awareness of evil, current, and perhaps even resurgent in modern technological society.

This is the tack which Masud Khan draws upon in shaping his case presentation. In order to situate the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy from our perspective, situated within the arena indebted to Lacan's teaching, I will follow a path which Masud Khan substantially neglected in his treatment of the topic. This concerns the clinical structure of the client. There are but two brief remarks throughout the text which betray a judgement with respect to clinical structure. At one point Masud Khan refers to Mr. X as a 'pervert manque', at another point later in the text he alludes to his 'near obsessional - or at least explicitly obsessive - determination to master the handicap of his right hand'. These isolated remarks do not amount to an adequate circumscription of a clinical structure, in my view.

I will take as the guiding principle of my approach the remarks of J-A Miller in his seminar *Du symptôme au fantasme et retour*;

... I think that this thesis is a general one: the articulation of the phantasy with the signifier is by the operation of the Other as barred. The barred Other is an essential moment in the clinic. Lacan says that the clinic is a question of types of symptoms. But when he deals with the clinic, when he puts the types in order, he does so on the basis of the phantasy. And even when he seems to do it on the basis of the imaginary Other, it is always the barred Other. I would even say that it is an affirmable thesis.... The clinic concerns the ways in which various subjects relate to the barred Other. Certainly, when one does the clinic of the symptom, one works with the unbarred Other. That is the clinic of the subject-supposed-to-know. And it is a perfectly legitimate clinic. But at that level, there is no way of separating the analytic from the psychiatric clinic. The analytic clinic, which we have long sought to define, is defined by Lacan again and again: 'The analytic

clinic', he says, 'is the clinic of the barred Other'. (Miller, 1982).

Given that we only have a selection of the material from the case, the grounds for our judgement will retain a provisional, hypothetical aspect. Nevertheless, the richness of elaboration of the fantasy and the perspicacious direction of the treatment by Masud Khan provide us with copious material for our consideration. This will permit us to bring the conjecture which we advance with respect to clinical structure to bear on the question of evil, both in so far as it is significantly at play in this particular case and also in more general terms. We will state from the outset the hypothesis with respect to clinical structure which we will endeavour to justify. It is that both the nature of the fantasy as presented and the import of the details of the client's life indicate quite clearly the existence of an obsessional structure. The first point we will adduce in this regard does not in fact bear on the fantasy. It is rather in the nature of a counterfactual inference, and it concerns the likely trajectory of Mr. X's life if the accident had not intervened to engender a traumatic deflection in its course.

We are presented with a picture of Mr. X as a lazy, dreamy child, unwilling to contest in games with his siblings, easily dismayed in this respect. His parents did not push him to succeed since they considered him a late developer. It occurred to me that he might have become a very late developer indeed in the affluent and socially privileged circumstances of his upbringing. I was reminded of a paper of Serge Leclaire's, perhaps stimulated by the fact that Masud Khan introduces his 'Conceptual Afterthoughts' on the case by way of a quote from Leclaire on the kind of listening required in analysis.

The paper, 'Philo, or desire in the Obsessional', originally appeared in *Évolution Psychiatrique* in 1958 and was later included in the collection of translated Lacanian case studies *Returning to Freud*, edited by Stuart Schneidermann. The description of Philo, as a man in his early 30's, resonates with that of Mr. X, prior to the accident. Leclaire gives a definition of the obsessional as a completed model of man in his essential prematuration. Philo has neglected to engage with life, he has not decided on a career, nor shown any inclination to marry. Leclaire emphasises that a secret complicity holds him in thrall with a mother who is a woman burdened with an unsatisfied desire. There are only some slight indications touching on this latter point in the material presented. It might have been interesting to have explored more deeply the influence of the mother in the tolerance shown to the indolence of her youngest son in the context of the activity and intelligence of the other children. Perhaps also to have considered the background to the circumstance immediately following the first operation;

On waking after the operation I was not very upset. But when the nurse brought me food, I burst into tears as she tried to feed me, since I couldn't manage with my left hand. Fortunately my mother was present and took over, and for the rest of my stay in the hospital and in the country house she fed me herself.

