

OBJECT RELATIONS: some
thoughts

PERVERSION IS NOT ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE DO, IT'S ABOUT WHAT THEY CAN'T DO.

1. Not about ethics or morality.
2. Focus on phenomenological descriptions.

Thoughts about healthy adaption:

1. Reality testing
2. Appropriate emotional expression
3. Impulse control [may include the healthy expression of instincts]
4. Formation of whole object relationships.

DISRUPTIVE SYMPTOMS

- PERVASIVE
- ENDURING
- INFLEXIBLE
- SUBJECTIVE DISTRESS
- OBJECTIVE DISFUNCTION

Characteristics of Perversion

- **Encapsulation:** includes splitting/ dissociation. Focus on autonomous-complexes/ autonomous Bipolar-Intrapsychic-Representations [Welldon, 2011].
- **Compulsion and repetition:** the act is compulsive and repetitive. Subjectively experienced as bizarre [ego-dystonic]- leads to shame and further splitting. Repetition leads to the release of unbearable sexual anxiety [i.e. the act goes from being ego-dystonic to ego-syntonic for a brief time] [Welldon, 2011].

- **Body engagement:** more than fantasies- must involve the use of the body [Welldon, 2011].
- **Part-object relationship:** the other is not seen as a whole person; a whole and complete separate human being with separate thoughts, feelings, desires, agendas etc. [Welldon, 2011].
- **Emotional interference:** in the formation of loving relationships: making-hate versus making-love.

- **Dehumanisation of the part-object:** the other is there to provide gratification...proper object-ification [Welldon, 2011].
- **Sexualisation:** sexuality replaces the ability to think [Welldon, 2011].
- **Lowering of symbolic function:** ability to interpret the autonomous-complex is absent or diminished. Fantasies and drives are thought of as-if they are actions. NB in light of the splitting- the perversion remains split from the persona personality [Welldon, 2011].
- **Enactment:** employing action to evacuate intense emotions [e.g. enuresis, aggression, perversion] [Morgan, 2008]. Moving from concrete thinking to symbolising and think about self/ other.

- **Fixed script:** specific scenarios/ specific scripts/ specific behaviours- no deviation from the fantasy-script [Welldon, 2011]. The process is “entirely objective and programmatic; certain objects are sought and known means of object use come with instructions” [Bollas, 2000]
- **Hostility:** the perversion implies hostility to the dehumanised other. Loss of symbolic function means the ability to interpret and work through the hostility is missing [Welldon, 2011]. Perversion can be described as “the recruitment of love in the service of aggression- the consequence of a predominance of hatred over love” [Kernberg, 1991].

- **Extreme fears of being trapped or engulfed:** especially in an intimate relationship. May lead to two lives: the persona-life and the repetition-compulsion-life [Welldon, 2011].
- **The need for complete control:** not only during enactments but also control of who does and doesn't know about the perversion [Welldon, 2011].
- **Fragmentation:** actualising the fantasy results in a fragmentation of the self [Bollas, 2000].
- **Deception:** distinction between the persona/false and the other [true]-self [Welldon, 2011].

