

BONDAGE FANTASIES AND BEATING FANTASIES

BY JOSEPH WEISS, M.D.

Two male patients had masochistic sexual fantasies: one had bondage fantasies, the other beating fantasies. Each patient had been traumatized in childhood by his experiences with a martyr mother. Each had developed the belief that in an intimate sexual relationship with a woman he would hurt her. As a consequence, each tended to suppress his sexuality. Each used masochistic fantasies to reassure himself that he was not hurting his fantasied or real partner. The reassurance made it safe to experience his sexual feelings. The two patients' use of their masochistic fantasies is compared to the fetishist's use of his fetish, as described by Freud.

In their attempts to address the riddle of sadomasochism, analysts have created a rich literature containing widely varied and complex formulations.¹ The variety of formulations arises from several factors: patients may suffer from a number of different sadomasochistic syndromes (Blum, 1991; Stoller, 1991); and analysts have attempted to understand their clinical observations of sadomasochism from a wide variety of theoretical perspectives. In this paper I shall not attempt yet another comprehensive review of the vast literature on sadomasochism. My purpose here is limited; it is to discuss a prominent function of masochistic sexual fantasies in two somewhat similar male patients, one of whom excited himself

by bondage fantasies,² the other by beating fantasies. Both patients functioned well. Neither depended entirely on his fantasies to become sexually excited. Both (in contrast to many patients with such fantasies) were quite curious about their fantasies, and both provided considerable information about them.

I shall attempt to understand the patients' masochistic fantasies from the perspective of my own particular theoretical approach (Weiss, et al., 1986; Weiss, 1993a, 1993b), hoping thereby to throw new light on one important meaning of such fantasies in patients similar to mine. My focus will be on the reassuring function of my patients' fantasies.

Each patient suffered from an unconscious omnipotent sense of responsibility for his sexual partner. He unconsciously feared that if he were to take the initiative in a sexual encounter and become sexually excited, he would hurt his partner. As a consequence of his unconscious anxiety about his sexuality, he tended to suppress or repress his sexual feelings.

Each patient used his masochistic fantasies to reassure himself and to overcome his unconscious anxiety about his sexual feelings; through his fantasies he denied the danger of hurting his sexual partner. He unconsciously assumed that if he were being tied down or spanked by his partner, he could not hurt her. By reassuring himself in this way, he created conditions in which he could safely bring forth his previously repressed sexual feelings.

Each patient had developed his fear of hurting women from early experiences with his mother, whom he perceived as an unhappy martyr who blamed him for her unhappiness, resented him when he was happy, strong, and willful, and was upset when he tried to separate from her by being different from her or by spending less time with her.

Each patient had difficulty separating from his mother; he shared his mother's moods and feelings. When she felt miserable, he would feel miserable. While she felt burdened by having to care

¹ The reader may gain an appreciation of this richness and complexity from a symposium on sadomasochism held at the fall meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1988. The papers from this symposium are printed in full in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. 39, 1991.

² A brief account of the patient with bondage fantasies is presented in Weiss et al. (1986, pp. 80-81).

for him, he felt burdened by having to make her happy. In his adult life he tended to share his sexual partner's feelings and moods.

Each patient's sexual fantasy was of a woman entirely different from his mother. Each patient pictured his partner as happy and energetic, as able to take initiative and assert authority, as feeling separate from him, and as enjoying her interactions with him. In each instance the patient's fantasy, besides enabling him to deny his fear of hurting women, provided him with the image of a woman with whom he could temporarily identify and so share her vigor, her enjoyment of their interactions, and her sense of separateness. At the same time, to the extent that the patient unconsciously experienced being tied down or spanked as being victimized, he retained a connection to his martyr mother. He used his temporary identification with the spirited woman of his fantasies to deny and keep suppressed his chronic identification with his mother. In both patients the fantasized image of the strong woman who dominated him elaborated a real³ experience with a caretaker who was comfortable and unambivalent about controlling him.