These indications are but slender and speculative. It is in the context of the traumatic accident and the subsequent evolution of the fantasy that more substantial traces of the underlying structure manifest themselves. In the immediate aftermath of the accident it might be judged from certain hints that he continued to have a tendency to dismay, to a resigned retreat from coping with the consequences of the event. However, it would seem that the pain, rage and humiliation associated with the series of operations he underwent in the first six months following the accident and his overhearing of the possibility of amputation of the arm being discussed between the

surgeon and his father, if the infection in the hand turned gangrenous, led to a change in him.

From being someone who was wary of contest, he became someone who challenged himself, who worked obsessively to overcome the effects of the accident. He refused to become resigned to these limiting effects. In fact, Masud Khan expresses the view that there are reasons to believe that he never fully accepted the reality of the accident. He offers as testimony the fact that Mr. X never attempted to develop his left hand as a substitute for the damaged appendage, but obstinately struggled to undo the consequences of the accident. In this case one would be led to characterise the change in temperament as a reaction formation rather than a sublimation and working through of the effects of the trauma.

One might then, perhaps, see the fantasy coming into play in this context, in so far as the fantasy induces a covering over of the trauma as real. The fixity of this fantasy, settling into place quite quickly during those early teenage years, and remaining essentially static up to its literal enactment during what we might presume to have been his late thirties or early forties, indicates how close it is to a fundamental fantasy. This estimation is strengthened by the fact that the instruments of pleasure in the fantasy scenario are directly derived from the traumatic accident and the process of recuperation. The skidding bicycle is the occasion of the accident, the flat ruler in the dream precipitating the fantasy is a major instrument of recuperation. Masud Khan noted, yet refrained from bringing to the client's attention, the link between the fantasy and drawings and incestuous wishes in relation to his sisters. However, he did interpret the connection between drawing and the accident in relation Mr. X showing him the first 'perfect' drawing he had completed and which had initiated his masturbatory relationship to the drawings;

For example, he meets the girl in his 'story' accidentally. Also, I had noticed in the drawing that, though he had chalked the shorts white, there were smudges of very light pencil shading on the shorts. This I rather brazenly linked with his arm in plaster and later in bandages, which could never be kept completely white.... Thus the shorts were a displacement. Into a pleasurable area of play, of what had caused him so much pain, discomfort and stasis.

While it is astute to have related the white shorts and the plaster/bandages, I would hazard a different emphasis in relation to the smudges. I am reminded of Lacan's interpretation of the anamorphic smudging in the foreground of Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors*;

... Holbein makes visible for us here something that is simply the subject as annihilated - annihilated in the form that is, strictly speaking, the imaged embodiment of the  $-\phi$  of castration, which for us, centres the whole organisation of the desires through the framework of the fundamental drives. (Lacan, 1973)

In this particular instance one might suggest that the world of representations embodied in the fantasy and constitutive of the libido investments of Mr. X under the character type induced by reaction formation is incomplete in at least one point. This incompleteness is figured in the smudge or smudges. It renders manifest that some libido is retained on the body of that collusive union which we have postulated that the client and his mother formed prior to the accident and in which the child functioned as phallus for the mother.

This speculation might well return us with more acuity to the question of what exactly was the nature of the trauma which rechannelled the client's destiny. It would seem



that it was not simply the accident and its aftermath which effected the trauma. In the course of the therapy Masud Khan assisted the uncovering of the kernel of trauma embodied in the accident and its aftermath;

In London and at home, he soon started to treat his arm in plaster as a 'thing' he carried around. He had experienced the three major operations as inevitable but futile. He expressed no protest at any point. But as he recalled his subjective feelings, he realised that he had felt 'mistreated' (his word) and deprived of having a say. As he talked, I could feel his rage and disillusionment. At one point he said that he had lost complete faith in his parents and the surgeons in London, after overhearing the surgeon's remark to his father about the possibility of amputation and never being told about it himself.

