



Family, Capitalism, Anus

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Homosexual desire flows in two directions: one rising towards sublimation, towards the Superego, towards social anxiety; the other descending into the abysses of a non-personalized, non-codified desire. And it is good to pursue the descent; this is the course of desire in which the connecting organs obey no law and follow no rule.

THE SIGNIFYING PHALLUS AND THE SUBLIMATED ANUS

In the world of Oedipized sexuality, free connections between organs, direct relations of pleasure are no longer possible. There is one organ, one sexual organ only, at the center of the Oedipal triangle, the One which determines the place to be occupied by the other three elements of the triangle. The One creates the lack; it determines absence or presence; the penis envy of the little girl, or the castration fear of the little boy. As the signifying despot, it organizes the global situations of people. As the complete detached object, it plays, in the sexuality of our society, the role money plays in the capitalist economy; the fetish, the veritable universal reference of activity, economic in one case, desiring in the other . . .

Sex for the whole world is above all a word that designates the phallus, in relation to the phallus the quantity of possible pleasure is determined. This society is phallocratic; in the construction of the complex of social relations according to the hierarchical mode, the transcendence of the Great Signifier displays itself. The schoolmaster, the general, the boss are father-phalluses. Everything is organized in pyramidal form, and the Oedipal signifier distributes levels and identifications. The body is centered around the phallus like society around its chief. Those who lack one, and those who obey, are subject to the reign of the phallus: such is the triumph of Oedipus.

If the phallus is essentially social, the anus is essentially private. The transcendence of the phallus, and the organization of society around the Great Signifier depends on the 'privatization' of the anus in Oedipized, individualized persons. "The first organ to be excluded from the social domain, the first to be made private was the anus. Just as money created the new state of abstract circulation, the anus provided the model for privatiza-

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tion.” (*The Anti-Oedipus*) Only the sublimated anus has a place in society. Because the functions of this organ are truly private, because they belong to the formation of the person, the anus expresses privatization itself. Analytic history assumes (and one can hardly help noticing the ‘anal’ in ‘analytic’) that the anal stage must be surpassed in order to reach the genital stage. In fact, the exercise in sublimation forced upon the anus is unequalled in any other organ; the anus moves from lowest to highest; in this sense ‘anality’ can be seen as the movement of sublimation itself.

The person is formed in the anal stage, explains Freud. The anus no longer has a desirous social functioning because all of its functions are henceforth excremental, that is to say, above all, private. The formation of the individual goes hand in hand with the great capitalist decoding: the anus is the most intimate concern of the individual and can certainly be linked with money, which must be possessed in order to circulate. The formation of the private person, individual and chaste, is ‘of the anus.’ The constitution of the public person is ‘of the phallus.’ The anus does not benefit from the ambiguity of the phallus, from its double existence as penis and Phallus. Certainly, to expose one’s penis is shameful, but it is at the same time linked to the glory of the Great Social Phallus. All men have a phallus which secures their social role, each man has an anus, very much his own, concealed in the depths of his person. Precisely because it establishes the individual, the anus is outside social relations, and thus permits the division between individual and society. Schreber suffers supreme humiliation when he can no longer defecate by himself. Defecation is not a public affair. The toilet is the one place to be alone, behind locked doors. There is no pornography of the anus (except anti-social). The anus is over-invested libidinally because it is dis-invested socially.

All libidinal energy directed towards the anus is diverted towards the social organization of private persons and sublimation. “The whole Oedipus is anal” (*Anti-Oedipus*) and there is all the more social anality when there is less desirous functioning of the anus. Your excrement is your concern, it belongs to you and you alone. Anus is to the organs what narcissism is to the formation of the individual: the source of energy from which the social sexual system and its oppressive reign over desire issue forth.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND ANUS

It could be said that the desirous functioning of the anus is not limited to homosexuals. We have mentioned in passing the anti-social exception: Bataille, for example, who is heterosexual, also recognized the particularly repressed character of this zone of the bourgeois body. For this very reason, Bataille cannot be considered an adequate expression of social sexuality; he is rather the expression of its extreme limits. No pornography of the anus, we have said, though certainly, heterosexual pornography makes quite a fuss over women’s buttocks. But if the breasts and buttocks of a woman represent

the fullness with which a man can fill his hands, the anus remains an intimate and empty site of a mysterious and personal production, the production of excrement.