I found that my focus on the reassuring function of my patients' fantasies helped them. They were relieved, and they produced considerable confirmatory material.

My explanation of a person becoming aroused by the fantasy of being beaten differs from that proposed by Freud in '*A Child Is Being Beaten*' (1919). However, it closely parallels Freud's explanation of the fetishist's arousal in *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence* (1940b).

In '*A Child Is Being Beaten*,' Freud assumed that, for the child, being beaten means being sexually loved, albeit in a regressed

³ In the case of a female patient who developed spanking fantasies, her image of the strong authority elaborated a fantasized childhood experience. The patient perceived both parents as helpless martyrs. She developed the fantasy of a strong man spanking her from her girlfriend's account of being spanked by her father. In the fantasy, the patient is visiting the girlfriend. They are both mischievous, and the girlfriend's father spans both of them.

form. In both male and female patients, the unconscious fantasy is of being beaten by the father, which stands for being loved by the father. (This is so, even though the male patient may fantasize being beaten by a woman.)

In *Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence*, written nineteen years after '*A Child Is Being Beaten*,' Freud relied on new and strikingly different concepts than those he had used in the earlier paper. At the time he wrote '*A Child Is Being Beaten*,' Freud had not yet fully developed his concepts about unconscious cognition, unconscious belief, and unconscious guilt. Nor had he developed the crucial idea that a person unconsciously regulates repressions by the criteria of safety and danger (1940a). A person, according to this formulation, keeps mental contents warded off while being threatened by them and brings them forth when he or she unconsciously decides that they may be safely experienced (1940a, p. 199). Freud did not develop these ideas fully until the *Outline* (1940a), around the time he wrote his article on fetishism.

In the *Outline* Freud assumed that the fetishist obtains pleasure from the fetish not because he loves it per se but because he finds it reassuring. The child who becomes a fetishist has inferred in childhood, from castration threats and the sight of the female genitalia, that castration is used as a punishment for sexuality. As a consequence of this belief, he is at risk of suppressing or repressing his sexual feelings. With his fetish, which he unconsciously equates with the female penis, he reassures himself against the danger of castration. By endowing the woman with a penis, he denies crucial evidence for the belief in castration. Indeed, he denies the belief in castration itself. He thereby creates conditions in which he may safely become sexually aroused.

In Freud's explanation of a person's sexual arousal by a fetish and in my explanation of my patients' sexual arousal by bondage or beating fantasies, a person is endangered by a frightening unconscious belief⁴ (Weiss, 1993a; Weiss, et al., 1986). In Freud's

⁴ Freud consistently wrote that castration anxiety stems from a belief as opposed to a fantasy.

explanation, the fetishist is threatened by the unconscious belief in castration. In my explanation, the masochist is threatened by the unconscious belief that he will hurt his partner in a sexual encounter. In Freud's explanation and in mine, a person finds a way to deny a danger: in Freud's by use of a fetish, in mine by bondage or beating fantasies. In both explanations, the denial of a frightening unconscious belief creates conditions that make it safe for the patient to be sexually aroused. He may safely experience the sexual feelings that he has suppressed or repressed as a consequence of his unconscious anxiety.

In Freud's explanation and in mine the man "elevates" the woman: in the case of the fetishist he endows her with a penis, and in the case of the man with bondage or beating fantasies he makes her strong and dominating.

How does Freud's explanation of beating fantasies in '*A Child Is Being Beaten*' compare with my explanation of my patient's fantasies? Freud assumed that the boy who is spanked by his father erotizes the spanking and so acquires a homoerotic attachment to the father. Freud's explanation implies that the process of erotization is fundamental and thus not subject to further analysis. My account agrees that the spanking is erotized, but it attempts to explain the process of erotization.⁵ It assumes that being spanked by the father relieves the boy of his burdensome sense of being dangerous, so that he may safely become sexually excited. In other words, he erotizes the spanking because it makes him feel safe.