It is this punitive judgement over which he has no control, which nullifies him as a subject, which is the likely core of the traumatic experience. In this he encounters the brutal and ferocious face of the superego, as 'Other, supreme in evil', to borrow Lacan's term from Kant avec Sade. It is this which blocks any possibility of a return to the idyllic dreaminess of his previous incarnation.

In the face of this exposure to the savage *jouissance* of the Other, the encounter with the Other of the Law, in the guise of the Swiss surgeon who sets him to work with the prosthetic instrument, functions as a draining of *jouissance* and permits the construction of a fantasy which eroticises the culpability attendant upon the superegoic assault and covers the helplessness and abjection of the subject, exposed to the 'pleasure' of the Other, with a veneer of ego mastery.

It is this side of the fantasy which Masud Khan chooses to emphasise in his interpretations. He uses Winnicott's notion of a transitional object and of play in a transitional space to stress the function of the fantasy and the drawings in an attempt to strengthen and reassure Mr. X's ego and to subdue the punitive effects of harsh superegoic judgements. In fact Masud Khan goes so far as to provide Mr. X with a copy of Winnicott's 1951 paper on transitional phenomena. In so doing he is aware that he is neglecting to accentuate the sexual component of the fantasy in favour of the component involving ego-mastery, but feels justified in this course of action in light of the recent depressive breakdown.

In electing to pursue this strategy he is redoubling the cleansing or dampening effect of the therapy with respect to the *jouissance* returned to activity in the course of the fantasy enactment. On one side Mr. X is encouraged to focus on the integration of the fantasy with a signifying reality, through its productive, ameliorative and re-integrative effects. On the other side Masud Khan takes the role of a signifying master, guiding the client, albeit carefully, in the direction he should take in the interpretation of the material he is producing and also acquiescing in the contest of divulgence and interpretation which he detected underpinning the rhythm of the client's engagement in the therapy.

These latter points derive their significance from the place of mastery in Mr. X's history. Following on from the Swiss surgeon, who sets him to work with the prosthetic instrument referred to previously, we have the old painter, who set him to work with pencil and ruler. This tutelage is followed by another, decisive in the direction of his subsequent career. His godfather provides the tools, the encouragement and finally sanctions, in relation his parents, the orientation towards woodworking and design. Indeed, a similar pattern is detectable in the course of the therapy. At the point at which Masud Khan invited Mr. X to lie on the couch he is

surprised at what he terms the innocence with which this sophisticated client responded by saying, "Are you asking me to lie on the couch and saying that it will be better for me?", thus forcing the analyst to answer in the affirmative, to which the client acquiesced without demur. By the following session Masud Khan had become convinced that his client had a compulsion to confess, in search of a return to a state of grace which he had lost, from which a countervailing reticence provided some safeguard.

Three months before the end of the therapy the client acknowledged what he had learnt from his analyst:

The one thing I have really learnt to my advantage from you is through watching your style of working.... I don't want you to feel that I think you haven't helped me with my problems - you have a great deal indeed. But I am talking of something different: it is your style of working - how much you say and how you say it. This is why I respected my Swiss surgeon so much, compared to the English ones. What I have learnt from your style, I am putting into practice in teaching the apprentices in my workshop. I no longer instruct them to do what I know they cannot yet execute, because of their lack of skill and experience. (Ibid. :165)

It seems to me that these points establish a congruence between his relationship with Masud Khan and that which he enjoyed with his previous masters. Furthermore, it allows us to locate the balance which Mr. X achieved between his subjection to the signifier and the space which he forged for erotic enjoyment. His fantasy is constructed in intimate association with this subjection to a relieving mastery, both temporally and in terms of content. It was in the last week of his stay with the Swiss surgeon that the dream which presaged his fantasy emerged. Its content tied the erotic act to the use of the drawing ruler as instrument. Masud Khan notes as a significant detail in Mr. X's story that his first proper drawing, stimulated by the strange mood of excitement which compelled him to draw cycles, was executed after his stay with the godfather who introduced him to carpentry. Indeed, Mr. X's story emerges during the treatment in a dialectic which Masud Khan is at pains to insist is suffused with the aura of an erotic contest.