If not exclusive to homosexuals, the desirous functioning of the anus at least takes precedence among them. Only homosexuals make constant libidinal use of this zone. In restoring to the anus its desiring function, homosexual desire defies anality sublimation. Schreber stops defecating when he can no longer resist his own homosexual libido. Homosexuality is above all anal homosexuality, i.e., sodomy.

At the end of his article on the “Noseology of Masculine Homosexuality,” Ferenczi makes an observation of considerable importance: “It is difficult to find the cause for the proscription pronounced at the encounter of *this form* of tenderness between men. It may have been provoked mainly by the considerable reinforcement of the sense of cleanliness throughout the last centuries, that is to say, the *repression of anal eroticism*. Even the most sublimated homo-eroticism is associated, more or less consciously, with pederasty, an erotic anal activity” (passages underlined by the author). There is a certain ‘form of tenderness’ in the relationships between men, or should we say rather a certain ‘desirous relation’ opposed to the sublimated form of friendship which excludes anal cleanliness. Anal cleanliness establishes the child’s responsible little self, and the relation between ‘private property’ and ‘personal cleanliness’ (*propriété privée* and *propreté privée*) becomes necessary rather than associative. Ferenczi also analyses “A Case of Paranoia Prompted by the Excitation of the Anal Zone.” The patient is a forty-five-year-old farmer whose social role is marked by an extraordinary zeal: he manifests a great interest in community affairs in which he plays an important role. After a surgical intervention with the anal fistule, he loses all interest in the community and becomes the victim of a persecution paranoia. For Ferenczi, the relation between paranoia and homosexuality leads to the following analysis: “The necessity of an active intervention by men (the doctors) *around the patient’s anal orifice* aroused . . . homosexual tendencies, formerly latent or sublimated. The paranoia is the consequence of a resurgence of the homosexual libido, which, until then, had been properly sublimated through friendliness for his fellow men and an important social role. If the anal fixation disappeared, Ferenczi concludes, the patient would be cured, that is to say “he would then be able to recover his capacity to sublimate, to direct his homosexual interests towards social activity and friendship, rather than towards a vulgar, though perhaps unconscious, perversion.” The perversion here is all the more vulgar because it is phantasmagorically associated with excrement.

The homosexual anal drive thus has a right to manifest itself only in its properly sublimated form. The repression of the anus’s desiring function is a condition for the important public role of a Schreber or a Souabe peasant, his rights, his individuality, his anal propriety, and his property. (Schreber has problems enjoying his family wealth when his presidential madness endangers their fame and fortune, which is protected in the end.) Domina-

tion of the anus is a condition for the acquisition of property, and propriety. Knowing how to 'hold it in' or, on the contrary, when to release one's excrement, is indispensable to the proper formation of the self. To 'forget oneself' is the most ridiculous and annoying social accident, and the most decremental to the human person. To live surrounded by dejection is, in our time, the great misfortune which only prisons and concentration camps can force upon us. To 'forget oneself' is to risk rejoining, across the excremental flux, non-differentiated desire . . .

One does not see one's anus except in the mirror of narcissism, 'tête à tête' or rather 'tête à dos' with one's own private little person. The anus is elevated socially and lowered individually, it is divided into the excremental and the poetic, the ignoble shameful little secret and sublimation. We have already noted that the homosexual undergoes a fate both miserable and divine. To renounce this conversion of anal libidinal energy in the paranoid machine, and to risk the loss of identity, is to sidestep the perverse reterritorializations imposed on homosexuality.