In my explanation the homoerotic element is less important than the fact of being spanked by a parent figure. In the case of Robert, reported below, it was not his father but rather an aunt who held him down, and it was from his elaboration of his experiences with her that Robert developed his bondage fantasies. A

⁵ No doubt there are other factors in the erotization of the spanking. The buttocks are an erogenous zone, and the father by spanking the boy on the buttocks, breaks a taboo about freely handling a private part. Kernberg (1991, pp. 346-347) has discussed the role of breaking taboos (that is, transgressing) in the development of sexual excitement.

colleague has told me about a patient with spanking fantasies who was not spanked by his father, but by his mother.

My assumption, that the homoerotic element is less important than the fact of being spanked by a parent figure, is consistent with the observation that a boy is easily able to replace the image of a male spanking him with the image of a female spanking him. The boy may replace the male image by the female image not simply to deny the unconscious homosexuality, but because he is more sexually interested in women than in men.

My explanation, while not denying the possibility that he has erotized the spanking by the father, points to the importance of the boy's prior relationship with a martyr mother. As will be seen later, a number of published reports of patients with beating fantasies bear out the assumption of the boy's relationship with a depressed, fragile, blaming mother.

The Case of Robert

Robert, the patient with bondage fantasies, was a forty-two-year-old French businessman in the import-export business. He came to analysis mainly because of periods of depression and passivity, following periods of successful activity. However, during the first few months of analysis, it became clear that he also had marital problems. He worried excessively about his wife. In social situations he was afraid that she would feel left out, and he worked hard to bring her into his conversations. Also, when she became upset, he blamed himself and tried hard to cheer her up.

Robert was an only child. He remembered his mother as nervous, possessive, and easily hurt. She was unable to exert authority. Robert had learned to be careful and restrained with her lest he hurt her. Around her he felt nervous and worried, as he assumed she felt. He had trouble separating from her. Even in adult life, he talked to her frequently on the phone and visited her in Europe once or twice a year. Robert remembered his father as calm, warm, and loving. Robert had been comfortable with his father, and the

two would play together. His father would tell him stories, teach him songs, and read to him.

Robert began talking about his bondage fantasies after six months of analysis. He was curious about them and eager to understand them better. The fantasy that he sometimes produced when having sex with his wife was of a strong, happy woman tying him down and playfully having sex with him. The analyst (who by this time was well aware of how worried Robert had been about his mother and how worried he still was about his wife) suggested that Robert used the fantasy to reassure himself during intercourse that he was not hurting his wife.

This interpretation made immediate sense to Robert, who proceeded to offer confirmatory observations. He stated that he is worried about his wife during intercourse. He wants her to enjoy sex, but he fears that she has sex simply to accommodate him. If he believes she is not interested in sex, he has considerable trouble becoming sexually aroused. The fantasy of the cheerful, strong woman tying him down helps him to become aroused. With this fantasy he blots out his wife's sober expression and substitutes the image of a woman who is confident and enjoying herself in her interaction with him. As he fantasizes the dominating woman enjoying herself, he becomes able to sexually enjoy himself.

A few days after Robert first mentioned his bondage fantasies, he brought forth a pertinent memory. When he was three and one-half, he would restlessly run around his family's small Paris apartment. His mother would become upset at his restlessness. She would sometimes get a headache and go to her bedroom. On one occasion when he was upsetting his mother with his restless activity, his mother's buoyant younger sister playfully held him down and he became sexually aroused.

A few days later, Robert remembered becoming sexually excited on an occasion in the seventh grade when he experienced two friendly women as comfortably controlling him while preparing him for a part in a bible pageant by putting makeup on his face. In adolescence, Robert's masturbation fantasy was of being tied down by a playful woman who proceeded to fondle him.

A few months after Robert remembered the above, he confessed his bondage fantasy to his wife. Much to Robert's surprise, she was happy to help him enact the fantasy by taking the role of the woman who tied him down and had sex with him. When they carried out this enactment, both he and his wife became especially aroused sexually. Though they subsequently enacted this fantasy infrequently, they became more comfortable with each other during intercourse, and came to find it more pleasurable. Robert was reassured by his wife's greater sexual involvement, but he nonetheless continued to worry about her. He spoke about his worry on and off for the next several years, and with the analyst's help gradually gained control of it.