A comparison between the elements which we have highlighted in connection with this case and Freud's 1919 paper 'A Child is Being Beaten' may allow us to structurally situate this connection between mastery and a coercive eroticism. Freud isolated three phases in the construction of the fantasy which culminates in the phrase embodied in the title of the paper. Firstly, an early envious wish for the destruction of a rival, encompassed by Freud in the phrase 'My father is beating the child whom I hate.' Secondly, a phase which is only produced through a construction on Freud's part, and justified as a necessary transition from the first to the third stages. 'I am being beaten by my father' is the elaboration which he advances. The final phase is accompanied by an erotic charge bound to the reveries which the title phrase distils.

This sequence which Freud decodes is derived from a study of female fantasies. The corresponding male sequence shows significant similarities, although also presenting notable differences, whose import he is not confident in elaborating, since it is based on too restricted a set of examples. In his male cases, the final term of the sequence is 'I am being beaten by my mother'. In this case it is the agent of the beating who is significantly altered in comparison with the constructed second phase. In the female cases there is a shift in the gender and identity of the one or ones being beaten as compared with the second phase, while the agent of the beating is disguised rather

than altered. It is recognisably a father figure who is involved. In Mr. X's case we can detect eroticised residues of the first phase both in the fact that the dream initiating the fantasy was based on two girls, corresponding to the number of his sisters, and in the fact that it was in coming upon the bicycle of one of his sisters resting against a wall one day, that he felt the initial compulsion to draw bicycles. The third phase of the fantasy is a hybrid by comparison with Freud's delineation of the third phase. The recipient of the beating has become an anonymous girl, the subject has become the beater, and there is no direct evidence that the fantasy has been reduced to a phrase.

How do we square this with Freud's classic formulation? It is in the evidence of an eroticised relationship to mastery, which we have noted above, that we may find a clue to the reconciliation of the scenarios. The second phase of the fantasy is a version of the second phase of the castration complex, in which there is a pèrversion or turning towards the father as possessor of the phallus, that which orients the desire of the mother. The third phase of the castration complex, at least in the little boy, is an inversion of the subjective position with respect to this tender dyad. This results in an identification with the insignia of the father in the construction of the ego ideal, and a position within the erotic dyad of activity, as opposed to the previous role of passivity.

This third phase of the castration complex, conduit to the dissolution of the Oedipus complex, is represented in the fantasy of Mr. X. However, it is clear that the fantasy is also strongly marked by the second phase, if we recognise that there is an identification on Mr. X's part with the position of the girl in the fantasy. Indeed, we might well characterise the fantasy as the reconciliation of a vacillation between these two phases of the castration complex, with the instrument of beating as the phallus qua signifier, striking the subject with the threat of castration on the one hand, but evaded in the form of control of the instrument on the other hand. The ex nihilo creationism of the signifier is both shown and disguised in that Mr. X stresses that the number of the strokes and the subsequent welts never went beyond five, the number of children which the father beget.

We might, perhaps, go so far as to suggest that it is an incompleteness in the function of privation terminating the Oedipus complex proper (which termination debouches the subject onto the castration complex as the phase of dissolution of the Oedipus complex) which induces a partial default in the action of the prohibition, the 'no' of the father which initiates the castration complex. We have previously alluded to this possibility in the form of a putative residue of a collusive union on Mr. X's part with his mother. This 'hidden self' might then be viewed as communicating with Masud Khan in the form of the strong impression which the latter gained that the reality of the mutilation was never really accepted.