"Only the mind is capable of defecating": by this statement Deleuze and Guattari mean that only the mind is capable of fabricating excrement, only sublimation is capable of localizing the anal. Between the whispering of the mind on the summits and the underworld of the anus, our anal sexuality is imprisoned. Here, too, reigns that rule of double bind, that simultaneous production of two messages, contradictory but coherent in the success with which they have tied production to desire.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND IDENTITY LOSS

Sex is the first digit of our national identity number in the efficient ordering of the modern world. And neurosis is, above all, the impossibility of knowing (and this is certainly different from innocent ignorance) whether one is man or woman, parent or child. Hysterical neurosis is, as we know, the impossibility of knowing whether one is man or woman. All homosexuals are more or less hysterics; in fact, like women they have a profound identity problem, or rather they benefit from an uncertain identity.

The phallus alone distributes identity, non-sublimated use of the anus creates the risk of identity loss. From behind, we are all women; the anus is unaware of the difference between sexes. R. Greenson discusses homosexuality and identity loss in an article published by *Revue Française de Psychanalyse* (February 1965). To begin, the author establishes a fact which appears to astonish him: when the subject of homosexuality is introduced in the discourse with the patient, "the patient reacts with a feeling of fear, as if I had told him: You *are* Homosexual!" As if homosexuality could be mentioned innocently; after all, the neurosis of the patient begins with the paranoia of the doctor. But what is really astonishing is that the patient (the term itself says enough about his supposed passivity) is overwhelmed and panic stricken by the idea. "If we continue the analysis, the patient will soon describe the feeling of having lost a part of himself, something essential

though acquired, and directly related to his sexual identity, in the response he gave one day to the question 'Who am I?' One of my patients expressed this very succinctly when he told me, 'I have the impression that you are going to tell me that I am not a man, nor a woman, but a monster.'" The author distinguishes three phases of 'progress' from child to adult:

"I am me, John,

I am me, John, a boy.

I am me, John, a boy, and have the desire at this moment to have sexual relations with girls."

The difference between sexes and the attraction for the opposite sex are the conditions for sexual identity. "The least sexual attraction (of the sick person) for a man may provoke a state of great panic and threaten his sexual identity." The relation between sexual tendency and sexual object will be discussed elsewhere; for the moment we will only say that sexual identity is entirely dependent on the double assurance of resemblance and difference, narcissism and hetero-sexuality . . .

When the desirous function of the anus imposes itself, it is no longer the 'I' who speaks. The problem here is not one of passivity and activity (which, according to Freud, are differentiated in the anal stage). All homosexuality is linked to the anus, even though the celebrated Kinsey statistics report that anal sexuality remains an exception for all, including homosexuals.

All homosexuality is concerned with anal eroticism despite the perverse differentiations and reterritorializations Oedipus consequently imposes. And the anus is not a substitute for the vagina: it serves women as well as men. Homosexual desire thus interferes with the signifying discriminatory function of the phallus, which is affected the moment the anus organ becomes detached from the private realm it was forced into in order to enter the market of desire. Collective and libidinal reinvestment of the anus weakens the reign of the great phallic signifier that controls our daily life, in the little family hierarchies as well as in the great social hierarchies. Because it is the most desublimating, the desirous operation directed towards the anus is the least acceptable to society.

COMPETITIVE SOCIETY AND THE REIGN OF THE PHALLUS

Our society is a competitive society, competitive between males, between phallus bearers. The anus is excluded from the social game; the bourgeois reign organizes individuals in relation to possession of the phallus, appropriation of the phallus of others, and the fear of losing one's own. The Freudian reconstruction merely interprets and interiorizes the competitive hierarchy's merciless reign. One can only have an erection by castrating others, one can only rise on the road to genitality by trampling on other phallus-bearers, one can only possess a phallus when it is recognized by others, and the phallus is constantly threatened. That is to say, the phallus bearer is constantly in danger of losing his phallus in a hard-won battle. Nobody threatens to take your anus, the danger lies in revealing that you,

too, have a phallus. Schreber fears the rape of Fleschig although he desires it; he fears for his phallic existence which is jeopardized by the disclosure that he, too, has an anus.