The development of Robert's bondage fantasy may be summarized as follows: from early childhood experiences with his mother, Robert developed the frightening unconscious belief that he was a danger to her. When his aunt playfully held him down, he was temporarily assured that he was not so dangerous to a woman. He did not have to worry about his aunt, and he could borrow her strength and her sense of fun and so became sexually excited.

In his later life Robert was in danger of experiencing his sexual partners as he had experienced his mother. In obedience to the belief that by taking the initiative sexually with a woman and by being strong with her he would hurt her, he tended to suppress his sexual feelings. However, by fantasizing a woman tying him down, he could temporarily deny his fear of hurting the woman and so could feel safe in becoming sexually aroused.

Robert's fantasy of being tied down by a strong, happy woman reflected his childhood experiences both with his aunt and with his mother. The image of a dominating woman elaborated his childhood image of his aunt. The sense of victimization (which was largely unconscious) implied by being tied down connected him to his mother and so protected him from feeling that by enjoying himself with a woman he was being disloyal to his mother.

Robert's episodes of depression, following successful activity, expressed in his everyday life inhibitions about being strong simi-

lar to those that had given rise to his bondage fantasies. After periods in which he was strong and successful, he unconsciously became worried about both his parents, neither of whom was endowed with his vitality. He thought it was unfair and disloyal of him to achieve much more than they had achieved, and he would metaphorically tie himself down by becoming inactive and depressed.

The Case of Richard

Richard, the patient who developed spanking fantasies, was a hard-working, successful computer programmer. He came to analysis at age twenty-four mainly because of difficulty in taking the initiative both in everyday life and in his relations with women. He dated a variety of women, but rarely maintained a relationship for more than a few months. He was sexually attracted to them but uncomfortable with them. He found any contact with women vaguely disgusting. At times he was nauseated before a date. In a relationship with a woman, he assumed he would have to give more than he received. He felt superior to the women he dated. He assumed none of them were worthy of him.

Richard was the oldest child of five children in a middle-class family. His mother was a housewife, his father a businessman. Both parents were alcoholics.

Richard's father was ambitious and self-centered. He worked hard and enjoyed his work. At home he was sometimes playful with the children, at other times impatient and critical. Richard's mother was passive, bland, depressed, and ineffective. Sometimes, after drinking too much, she would stay in bed all day. She was overwhelmed by the task of taking care of five children and would complain to them about how burdensome they were.

Richard remembered being upset by his mother's weakness. When he was disobedient, she would react, not by making him obey, but by telling him how he was making her unhappy. On one occasion, when his mother was depressed, he playfully hit her on

the arm in an attempt to engage her. Though he did not hit her hard, she looked shocked and pained and made no effort to defend herself. Richard was upset and baffled. He did not believe he had hurt his mother, but he nonetheless felt guilty. (Looking back from the present, Richard assumes that his mother was acting so hurt in order to teach him never to hit her even in play.)

At the beginning of his analysis, Richard expressed his determination to find a girlfriend and get married. After about six months he began to date Ann, a woman from work, and he gradually developed a serious relationship with her. He found her pleasant and attractive, albeit occasionally depressed and dissatisfied. As a consequence of his new relationship, Richard came to realize that he was prone to worry excessively about women and to take too much responsibility for them. When Ann complained or pouted, he became excessively worried about her and tried to cheer her up. When they had a dispute, Richard readily took the blame and was usually the first to apologize. He occasionally considered ending the relationship but was deterred by the fear that if he left her, she would become depressed and commit suicide. Richard was relieved when the analyst suggested that he assumed too much responsibility for Ann's happiness, much more than was warranted by his limited power to make her happy. Richard realized that the analyst was right. He stated that he very much wanted to overcome his irrational worry. Also, he spontaneously connected his worry about Ann with his childhood worry about his mother.