Nevertheless, it is clear that there was sufficient of a progression through the castration complex as to permit the sublimation of the fantasy, generated in the imaginary conflation of the second and third stages of the complex, into a creative artistic and artisanal production. Lacan asserts in his seminar on ethics, Seminar VII, that in order to effect the sublimation involved in the image offered by the apocalypse of eating the book, it is necessary to yield the pound of flesh. Under the aegis of a series of masters, the trauma of the accident and its aftermath was assimilated to a sufficient extent, under the rubric of the fantasy, as to provide a creative dynamic which meshed with cultural approbation. Mr. X had succeeded in paying with a pound of flesh, with *jouissance*, for the satisfaction, under sublimation, of his desire.

However, this good which was sacrificed for desire, in his work, bespoke also a sacrifice of desire, for the good, in his life. In this regard we may note that, away from his work, Masud Khan had detected signs that he had never lived 'as a whole person with himself and others'. Yet this accommodation had sustained him effectively for more than a quarter of a century, until the fateful encounter with the young woman journalist. We do not, I think have sufficient information to allow us to assess the pre-conditions for this event. Masud Khan certainly highlights Mr. X's characterisation of it as 'accidental' in a querying tone. This seems to be as far as we can go, save to note that it transpires, in a retrospective realisation during the analysis, that he began to feel the familiar excitement associated with his drawings immediately upon noticing, during the conference dinner, that the young woman was wearing very tight white trousers. This is unlikely to have been the first occasion since his teens that such a sight had come to his view.

A significant element to note concerning the experience is that he describes it as 'being possessed, without any awareness of her or myself', and the aftermath as 'I was completely in a daze, as one is when waking up from an anaesthetic.' This latter point surely harks back to the traumatic period of multiple operations on his arm following his accident as a teenager, and gives grounds for assessing this second occasion also as a baneful encounter with the *jouissance* of the Other.

Both of these quotes indicate an experience of aphanisis, not in Jones' sense of a loss of desire, but in one variant of Lacan's sense, i.e., in this instance, the fading of the subject in the face of the satisfaction or completion of the desire embodied in his fantasy. His horror in the face of his functioning as instrument of the *jouissance* of the Other bears witness to the fact that we are not faced with a perverse structure. The rigidity of the splitting of Mr. X's life into different sections, indicates that we are confronted with an obsessional structure. The obsessional question of whether he is alive or dead is fully represented in the two components of his life, a public sphere in which he is effectively dead, going through the motions, and a private sphere in which a lustful life effervesces, whose products commingle with the public sphere in the closure of a surplus value.

His relationship to mastery stabilises the suturing of these two domains. It is the mischievous pleasure of the young woman which forces the private fantasy into a real enactment, flooding the public sphere which Mr. X had hitherto kept swept clean of *jouissance*. J-A Miller comments on this process in the following terms;

Since obsessiveness is only the sutured signification of the subject-supposed-to-know, the encounter with the *jouissance* of the Other unravels the suture of the subject. But precisely because it is the *jouissance* of the Other that has this effect, the refinding of *jouissance* takes a quasi-paranoiac aspect resulting from the identification with the place of the Other. (Miller, op. cit. :43)

He also notes that the resulting 'transferential trance', as he calls it, regularly prompts obsessives to seek treatment. In so doing they are searching for an other capable of embodying the subject-supposed-to-know, i.e. an Other who monitors, who witnesses, who counts, but not in the framework of taking pleasure.

Miller structures his paper as a search for the elements which might guide him towards the unknown formula ciphering the transformation of obsessiveness into hysteria, and thus contribute towards an understanding of the hysterical moment which occurs in every cure, which he calls the hysterical 'nucleus' of neurosis. An investigation of the transferential crisis is the culminating recommendation of the

paper in this relation.

It is here that Mr. X's experience proves its value. However, before directly approaching it we should clarify the implications of the term hysterical moment in relation to the cure. It would seem that there are two hysterical moments associated with the treatment. Firstly, there is that process of the rectification of the subject's relationship to the real, in the sense of his inclusion within his own story as an enigmatic motivation, which Lacan outlined in his paper on 'The Direction of the Treatment', and which is the trigger moment of transference in the automatic construction of the subject-supposed-to-know. Then, there is the experience of *desêtre*, of the failure of the imaginary components of the fantasy in the context of its traversal at the end of analysis. In a sense Mr. X's experience reflects both of these hysterical moments and, perhaps, in so doing indicates the link between them.