All relations between men, that is to say, between phallus-bearers, subject to the competitive rule, refer to the only possible object of sexual activity: the woman. Competition 'begins' in the family, with the father, with the brothers, and 'continues' in the whole social process, with the ascent in the hierarchy. To possess or not to possess, to possess a woman or not to possess her, that is the question posed by the world, the 'apparent' question that conceals the production of desire.

All normal people are more or less paranoid, admit the psychologists. Relations of property and possession create the generalized paranoia of our society, based on the system of jealousy. We have already seen how Freudian analysis conceives the relations between paranoia and self-repressed homosexuality. In 1927, Freud writes an article entitled "On Certain Mechanisms of Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality". In this text he distinguishes between competitive jealousy, considered normal, projected jealousy, pertaining to the resistance of socially tolerated transgressions (adultery for example), and finally, delirious jealousy of paranoid order. Actually these distinctions, which introduce (at least quantitatively) a minimum of differentiation between the normal and pathological person, serve the sole purpose of reassuring the reader. In fact we are told that competitive jealousy "is caused by an unconscious hatred for woman, who is considered a rival . . . (the jealous man) associated (his feelings of jealousy) with the impressions of several homosexual aggressions he suffered as a young boy." As for projected jealousy, which is provoked by society's wise concession of a certain inevitable amount of infidelity in marriage, it "already has a delirious character." The analysis of delirious jealousy will show why Freud finds himself obliged to temper his discovery with alterations. For him it is out of the question to imprudently attack the competition-jealousy system head-on.

'Delirious jealousy' corresponds to homosexuality 'gone sour'; it is a defensive attempt against an overwhelming homosexual tendency, which could, for man, be circumscribed by the following formula: "I no longer love him, *she* is the one I love." This could be formulated more precisely: "I cannot love him since she is the one I love and who loves him."

The persecution delirium is this imaginary reconstruction that allows self-defense against the emerging homosexual drive: "We know that the person the paranoid transforms into his persecutor is precisely the member of his own sex that he loves the most." The jealousy-competition system opposes the system of non-exclusive desire, and multiplies the safeguards against it. Concerning relations between men: "Within the male community, a man who sees virtual objects of love in other men, must act differently from those who are forced to consider men primarily as rivals in front of women." The jealousy-competition system is immediately opposed to the poly-vocal system of desire. Homosexual desire preserves something of this opposition, but it is transferred, in its sublimated social form, to a devotion

to the community of men, to the public interest, in Freud's own terms. Sublimation of homosexuality can thus be considered a public service. The ambiguity stems from such vague Freudian expressions as 'instinct to a social tendency' and 'devotion to the interests of public service.' This supposed social sense is the basis of the exploitation of homosexual desire, of its transformation into a cohesive social force. It is a necessary counterpart to the jealousy-competition system, which, taken to its limit, would be a total law of the jungle.

Homosexual sublimation offers ideological security to a social cohesion which is constantly threatened. Thus the essential role of the jealousy-competition system in the social relations of capitalist society is entirely supported by a double drive of homosexual repression and sublimation, one securing the phallus' competitive reign, the other, the hypocrisy of human relations.