About six months after he began his relationship with Ann, Richard confessed his spanking fantasies. He fantasized being spanked by a strong self-righteous woman. He was ashamed of his fantasies; he assumed that they expressed a deep-seated pathological longing for passivity. The analyst told Richard that perhaps he fantasized being spanked by a strong self-righteous woman to assure himself against the irrational fear of hurting women. Also, the analyst reminded Richard that he had been overly worried about both his mother and his girlfriend, Ann.

Richard agreed and readily produced confirmatory material.

He noticed that his worry about a woman is incompatible with his sexual interest in her. He is especially attracted to proud, bossy women. When he notices that Ann is unhappy or irritable and unable to enjoy sex, he has trouble becoming aroused.

A few weeks later Richard continued his investigation of his spanking fantasies. He remembered that on several occasions after he had inadvertently hurt his mother, she complained to his father about him, and his father, without hesitating, reacted by spanking him. His father was not angry; rather, he was matter-of-fact. Richard's father spanked him only a few times and not after he was five. However, his father did occasionally threaten to spank him, and Richard thought, by the way his father threatened him, that his father enjoyed doing so. For example, his father would ask, "How would you like me to apply a ruler repeatedly to your behind?"

Still later Richard remembered an occasion when he became sexually excited in the sixth grade. His female English teacher wrote a note to his parents reporting that Richard was neglecting his homework and advised his parents to coerce him into spending more time on it. Richard read the note and, not knowing the meaning of the word "coerce," looked it up in the dictionary. When he found that it meant "force," he became sexually excited and fantasized himself being spanked by the English teacher.

Richard began masturbating in early adolescence. His fantasy while masturbating was of being spanked by a woman for a minor misdemeanor. The woman in the fantasy was either a teacher or the mother of one of his friends. She was self-righteous and completely unambivalent about spanking him. In the fantasy she believed he deserved to be spanked, and he agreed. Also during early adolescence Richard would occasionally take his pants down in front of a mirror and spank himself with a hair brush while imagining he was being spanked by the woman of his sexual fantasies.

Richard became less ashamed of his spanking fantasies, as he realized that they expressed not simply a deep-seated longing for

passivity but an inhibition about being strong and active with women lest he hurt them.

During the next year Richard developed a deeper understanding of his childhood relationship with his mother. He realized that he had shared her sense of victimization. At times they would sit together, both sad and each consoling the other. Richard experienced a sense of merger with his mother that made him quite uncomfortable. He would feel disgusted when he pictured his mother lying in bed all day with a hangover, dirty and perspiring. When he would visit her in her bedroom after school, he felt heavy and depressed as he assumed his mother felt. He also felt sad at not having a happy mother with whom to interact.

Richard contrasted his childhood image of his father with his image of his mother. He considered his father clean and strong. Though his father drank too much, he did not act drunk. Whereas his mother was passive, depressed, and withdrawn, his father was active, cheerful, and interested in his work. He was proud, lively, and vigorous.

Richard's spanking fantasies derived from childhood experiences with his father and his mother. His image of the vigorous woman who was unambivalent about spanking him was based mainly on the childhood image of his father who had been unambivalent about spanking him. By endowing the woman of his spanking fantasies with his father's characteristics, he created the image of a woman who, unlike his mother, was not hurt by him and who enjoyed her interactions with him. (Richard's use of a fantasy to endow a woman with his father's characteristics closely parallels the fetishist's use of his fetish, as described by Freud, to endow a woman with a penis.) In addition, Richard's spanking fantasy enabled him, by temporarily sharing in the vigor of the strong woman who was spanking him, to feel vigorous himself and so to feel sexually aroused. However, to the extent that Richard unconsciously felt mistreated by being spanked, he maintained an unconscious connection to his martyr mother.

