

Sex and Pain

Ratticus

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If you are reading this right now, you are not making love. But you are presumably not assembling cars nor doing the dishes either. In this essay about sex you will not learn new techniques, ideas or perspectives. You might even get bored reading it, in which case I insist that you do something else immediately, as that is the whole point of what I am saying.

The Surrealists like to say that in poetry words make love. At “Burger King” they like to say that hamburgers make love and they’re probably right also. I would not, I swore to myself long ago, be writing this if and until I could enjoy it.

Which is not to say that dry, academic—boring—essays can’t be enjoyable, sometimes, like when I’m in a dry, academic and boring mood, nothing could bring me to greater heights. This is all about pleasure.

I can’t prove it, but at this exact moment you are experiencing orgasmic pleasure beyond your ability to imagine it. Every absolute cell in your body, yes, weirdo, even your foot cells, are undergoing excruciating ecstasy. That is one of the reasons you won’t let yourself feel it. It is so painful to let go of yourself and so pleasurable to be miserable like this.

That is why I start with Marquis De Sade. In spite of himself, this poet revealed the sexual dialectic in one of its basic manifestations. I say “in spite” because like Reich, he could not develop his thought that little bit further which would unlock forever the key to all of his dreams. Similarly, both writers could sense this and I truly believe that this frustration made them despair to the point of self-destruction.

The pleasure/pain dialectic. Since the point of essays, being reductionist, is oversimplification, let me in the spirit of consistency eliminate a whole department of mental bureaucracy, and put it this way: Self-consciousness is the essence of limitation. Self-consciousness is every thing we seem to be, and is the sine qua non of education.

In the spirit of limitation, of self, unlimited pleasure becomes its opposite, pain. Experience pain at a high level, I dare you, and at a point it too degenerates into something quite nice. Why DeSade is important to understand is that he answers the puzzle of why we would let ourselves go on reproducing this miserable society with all of its painful manifestations.

The religious exploit this institutionally by claiming suffering as a virtue. Furthermore, they always tortured witches, for instance, as opposed to merely burning them, because in this way they could “cleanse their souls,” or, in other words, expand their consciousness, and they probably did.

Similarly, we hear of shamans swinging on poles by ropes attached on hooks through their skins, like so many Walleyes; or of long fasts on cold hilltops, walking over hot coals, etc. I could have told them that these feats are unnecessary, but they wouldn’t have believed me either.

Consciousness, by definition, is pain. Reich, maintaining that the momentary release of self through sexual love would somehow culminate in a permanent reversal of this condition, was indeed a hopeful attempt, but this release, even coupled with the social transformation of labor, and other forms of pain, would only succeed in instituting new forms of pain, because we would all be the same kind of people. We may be experiencing less severe forms of

pain/oppression, but we cannot boggle our way out of this mess by merely pulling down our pants more often; so what if we throw away the pants, they cling to us in what he would rightfully call “character armor.”

If it makes you feel better, at this point, to have a quick fuck in the bush for a moment, go right ahead. Who am I to stop you? But you’ll be back, or you won’t do it now for various reasons, which is the crux of what I am saying.

I just recently finished reading Fredy Perlman’s delightful book *Against His-story, Against Leviathan*, and he comes to this point repeatedly. The book was delightful because I enjoyed reading how so many civilizations were trampled in the dust of barbaric vengeance; it was a pleasure to experience, even indirectly, the disintegration of so many of the institutions that torment us daily, and to learn, again and again, that our ancestors had to be dragged kicking and screaming into this false light, and that many of them rid themselves of this Reichian armor.

I enjoy kicking and screaming. I even enjoy the armor. It’s truly a pity, truly, that I can’t however, grow bark. I’ve said many times that I would enjoy growing antlers, almost did one time, and still some day intend to!

What has this to do, you undeservedly ask, with sexuality? Not antlers, but I remember my first sexual dream was of me with a cow, the cow had horns. That’s quite a score for an eight year old, eh, guys?