In a mirroring of the first hysterical moment, the encounter undermines the collusive containment of the fantasised erotic contest. In the fantasy the girl functions merely as a reflection of his erotic ploys. However, in the context of the encounter, he is disconcerted by the feeling that she is taking over the initiative. In fact, at every stage of the proceedings she determines the persistent flow of the enactment of the fantasy scenario by way of her insistence, up to and including the point where she demands that he 'fuck' her. Nevertheless, in his reflection on the traumatic aspect for him of the encounter, Mr. X concentrates on 'his savage lustful disregard of her and his equally brutal pleasure.'

We can reconcile these two perspectives by considering the causal connection between them. In taking the initiative the young woman moves the role of partner in the fantasy scenario from being a repressed version of the subject's position to the limit point of recognition, the point of the 'fremde person', the stranger of perverse partnership. However, the coherence of her initiative forces the subjective division back onto his side. It is experienced as an overwhelming of his conscious self-control by his own lust. This is what catapults him into the transference trance. There is no one in place, as there is in the analytic setting, to function as an embodiment of the subject-supposed-to-know, and thus to recuperate the effect of the separation of *jouissance* effected by the encounter, by means of an alienation involving the symbolic identification of a trait in an other, which permits them to function as an Other of knowledge. The result is, then, a failure to cover over subjective division save through the hysterical quasi-somatised reactions of depression and depersonalisation. These phenomena are also commonly associated with the second hysterical moment of the analytic cure, the phenomenon of *desêtre*, which is also associated with the failure of the Other.

In this latter case, there is a permanent weakening of the imaginary unity of the Other. In Mr. X's case there is certainly a deflation of the fantasy. This is demonstrated not only in the subsequent reaction to its enactment, but more importantly in reduction of the phantasy to the phrase 'I am an evil man' upon waking from a long sleep after the event.

The content of this phrase is significant in determining the status of the Other in the aftermath of the erotic encounter. It is quite clearly a formation of the unconscious. It comes to Mr. X as if in a dream, at the moment of waking. It functions as a judgement which engenders an extensive and patent moral masochism. As such, it bears witness to the limit point in the maintenance of a complete and consistent Other in the case of an obsessional. It involves the bearing of the divisive judgement by the subject in a form in which the signifier of the subject in the Other, which maintains the Other as complete, is a condemnation of the being of the subject. Hence, everything

touching on the being of the subject is tainted with the mark of disapprobation.

In his seminar of 1981-2, referred to previously, Miller argues that the fundamental fantasy should be considered as the link point between primal repression and primary masochism. If the phrase is considered from this point of view, we might contend that it represents an exemplar of the limit of an obsessional fantasy, in so far as it has been emptied of imaginary content and reduced to a purely signifying content. However, this is a signifying content and not a purely logical operator. Since it functions to maintain the existence of the Other, in extremis, it is in the paradoxical situation of being at once very close to being a logic of the obsessional fantasy while also acting as a formidable barrier to the traversal of the fantasy from signifying to logical articulation. There is an hystericalizing of the obsessional, but at the price of the emergence of an implacable Other. In its weakness the Imaginary Other is prey to a superegoic Real which excoriates the subject.

Hence the wisdom of Masud Khan's strategy in re-establishing the functioning of an Other swept clean of *jouissance*. It allowed the gradual emergence of an acceptance on Mr. X's part of the part which the young woman had played in the engendering of the enactment;

He asked me whether I would agree that it wasn't all his doing, that she had set it up as well and urged him on. I said, 'Yes', and added: 'The passive accomplice is often more in control of such situations and events than the active one. (Khan, op. cit :170)

This interchange, which occurs towards the end of the therapy, leads on to the last phase, which Masud Khan reports in a peremptory fashion. It concerns the reconstruction, from his period of invalidism of all dissociated and repressed feelings of rage, humiliation and abject helplessness, as well as his need for vengeance.