After going with Ann for about a year, Richard left her. He was

relieved to observe that she was not nearly as upset as he feared she would be. Then after six months Richard began a new relationship with another woman, Carol, who was more confident and cheerful than Ann. Nonetheless, at times, Richard worried excessively about her, and his observing this made him all the more aware of the irrationality of his worry. Though he realized his worry about Carol was irrational, he had to work hard to overcome it over the next several years. During this time he found a new way of assuring himself that he was not hurting Carol during intercourse. He developed a teasing relationship with her that they both enjoyed. Carol's toleration of his teasing and her enjoyment of teasing him were reassuring to him.

During the last two years of his analysis, Richard made progress overcoming his irrational worry about Carol, and he became more able to take the initiative with her. During this time he scarcely mentioned his spanking fantasies. Toward the end of the analysis the analyst asked him about them. Richard mentioned that he occasionally produced them and that he no longer was ashamed of them.

Richard married Carol shortly after the analysis ended. The analyst did not hear from him until about two years later when Richard called him, upset by Carol's having had a miscarriage. Several years later, Richard enclosed a brief note with a birth announcement. He wrote that he was doing fine and had taken up a new hobby, sculling on San Francisco Bay.

DISCUSSION

A colleague with whom I discussed my clinical material suggested that I failed to take into account the importance of the patient's compliance with the analyst. He suggested, for example, that Richard reacted to the analyst's interpretation of the reassuring function of his beating fantasies as he had reacted to his father's spanking him. With his father he had become sexually excited. With the analyst he happily produced confirmatory material. In other

words, he eroticized the analyst's interpreting to him, just as he had eroticized his father's spanking him.

I disagree. In my view the patient's sexual excitement when spanked and his happily confirming the analyst's interpretations are entirely different experiences. Richard became sexually excited while being spanked because he was reassured by the spanking against his irrational fear of being a victimizer. However, Richard happily confirmed the analyst's interpretations about the meaning of being spanked because as he experienced it, the analyst was supporting his wish to overcome his irrational fear of victimizing women.

His father's message and the analyst's message pointed him in different directions. His father's message as Richard experienced it was, "You are constrained." This message gave Richard immediate relief of anxiety. The analyst's message as Richard experienced it was, "You need not be constrained." This message indicated how Richard might over time become less anxious; namely, by facing his irrational worry about women and overcoming it.

Richard liked the interpretation and happily confirmed it because he wanted very much to overcome his worry about women, and he wanted to be able to take the initiative with them. These were goals that he had begun to work on before the analyst's interpretation and that he continued to work on throughout the analysis. Since he wanted to overcome his worry about women and wanted to be able to take the initiative, his working energetically to do these things should not be considered a compliance. A person who does what he wants to do, even with the help and encouragement of another person, is not complying with that person.

Richard found the analyst's interpretation of his spanking fantasies both demystifying and consistent with his own experience. He reacted to the interpretation by feeling more free; he took the initiative in the analysis, bringing forth both genetic and current material and fitting them together to make a coherent and convincing story. Moreover, he brought forth material that the analyst had not anticipated.

The idea that Richard eroticized the analyst's interpretation of the spanking fantasies just as he had eroticized the spanking itself cannot explain the following observations: Richard made progress. He faced his worry about women and gradually overcame it. He became progressively less worried about Carol, stronger in his relationship with her, and more able to take the initiative. As he accomplished these things, he relied progressively less on his spanking fantasies, though he never completely relinquished them.

I have found support for my focus on the reassuring function of masochistic fantasies in the work of Novick and Novick (1987), who did extensive research on beating fantasies. They studied eleven children with fixed beating fantasies and compared them to a control group with transient beating fantasies. The mothers of the children with fixed beating fantasies, in contrast to those of the control group, were very much like the mothers of Robert and Richard, only somewhat more disturbed. They were dominating, but they dominated by their suffering. They were unable to absorb their children's helplessness and anger. Therefore, they blamed their children for their own failures, externalizing onto their children their own painful affective states.