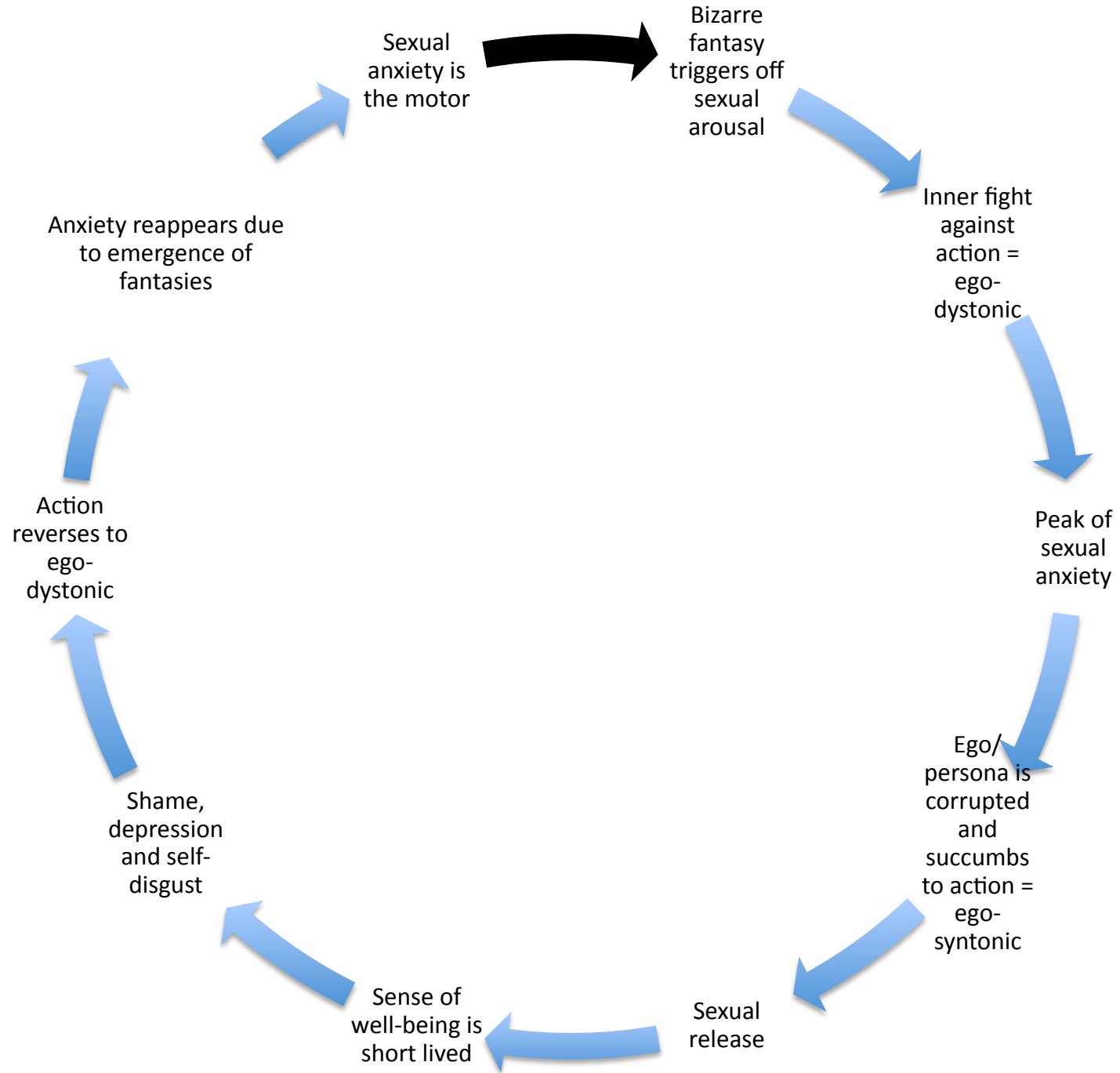
- **Private-public issues:** from fame to shame [Welldon, 2011].
- **Risk taking:** often the perversion requires being in risky situations [Welldon, 2011].
- **Inability to mourn:** mourning would require symbolising, externalising, ritualising the autonomous-complex [Welldon, 2011].
- **Manic defence against depression:** the repetition compulsion wards off grieving the implications of the perversion fantasy [Welldon, 2011].

- **Paradoxical sense of innocence:** the encapsulated fantasy feels foreign, bizarre, dystonic. This disconnection allows for a sense of not-me/ innocence [Bollas, 2000].
- **Sense of omniscience and omnipotence:** Perversion seeks to export internal scenes into the external world...feels there is no boundary between the inner-life sexual life and the external-real [i.e. participation mystique]...compelled to find objects that match the fantasy- these objects do exist and when they are found there exists a “strange harmony that gives the pervert an illusion of omniscience, as the world seems to constantly serve up objects of desire.” [Bollas, 2000; p.170].

- **Feelings of shame are necessary but not sufficient:** perversion implies, also, an inability to experience guilt and remorse. This is combined with an absence of non-violent means of self expression [e.g. acting not talking] [Gilligan].

THE INTERNAL CIRCULAR MOTION OF PERVERSION

[adapted from Weldon, 2011]



Causes of perversion

The event has happened but it is yet to be experienced/ worked-through.