Jealousy and rivalry play a role in homosexual love too; in return for the services rendered by the homosexual libido, the competition-jealousy system invests in homosexual love. To the point, moreover, that certain people attribute the origins of jealousy paranoia to homosexual desire, which actually has been forced to serve as its motor. In Stekel's psychological analysis (cited above)¹ jealousy is linked to homosexuality, conceived as a means of representing the competitor's phallus. If men are in competition, then sexual relations between men (here Stekel has evidently forgotten to specify that they are repressed, strictly imaginary) are relations between phalluses, relations of comparison and hierarchy. Homosexuality thus becomes phallic in exchange for what it has allowed through repressive organization of desires directed towards the anus, namely, the triumph of the phallus. To free homosexual desire from the imaginary system in which it is exploited is essential for the destruction of the jealousy-competition system.

OEDIPAL REPRODUCTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Homosexual desire is specifically related to the pre-personal state of desire. Insofar as it is repressed, experienced within the imaginary system, it is related to the fear of losing one's identity. Manifest homosexual desire conflicts with identity relations, with the roles Oedipus imposes in order to insure the reproduction of society. Reproductive sexuality also reproduces Oedipus; parent sexuality insures the reproduction of children, but above all it insures the reproduction of Oedipus as discrimination between parent and child . . .

Homosexual neurosis is the retaliation of Oedipal reproduction threatened by homosexual desire. Producing without reproducing, homosexual desire is the terror of the family, the non-engendered non-engenderer. And so the homosexual must feel that he is at the end of a race, a race of reproduction for which he is not responsible and which he concludes. The homosexual is socially unacceptable unless he is neurotically attached to his

mother or father, the by-product of an expiring lineage that finds meaning for its perversion in the guilt of the one whose position can be determined only in relation to the past. Since he does not engender, the homosexual must be a degenerate, the artistic end of a race. His temporality is limited to the past: the Greeks or Sodom. Homosexuality serves nothing, grant it at least a little useless, though necessary role in the conservation of the artistic spirit. Homosexuality is treated as a regressive neurosis, completely turned towards the past, revealing the inability to follow the course that is designed for each individual of the male sex, the path to the adult figure, to papa. Since it is incapable of rising to genitality, since, like the countercurrent of a necessary historical evolution, it ignores the succession of stages, homosexual desire must be regressive. Because otherwise the homosexual would be a childless orphan. An orphan in the sense that "the unconscious is an orphan" as Deleuze and Guattari say. Childless: as such the transmission of homosexuality preserves the rather mysterious nature that belongs to the course of desirous production; G. Macé refers to a police commissioner's definition of homosexuals (*Lundis en prison*): "These people who tend to multiply even though they don't procreate." Homosexual reproduction is based on unrestricted horizontal relations; heterosexual reproduction is based on hierarchical succession. In the delineated Oedipal triangle everyone knows what place he will occupy in his turn; this, explains Freud, is the condition for society's progress . . .

HOMOSEXUAL GROUP-FORMATION

Sublimated homosexuality provides the minimal amount of humanitarian cohesion required by society. The repression of homosexuality corresponds to the jealousy-competition system of phallic individuals. Freud writes at the end of an article ("Of Certain Neurotic Mechanisms in Jealousy, Paranoia, and Homosexuality"): "...from the psychoanalytic point of view, we are accustomed to think of the social sentiment as requiring a sublimation of homosexual desire with regard to its object." It would be interesting to consider what sort of 'social relations' are not founded on homosexual sublimation, or conversely, how the de-sublimation of homosexual desire would affect social organization.

Freud ends his article with the following ambiguous conclusion: "Among homosexuals endowed with a social sense, the social sentiments will not function in such a way as to detach him from the original choice of object with fully gratifying results." This sentence is particularly unsatisfying from a Freudian point of view, for the quantity of libido directed towards the homosexual object should, in principle, diminish in proportion to the 'social sense.' According to this, in dealing with the homosexual endowed with a social sense, we are dealing with a contradictory monster; unless 'social' here has a meaning other than the ordinary one. If the direct expression of homosexual desire can acquire a social sense it is certainly not in a society founded upon the heterosexual family system where anti-homosexual paranoia and sublimation reign.