The children studied by Novick and Novick tried to perceive their mothers as loving and perfect and so reacted to their mothers' suffering by developing a belief in their own omnipotence. They blamed themselves for their mothers' deficiencies, assuming that they had caused these by their aggression. The children expressed guilt about their normal desires to separate from their mothers and to function independently. One of the children said, "When I do something good without my mother, I'm afraid she will die." Recall that Richard feared that if he left Ann, she would commit suicide.

Just as Richard felt like his mother, Novick and Novick's patients with fixed beating fantasies felt like their mothers. One patient who spent a lot of time with her mother, said, "When I'm feeling good I'm all alone. When I'm feeling bad I'm with my

depressed mother." Another patient was a slender boy who complained about being fat like his plump therapist.

Novick and Novick wrote that helping patients with fixed beating fantasies to separate from their mothers was a central task of the therapy. They noted that the patients' mothers would become upset at their children's steps toward independence. As noted above, both Richard and Robert were incompletely separated from their mothers and felt guilty when they attempted to separate from them.

In several detailed psychoanalytic case reports of patients with beating fantasies (Glenn, 1989; Lihn, 1971) the patients' mothers were similar to those of Novick and Novick's patients, and they were also similar to Richard's and Robert's mothers. The mothers were blaming, guilt-provoking, and easily hurt. Bloss (1991) has reported the case of a woman with beating fantasies whose mother was depressed and silent.

My suggestion that by his beating fantasy Richard warded off his feeling like his sad, weak mother is compatible with Stoller's (1991) idea that masochistic perversions may be used to protect against what he called "symbiosis anxiety or merging anxiety" (p. 41). A child who is being spanked is helped to feel separate by the stimulation of the surface of his or her body. While being spanked, the child need not feel compassion for the person spanking him or her. Moreover, the child may temporarily share in the sense of separation of the person who is doing the spanking.

The idea that the masochist is incompletely separated from the mother appears in the writings of Chasseguet-Smirgel and Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandchaft. Chasseguet-Smirgel (1991, p. 411) wrote that the "masochist's own body is identified with the body of the mother, with whom he fuses." However, she considers this identification defensive, masking the patient's disqualification of his father.

Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandchaft (1988) wrote about a psychotic patient who demanded that the analyst hit her. The patient felt like a chameleon. She told the analyst, "Doctor, I turn into

anyone I meet." Her wish to be hit symbolized her need to be enlivened by the analyst's presence. Her primary unconscious fear was of being unable to connect with others. "She was struggling to overcome the gap that separated the therapist from her isolated sense of self" (p. 506).

Blum (1991, p. 437), points to the importance of a sense of rejection in the masochist. "It is 'better to be beaten than neglected' . . ." This formulation, though not much focused on in Richard's analysis, applies to him. He felt lonely and sad after school when he visited his mother who was in bed with a hangover.

Loewenstein (1957) suggested that in some cases beating fantasies begin with a memorable beating by a parent or parent surrogate and express an attempt to master the resulting trauma.⁶ This may be true in some cases. However, in my observations of Richard and several other patients, the memorable beating is part of a second stage in the development of beating fantasies. In the first stage the patient is traumatized by experiences with a fragile helpless mother, which makes the future masochist feel omnipotent and worried about women. The memorable beating of the second stage reassures the future masochist against the fear that he cannot be controlled and that in an intimate encounter he is bound to make his partner unhappy.

My patients felt guilt toward their mothers, but in my opinion, their guilt was not a consequence of anger at their mothers. They developed guilt because their mothers either explicitly or implicitly blamed them for their unhappiness. The patients accepted the blame so as not to risk losing their relationship to their mothers (Berliner, 1958).

Stoller (1991) assumes that a person by his perversion may be struggling to master childhood traumas. Though this may be true of some patients, it was not a primary motive in the cases I studied, if to master trauma means to make fundamental changes in un-

⁶ During childhood Richard and his siblings did play spanking games with each other. They were apparently somewhat traumatized by being spanked and attempted by the games to master the trauma. The games, however, were not sexually exciting.

derlying psychopathology. My patients' childhood traumas arose from their experience with their helpless, blaming mothers. My patients mastered their traumas with their fantasies of being dominated if mastery means finding a way, despite their traumas, of achieving sexual pleasure. However, they did not master their traumas if mastery means overcoming their unconscious beliefs that they are a danger to women. They did not accomplish this task until they succeeded, in their analyses, in overcoming their exaggerated worries about their wives and their internalized mothers.