This is what Mr. X took away with him as he went abroad. The following Christmas, he sent Masud Khan a card which was a reproduction of a native drawing, depicting a coolie pulling a wheelbarrow. We might hazard a guess from this that the subject's position had shifted in the reinflated fantasy to the passive role. One might suspect that the attenuated passive homosexual eroticism evident in the contestatory games of disclosure with Masud Khan would be unconsciously integrated into his life.

This is by way of a reminder that the analysis was incomplete, both temporally and substantially. In fact, the reported events, and this may apply also to the unreported remainder, covers only the therapeutic phase of an analysis, although shaped by an analytic aim. The end phase of analysis, the properly analytic phase, is in fact captured in what Masud Khan and Mr. X together construct as the elements which for the latter constituted the evil in his relationship to the object;

Mr. X was quite lucid about the difference between what he called the 'aesthetic tenderness' and concern he felt for 'the girl' in his 'story', and his total disregard for the young woman's experience and feelings, as well as his own lack of any subjective feelings. We were able to piece together how subtly Mr. X had started to 'dismantle' (his word) her as a person, from the moment he had met her. Her complicity rendered it absolute. She was a 'thing' and no longer a person with an ego. I have reported such a way of using the object in a case of foreskin fetishism. In the latter phase of analysis, the analyst is complicit in the construction (the term 'dismantling' refers to the complementary shedding of the narcissistic components of the relationship to the object) of a body of *jouissance* based on traits of the person of the analyst. The aim is to construct a body of disgusting *jouissance*, in conjunction with, or following upon the weakening of the

functioning of the Ideal within the analysis. The analyst, embodying the Ideal through the transferenceal stratagems of the early and middle phases of the analysis, aids the dismantling process by gradually introducing tactics involving incompleteness and inconsistency. The effect is a gradual forcing of the fantasy to a point where it collapses and the Other falls in a complementary moment of hysterical crisis, which Lacan referred to as the experience of *desêtre*. The subsequent trajectory of the scar of the symptom is beyond the scope of this paper.

However, the experience of the erotic encounter on Mr. X's part does permit us to distinguish between the early and later hysterical moments of analysis, in terms of the categories of good and evil. The early hysterical moments of analysis, those connected with the rectification of the subject's relationship to the real, involve an experience of subjective division which is sustainable only in the context of an Other kept clear of *jouissance*, a subject-supposed-to-know. In the absence of an other who can embody the Other as Good, the subject is potentially exposed to the full weight of superegoic judgement. In limited disjunctions between the other and its embodiment of the Other as Good, the bearing of subjective division can continue under the rubric of a negative transference without necessarily triggering an acute negative therapeutic reaction.

In the case of an hysterical moment which is not quickly dampened through the alienation of symbolic identification, then the reaction depends on the subjective structure. We have already suggested that the phrase which came to Mr. X, 'I am an evil man', is the signifying limit of the obsessional relationship to the Other of *jouissance*. The complementary paranoid response would then be that 'The Other is evil'. The hysterical response would be the conversion of the signifying judgement, prior to its advent as signification, into a frozen knot of *jouissance* emblazoned upon the hysterical body in a mute mime show. In so far as a pervert experiences the reversion of the split of subjectivity onto himself, it might be held that the outcome might take any of the previously noted pathways. Finally, it might tentatively be suggested that the schizophrenic psychotic response to an hysterical moment implies the brutal experience of the body as fragments of *jouissance*.

These are the possible outcomes of a forcing of *jouissance* into the relationship between subject and Other such as occurs in the traumatic encounters which often precede the search for therapeutic relief. They also exist as a backdrop, harbouring potential enactment, in the setting of the analytic dynamic. It is in the context of this latter dynamic that new light is thrown on the provenance of the sentiment of evil.