The desires directed towards the anus are closely linked to homosexual desire and constitute what can be described as a group-mode of relations as opposed to the usual social mode. The anus undergoes a movement which renders it private; the opposite movement, which would make the anus public, through what might be called desirous-group formation, provokes a collapse of the sublimating phallic hierarchy, and at the same time, destroys the double bind relation between individual and society.

Deleuze and Guattari explain that there is no individual phantasm which could oppose the collective phantasm, the fruit of a collectivity based on Oedipal oppression. To speak of homosexuality as an individual problem, as *the* problem of the individual, is a sure means of subjecting it to Oedipus. Homosexual desire is a group desire, it forms the anus-group, by endowing the anus with the function of 'desiring link,' by reinvesting it collectively, in a way that opposes its reduction to a shameful little secret. "Practicing homosexuals have somehow failed to sublimate desire, they are incapable of fulfilling the demands that nature and society impose upon individuals." (Jacques Corrazé, *The Dimensions of Homosexuality*). The failure to sublimate involves, quite simply, a different conception of social relations. When the anus recovers its desiring function, when the connecting of organs follows no rule and obeys no law, the group can enjoy a sort of immediate relation in which the sacred distinctions between public and private, individual and society, disappear. And one could perhaps find an indication of this primary sexual communism in certain institutions of the homosexual ghetto, even though they are frequently the object of repressions and guilty reconstructions; the Turkish baths, for example; well-known as the place where homosexual desires are anonymously connected in spite of the constant menance of police presence. With the formation of anus-groups, sublimation loses its hold, not even a crevice is left for the implantation of the guilty conscience.

The group-mode of the anus is annular (anular, we could say); it is the circle which is open to infinite possible connections in all directions without the limitation of assigned places. The social in the phallic hierarchy, that flimsy castle of cards which belongs to the realm of the imaginary, collapses with the annular group formation.

Homosexual desire is not a secondary consequence of Oedipus; it is the functioning of the desirous machine connected to the anus. Deleuze and Guattari underline the error of Devereux (*Ethno-Psychoanalytic Consideration on the Notion of Parenthood*, "L'Homme," July 1965), who considers homosexuality to be the product of Oedipal repression. *Anti-Oedipus* insists on the fact that "... if it is true that Oedipal or filial homosexuality exists, we must recognize it only as a reaction to group homosexuality, initially non-Oedipal." Homosexual desire, then, exists only in groups, and at the same time is forbidden by society. And so it is necessary to make the anal disappear, or rather, to transform the anal into anality. Freud writes: "The first restriction imposed upon the child . . . is directed towards the pleasure obtained by anal activity and its products. For the first time, the

child feels himself surrounded by a world hostile to the manifestations of his desires; he learns to distinguish between his own small self and these strangers who are forcing him for the first time to repress his possibilities for pleasure. From this point on, the anal becomes the symbol of all that must be excluded from his life." In his *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, Freud explains that anal stimulation is rejected because "all that is related to this function is indecent and must remain hidden. (The child) is forced to renounce pleasure in the name of social dignity."

If homosexual desire, caught in the trap of Oedipus, becomes homosexuality, it is precisely because the anal group-formation threatens to silence the social Oedipus. And the myth of Oedipus reveals why it is necessary to distinguish between homosexual desire, the primary form of homosexuality characterized by a non-differentiation of desire, and Oedipized homosexuality, perverse because all energy is directed towards the reinforcement of the law. It is because, say Deleuze and Guattari, everything begins in the mind of Laius, the old homosexual of the group, the pervert who sets a trap for desire. Oedipal homosexuality begins in the mind of the father and assures the integration of the group-forming force into the Oedipal social edifice.

Translated by Caithin and Tamsen Manning

NOTES

1. Wilhelm Stekel, *Impotence in the Male; The Psychic Disorders of Sexual Function in the Male*, translated by Oswald H. Boltz, New York: Liveright, 1927.