It has to do with Reich claiming to shed character armor by unleashing our sexuality. If we are not repressed, starting as children, in our sexuality but allowed to express and develop it fully we would not have this armoring, and it would not be subject to the rigidity so necessary to the dominant institutions to maintain our passive submission. A Detroit character would later claim, as a revolutionary program, “rock and roll, dope, and fucking in the streets.” This was the line of the White Panthers and I think that most of them now have pulled the broken glass out of their buns and are trying something else.

It should be clear, by now, that I’ve taken Sade to heart. Why people like sports, jogging, chopping wood, boxing, etc. instill a mystery to those who haven’t. Many of us, it is true, love war. Consciousness is pain, as I said. The fact that you are reading this proves it.

I would come more to the point, of course, if I didn’t like to play around with this—I wouldn’t have bothered in the first place. I would just say that I read *Life Against Death* by Norman O. Brown in which he said that infantile sexuality is not merely genital, but polymorphous.

By that Greek word, in which Brown pays obeisance to centuries of intellectual slavery—Polymorphous—a nice word, really, he (like Freud) is saying that all of those wonderful feelings aroused in our genitals in adult sexuality, were always with us, but as children they permeated our bodies in so many ways that about any activity could be a sexual experience.

Of course this changes the meaning of the word, sexuality. It also changes the implications of the word, of society, of us and everything else. While the majority of our activity is mundane, in fact painful, what we have left is that orgasm to compensate, in fact, to bribe us to sacrifice the rest of our bodies, and activities. In education, the development of so-called selfhood is the continuous restructuring of activity and awareness so that we learn how to convert pleasure into pain. Furthermore, we learn how to enjoy pain, by giving it meaning. Indeed, the most important thing (in terms of our usefulness) we learn is that pain is more significant, more applicable in more situations than pleasure could ever be. It is not long before we learn that pleasure, or play, is in fact wasting time.

I won’t get much deeper into the multitudinous aspects of this—it’s too painful. I will reassert that the mere quantification of orgasmic experiences does not alter the basic structure of our being; as I’ve hinted all along, it is a qualitative transformation we need to prepare for the old world that’s been denied us and the new world we can create.

Also, I was not kidding when I said that we have outlandish ecstasy at our disposal preimmediately. For while we are being trained for years to develop our ability to experience pain, we are not doing its opposite, which would ordinarily be the case. Infantile sexuality is our point of departure, think for a second what adult sexuality might be if cultivated so ardently. It would be enough to suggest that primitives, as is demonstrable to those needing documentation, may enjoy your standard roll in the hay, but they have so much fun that I doubt they clamor about “sex” one tenth as much as we.

Why do we devote novels, films, TV bar time, clothing and hair styles—in other words, almost all of our cultural activity toward and around the genital act? This is almost all we have left of pleasure and of course, that is exploited to the maximum.

When there is no alien world—no alienated beings—then you can talk about an Earth Mother in a meaningful sense, a sensual meaning. When you die you will see that all along you were in a radiant cradle rocking in such unimaginable enjoyment that an orgasm will be as a yawn, but even though this is guaranteed and easily verifiable, nothing you see would seem to indicate it. As you know, there are so many who would say you do not even deserve it then. In essence the motto of any conceivable civilization—because this is its *raison d'être*—is FEEL BAD BECAUSE WE SAY SO.

But really, sex is one of the great absurd tragedies of the present world. How many suicides over it or lack of it? How much petty arrogance over its acquisition leads to smug satisfaction. Remember, bogus sexuality is the coin of this world, not money. Money is to buy land, cars, houses, power—all accouterments of bogus sexuality. The biggest winners are still losers if they don't got that kid stuff, that spontaneity which alone is the sign and the coin of true happiness. Spontaneity, kid's stuff, is the key to the locks everywhere.

Because spontaneity is the movement of nature, so-called music is not music. It is civilized harmony, artificially imposed rhythm. Because spontaneity is the movement of nature, there is no program to follow, no plan. Also, because spontaneity is the movement of nature unlimited, existence, freedom and pleasure cannot be manufactured, but are available constantly. This is easily verifiable, demonstrable, and perfectly obvious.

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