Causes of perversion

- Fear of breakdown/ fear of suffering-disintegration anxiety.
- The need to die- feeling devastating shame and incapacity.
- Fear of madness/ psychosis.
- Inadequate ego/ persona development.
- The affect-images remain autonomous, active, compelling, disturbing [intrusive memories/ hypervigilance/ avoidance].

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Causes of perversion

- Energy invested more in fantasies [auto-erotic] than in the fulfilment of desires in outer world [allo-erotic].
- Splitting: the formation of a False-Self [Progressed Self] and a True-self [Regressed Self] [Kalsched, 1996].
- Having one's love rejected: the fear of loving and being loved- accepting a compromise [Knox, 2005]. The origins of hate.

Causes of perversion

The conscious mind has to form a response to these affect-images:

- Splitting...externalisation...compulsive acting-out [release]. PARAPHILIA [*Para* "beside, aside" + *philos* "loving"]
- Anxiety...symptom formation/ defenses-
NEUROSIS
- The central dilemma: the conscious mind's inability to SYMBOLISE, EXTERNALISE, RITUALISE the affect-images.

Causes of perversion

MIRRORING:

1. The individual IDENTIFIES with his/her affect-images.
2. The OP other Mirrors the child: mirroring needs to be contingent, marked, congruent [Bateman & Fonagy, 2004].
3. Symbolising, Externalising, Ritualising of affect-images.

Causes of perversion

Disruptions to MIRRORING:

Lack of mirroring:

- Low Contingent: affect-images are rejected.
- Low Marked: Psychic equivalence [Bateman & Fonagy, 2004].
- Low Congruent: Pretend [Bateman & Fonagy, 2004].

Causes of perversion

IDEALISATION:

The individual projects [projective identification] the part-object into the other:

1. Projective identification: the other carries the desired affect-images
2. Modelling: the other models the affect-images.
3. Introjection: the individual learns, by observation, how to SER affect-images.

Causes of perversion

Disruptions to IDEALISATION:

The individual projects [projective identification] the part-object into the other:

1. Projective identification: the other carries the desired affect-images
2. Modelling: the other is overly-compliant. The affect-images remain unchanged.
3. SER: the affect-images fade until the impulse reignites.

WHICH COMES FIRST- FANTASY OR OBJECT

SEEING THE OTHER AS AN INDIVIDUAL

FINDING AN **EXTERNAL-OTHER** WHO IS INTRIGUING AND INTERESTING

ASKING THE OTHER WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY WANT TO BE

FANTASY OF THE OTHER IS INSTIGATED, INFORMED, ELABORATED AND SUSTAINED BY THE OTHER

THE OTHER IS APPRECIATED AND MIRRORED- LEADING TO INTIMATE COMMUNICATION. "[Sexuality and eroticism, then, seem to arrive from the arrival of the specific other and love is the predominant state of mind" [Bollas, 2000; p171].

FROM OUTER TO INNER

SEEING THE OTHER AS A VICTIM OF YOUR INNER DRAMA/ FANTASY

ENCOUNTERING AN **INTERNAL-OTHER** WHO IS COMPELLING AND DEMANDING

TELLING THE OTHER WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY OUGHT TO BE

FANTASY OF THE OTHER REMAINS LARGELY UNAFFECTED BY THE OTHER

THE OTHER COMPLIES WITH THE FANTASY...THE FANTASY IS COMPLETED... THE OTHER FADES AWAY

FROM INNER TO OUTER

The main phenomenological features of male and female perversions

MALE	FEMALE
Aimed at outside object or person	Aimed at self or objects of their own creation; e.g. children
Onset usually at an early age	Onset at variable stages
Action is inflexible and chronic	Action is more flexible
Lack of freedom in object choice	Some degree of changeability in the object choice
No emotional/ physical attachment to object/ part-object	Some degree of emotional and physical attachment
Does not usually involve sexual intercourse	Action often involves intercourse for fantasy purposes and as a means of producing the perverse scenario

The main phenomenological features of male and female perversions

MALE	FEMALE
Interferes with objective functioning: affect/ cognition/ behaviour	Interferes at times of emotional crisis
Desire to harm the other is not always apparent	Desire to harm self and objects of creation
High longevity	Appears and fades at different stages of life
Not significantly related to current adaption challenges- persists despite failure/ successes	Significantly related to other stressful situations
Poorer prognosis	Variable prognosis

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