

Freud Museum

20 Maresfield Gardens,
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Institute for Advanced Studies in Psychoanalysis

WHAT ARE PERVERSIONS?

27 November 2016

2pm - 5pm

A half-day symposium on sexuality, ethics and psychoanalysis

What are 'perversions'? Some people argue that we call 'perverse' any sexual acts we do not label as 'normal', but the criteria for normality has varied from one era to another. The picture is complicated by the fact that many perversions have no criminal implications while others lead to serious incriminations. It is not just a question of legality, and Freud noted that few individuals sought psychological help in order to rid them of their perversions. Yet psychoanalysts usually believe that perversions do exist, and in this half-day conference the speakers will try to show in what sense this is the case, and how 'the perversions' manifest themselves in the consulting room and everyday behaviour.

Programme

Why Perversion?

Sergio Benvenuto and Dany Nobus

When Perversion?

Darian Leader

A Perverse Patient's Management of a Dangerous Therapist

Carine Minne

Plenary Discussion

What do psychiatrists and psychoanalysts consider perverse or paraphilic today?

Abstracts

Sergio Benvenuto and Dany Nobus

Why Perversion?

In this wide-ranging conversation we will explore some of the ideas developed in Sergio Benvenuto's new book, in which he argues that perversion is not ego-dystonic as all neuroses are, but that it is rather a hetero-dystonic sexuality. That is, the pervert derives a "special" sexual enjoyment by in some way using the other's subjectivity. He uses the other not as object, as we may initially imagine, but as subject. What we mean by perversion is solitary sex practiced with the willing or unwilling help of an other subject, which becomes the sine qua non of sexual enjoyment. Analysts usually see perversion as a subjective structure dominated by a process other than repression, denial or disavowal. Following Freud's explanation of fetishism, Benvenuto explores the process of disavowal in the structure of perversion. How then to extend this disavowal mechanism to all so-called perversions? What does a sadist or a voyeur, for example, disavow, and how does this disavowal lead to a specific relation to the 'law'?

Darian Leader

When Perversion?

Psychoanalysis distances itself from moral discourses which make judgements about sexuality based on surface behaviour. What appears to be the same behaviour can have entirely different meanings and functions for each individual. When, then, should we speak of perversion, not as a form of sexual practice but as a psychical structure?

Carine Minne

A Perverse Patient's Management of a Dangerous Therapist

In this paper I present the case of a life threatening perversion. While clearly pathological, this is a case where one can link the psychopathology not only to disturbed very early infantile traumatic experiences but also to a fixation on a bodily activity that all babies and toddlers are temporarily preoccupied with. Despite being a disturbing case, the aim is to show the function of the perversion, in the non-pejorative sense of the word.

Speakers' Biographies

Sergio Benvenuto is a psychoanalyst in Rome, president of the Institute for Advanced Studies in Psychoanalysis (ISAP), and a scientific researcher in the Institute of Sciences and Technologies of Cognition at the Italian Council for Scientific Research (CNR) in Rome. He is professor emeritus in Psychoanalysis at the International Institute of Psychology of Depth, University of Nice in Kiev. He is also the founder and editor of the European Journal of Psychoanalysis, published both online and in print. His latest book is *What are Perversions? Sexuality, Ethics, Psychoanalysis*.

Dany Nobus is Professor of Psychoanalytic Psychology and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs at Brunel University London, where he also directs the MA Programme in Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Society. He is the Chair of the Freud Museum London, and the author of numerous books and papers on the history, theory and practice of psychoanalysis.

Carine Minne is Consultant Psychiatrist in Forensic Psychotherapy at Broadmoor Hospital, West London Mental Health NHS Trust, and the Portman Clinic, Tavistock & Portman NHS Foundation Trust. She is Vice-President of the IAFP (International Association for Forensic Psychotherapy) and also a psychoanalyst with the British Psychoanalytical Society. She is the Training Programme Director for the North West London Specialist Registrar forensic psychotherapy training. One of her particular interests is in providing long-term psychotherapy to patients across the different levels of security they pass through and continuing when they are back living in the community, offering a chance for mental structural changes to become embedded.

Darian Leader is a psychoanalyst and author working in London, and Founding Member of the Centre for Freudian Analysis and Research (CFAR). He writes regularly about Lacanian psychoanalysis, psychoanalytic theory and practice, as well as about contemporary art. His books include: *Introducing Lacan* (2000), *Why do women write more letters than they post?* (1996), *Freud's Footnotes* (2000), *Stealing the Mona Lisa: What Art Stops Us From Seeing* (2002), *Why do people get ill? Exploring the Mind-body Connection* (2007, with David Corfield), *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia and*

Depression (2008), What is Madness? (2011), and Strictly Bi-Polar (2013). His latest acclaimed publication is Hands: What We Do With Them – and Why (2016).

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