In his Seminar VII, on the ethics of psychoanalysis, Lacan states that it is Freud who is responsible for introducing a new perspective on the question of evil;

It is on the level of the good and bad will, indeed of the preference for the bad at the level of the negative therapeutic reaction, that Freud at the end of his thinking discovers once again the field of *Das Ding*, and points out to us the space beyond the pleasure principle. It is an ethical paradox that the field of *Das Ding* is rediscovered at the end, and that Freud suggests there that which in life might prefer death. And it is along this path that he comes closer than anyone else to the problem of evil or, more precisely, to the project of evil as such. (Lacan, 1866:104)

A little earlier in this text Lacan specifies the domain within which this project of evil unfolds;

Freud allows us... to measure the paradoxical character or practical aporia of something that... introduces itself immediately as possessed of a very special quality of malice, of bad influence - that is the meaning of the French word *méchant*... It is that the moral conscience, as he says, shows itself to be the more demanding the more refined it becomes, crueller and crueller even as we offend it less and less, more and more fastidious as we force it, by abstaining from acts, to go and seek us out at the most intimate levels of our impulses or desires. In short, the insatiable character of this moral conscience, its paradoxical cruelty, transforms it within the individual into a parasite that is fed by the satisfactions accorded it. (ibid. :89)

Lacan holds that this location of the source of evil in the space of the moral conscience is a consequence of Freud's endeavouring to rethink the problem of evil in the context of the absence of God:

... If we follow Freud's analysis, ... we know that God is dead. However, ... God himself does not know that. And one may suppose that he never will know it because he has always been dead. This formula... leads us to something ... that changes the basis of the ethical problem, namely, that *jouissance* still remains forbidden as it was before, before we knew that God was dead.... As a result,... we cannot avoid the formula that *jouissance* is evil. Freud leads us by the hand to this point: it is evil because it involves suffering for my neighbour.... He wrote 'Civilization and its Discontents' to tell us this. That's what was increasingly announced, promulgated, publicised, as analysis progressed. It has a name; it's what is known as beyond the pleasure principle. (ibid. :184)

In the seminar on ethics, this beyond is related to the effects of the signifier on humankind. In his later work, the agency of this beyond becomes more theoretically elaborated. It is located through the concept of the effects of irrevocably lost objects, the *objets petit a*. In this reformulation, the superego is identified with the object voice, which in its most naked form, engenders the mad Law which commands us *Jouit* (enjoy) beyond any consideration of our own good, or that of our neighbour. The object look, sometimes called the gaze, is quintessentially identified by Lacan with the evil eye, with its virulent and destructive qualities. The anal object, the *scybale*, as Lacan calls it in his *Écrits*, is in its essence a function of impurity, of soiling. The oral object, which Lacan calls the nothing, is a function of privation, as evidenced in its role in anorexia nervosa.

Masud Khan locates the psychoanalytic approach to the problem of evil within the tradition of rationality associated with the scientific world outlook dominating our modern era. It is true that the dominant cultural outlook associated with the perception of a withdrawal of God from active intervention in the world, from the 17th century onwards, is characterised also by the loss of a sense of any active agency of evil operating within the world. This is amply illustrated, right at the beginning of this our modern period, in the Blyenbergh-Spinoza correspondence on evil (cf. Deleuze 1970).

However, Lacan's reading of Freud's position with regard to the dynamic of evil within the world is clearly operating in a different paradigm to that underpinning the conventional rationalist scientific world-view. Masud Khan is clearly unaware of Lacan's interpretation and neglects to consider implications stemming from Freud's position which coherently transcend a conventional rationalist scientism, while remaining faithful to the traditions of the Enlightenment.

It is here that the experience of Mr. X is exemplary, if our reading of the case is



sustainable. In so far as there is a special intimacy between obsessional structure and moral masochism there will be evinced, in the case of the obsessional, a sensitivity to an irruption of *jouissance*, which will be interpreted, in varying but significant part, as evidence of sin and revelation of evil. It is in this sense that we can concur with Masud Khan in his estimation of the significance of the case.

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