REFERENCES

- BERLINER, B. (1958). The role of object relations in moral masochism. *Psychosom. Q.*, 27:38-56.
- BROS, P., JR. (1991). Sadomasochism and the defense against recall of painful affect. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 39:417-430.
- BLUM, H. P. (1991). Sadomasochism in the psychoanalytic process, within and beyond the pleasure principle: discussion. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 39:431-450.
- CHASSAGUER-SMIRGEL, J. (1991). Sadomasochism in the perversions: some thoughts on the destruction of reality. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 39:399-415.
- FREUD, S. (1919). 'A child is being beaten': a contribution to the study of the origin of sexual perversions. *SE*, 17.
- (1940a). An outline of psycho-analysis. *SE*, 23.
- (1940b). Splitting of the ego in the process of defence. *SE*, 23.
- GLENN, J. (1989). From protomasochism to masochism: a developmental view. *Psychosom. Study Child*, 44:73-86.
- KERNBERG, O. F. (1991). Sadomasochism, sexual excitement, and perversion. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 39:333-362.
- LIHN, H. (1971). Sexual masochism: a case report. *Int. J. Psychoanal.*, 52:469-478.
- LOEWENSTEIN, R. M. (1957). A contribution to the psychoanalytic theory of masochism. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn.*, 5:197-234.
- NOVICK, K. K. & NOVICK, J. (1987). The essence of masochism. *Psychosom. Study Child*, 42:353-384.
- STOLLER, R. J. (1991). *Pain and Passion: A Psychoanalyst Explores the World of S & M*. New York/London: Plenum.
- STOLOROW, R. D., ATWOOD, G. E. & BRANDHAFT, B. (1988). Masochism and its treatment. *Bull. Menning. Clin.*, 52:504-509.

WEISS, J. (1993a). *How Psychotherapy Works: Process and Technique*. New York: Guilford.

_____. (1993b). Empirical studies of the psychoanalytic process. *J. Amer. Psychoanal. Assn., Suppl.*, 41:7-29.

_____. SAMFSON, H. & THE MOUNT ZION PSYCHOTHERAPY RESEARCH GROUP (1986). *The Psychoanalytic Process: Theory, Clinical Observation, and Empirical Research*. New York: Guilford.

2420 Sutter St., Rm. 4
San Francisco, CA 94115

FROM WHOSE POINT OF VIEW? THE NEGLECTED QUESTION IN ANALYTIC LISTENING

BY EVELYNE ALBRECHT SCHWABER, M.D.

The central question which I hope to address is: how do we discover, in our clinical work, what we had not before even considered, another way of thinking about a matter? Drawing upon clinical examples, including a critique of my material, I shall illustrate a mode of listening which attempts to keep clear the delineation of whose point of view one is referring to—patient's or analyst's. In so doing, I shall consider some conceptual, methodological, and epistemological ramifications of this effort in an attempt to demonstrate the potential for deepened illumination of nuances of the patient's experience—and of our own—which may otherwise go unnoted.

How can we learn, in our clinical work, what we had not already believed, not already known? How do we discover something we had not considered, another way of thinking about a matter? Perhaps deceptively simple, these questions may carry fundamental conceptual and epistemological implications, profoundly affecting our clinical stance and warranting further reflection.

Some time ago, I had a patient who would "whistle in the dark," smile when she spoke about subjects that seemed hard or painful. I asked about this apparent discrepancy, and as she reflected on it, we learned then of the many ways she had found to feel cheerful; it was for her a *modus vivendi*. She loved flowers, especially those which are longer lasting and most brightly colored—with "spectacular blooms." One time, before she was to leave on a winter vacation, she dreamed of growing her plants in