

Female Sexuality ¹

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In that phase of children's libidinal development which is characterized by the normal Oedipus complex we find that they are tenderly attached to the parent of the opposite sex, while their relation to the other parent is predominantly hostile. In the case of boys the explanation is simple. A boy's mother was his first love-object; she remains so, and as his feelings for her become more passionate and he understands more of the relation between father and mother, the former inevitably appears as a rival. With little girls it is otherwise. For them, too, the mother was the first love-object; how then does a little girl find her way to her father? How, when and why does she detach herself from her mother? We have long realized that in women the development of sexuality is complicated by the task

10 of renouncing that genital zone which was originally the principal one, namely, the clitoris, in favour of a new zone, the vagina. But there is a second change which appears to us no less characteristic and important for feminine development: the original mother- object has to be exchanged for the father. We cannot as yet see clearly how these two tasks are linked up.

We know that women with a strong father-attachment are numerous and need not by any means be neurotic. In studying this type I have made some observations which I propose to communicate here and which have led me to a certain view of female sexuality. I have been struck, above all, by two facts. First, analysis has shown that where the attachment to the father was peculiarly strong it had been preceded by a phase of equally strong and

20 passionate attachment exclusively to the mother. Except for the change in the object, the love-life had acquired hardly a single new feature in the second phase. The primary mother-relation had developed in a very rich and many-sided way.

Secondly, I learnt that the duration of this attachment to the mother had been greatly underestimated. In a number of cases it persisted well into the fourth and, in one, into the fifth year, so that it comprised by far the longer period of the early sexual efflorescence. Indeed, one had to give due weight to the possibility that many a woman may remain arrested at the original mother-attachment and never properly achieve the change-over to men.

These facts show that the pre-Oedipus phase in women is more important than we have
30 hitherto supposed.

Since there is time during this phase for all the fixations and repressions which we regard as the source of the neuroses, it seems that we shall have to retract the universality of the dictum that the Oedipus complex is the nucleus of neurosis. But if anyone feels reluctant to adopt this correction, he need not do so. For, on the one hand, we can extend the content of the Oedipus complex to include all the child's relations to both parents or, on the other, we can give due recognition to our new findings by saying that women reach

the normal, positive Oedipus situation only after surmounting a first phase dominated by the negative complex. Actually, during this phase, to a little girl, her father is not very different from a troublesome rival even though her hostility towards him never reaches

40 such a pitch as does the boy's. We have, after all, long given up any expectation of a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development.

Our insight into this early, pre-Oedipus phase in the little girl's development comes to us as a surprise, comparable in another field with the effect of the discovery of the Minoan- Mycenaean civilization behind that of Greece.

Everything connected with this first mother-attachment has in analysis seemed to me so elusive, lost in a past so dim and shadowy, so hard to resuscitate, that it seemed as if it had undergone

some specially inexorable repression. But possibly I have received this impression because, when I have analysed women, they have been able to cling on to that very father-attachment in which they took refuge from the early phase of which I am

50 speaking. It would in fact appear that women-analysts— for instance, Jeanne Lampl-de Groot and Helene Deutsch— had been able to apprehend the facts with greater ease and clearness because they had the advantage of being suitable mother-substitutes in the transference-situation with the patients whom they were studying. I have not indeed succeeded in completely unravelling any of the cases in point and will therefore confine myself to communicating my most general conclusions and giving only a few examples of the new ideas which have suggested themselves to me. Amongst these is my conjecture that this phase of mother-attachment is specifically closely connected with the aetiology of hysteria (this is indeed by no means surprising when we reflect that both the phase and the neurosis in question are characteristically feminine); further, that in this

60 dependence on the mother we have the germ of later paranoia in women.² For it appears that this germ is the surprising, yet regular dread of being killed (? devoured) by the mother. It would seem plausible to conjecture that this anxiety corresponds to the hostility which the child develops towards her mother because of the manifold restrictions imposed by the latter in the process of training and physical care and that the immaturity of the child's psychical organization favours the mechanism of projection.

II.

I have begun by stating the two facts which have struck me as new: first, that the great dependence on the father in women merely takes over the heritage of an equally great attachment to the mother and, secondly, that this earlier phase lasts longer than we should

70 have anticipated. I must now go back a little in order to insert these new conclusions in their proper place in the picture of female sexual development with which we are already familiar. A certain amount of repetition is here inevitable. It will help our exposition if, as we go along, we compare the course of female development with that of the male.

First of all, there can be no doubt that the bisexual disposition which we maintain to be characteristic of human beings manifests itself much more plainly in the female than in the male. The latter has only one principal sexual zone, only one sexual organ, whereas the former has two: the vagina, the true female organ, and the clitoris, which is analogous

to the male organ. We believe that we may justly assume that for many years the vagina is virtually non-existent and possibly remains without sensation until puberty. It is true, 80

however, that recently an increasing number of observers have been inclined to think that vaginal stirrings are present even in those early years. In any case female genitals must, in childhood, centre principally in the clitoris. The sexual life of the woman is regularly split up into two phases, the first of which is of a masculine character, whilst only the second is specifically feminine. Thus in female development, there is a process of transition from the one phase to the other, to which there is nothing analogous in males. A further complication arises from the fact that the clitoris, with its masculine character continues to function in later female sexual life in a very variable manner, which we certainly do not as yet fully understand. Of course, we do not know what are the biological roots of these specific characteristics of the woman, and we are still less able to

90 assign to them any teleological purpose.

Parallel with this first great difference there is another, which concerns the love-object. The first

love-object of the male is the mother, because it is she who feeds and tends him and she remains his principal love-object until she is replaced by another which resembles her or is derived from her. With the female too the mother must be the first object, for the primary conditions of object-choice are the same for all children. But at the end of the girl's development it is the man— the father— who must come to be the new love-object; *i.e.* as she changes in sex, so must the sex of her love-object change. What we now have to discover is how this transformation takes place, how radical or how incomplete it is, and all the different things that may happen in this process of

100 development.

We have already observed that there is yet another difference between the sexes in their relation to the Oedipus complex. We have the impression that what we have said about that complex applies in all strictness only to male children, and that we are right in rejecting the term "Electra complex" which seeks to insist that the situation of the two sexes is analogous. It is only in male children that there occurs the fateful simultaneous conjunction of love for the one parent and hatred of the other as rival. It is thereupon the discovery of the possibility of castration, as evidenced by the sight of the female genital which necessitates the transformation of the boy's Oedipus complex, leads to the creation of the super-ego and thus initiates all the processes that culminate in enrolling the

110 individual in civilized society. After the paternal function has been internalized so as to form the super-ego, the next task is to detach the latter from those persons of whom it was originally the psychical representative. In this remarkable course of development the agent employed to restrain infantile sexuality is precisely that narcissistic genital interest which centres in the preservation of the penis.

One residue of the castration complex in the man is a measure of disparagement in his attitude towards women, whom he regards as having been castrated. In extreme cases this inhibits his object-choice, and, if reinforced by organic factors, it may result in exclusive homosexuality. Very different is the effect of the castration complex on the girl. She acknowledges the fact of her castration, the consequent superiority of the male and her

120 own inferiority, but she also rebels against these unpleasant facts. So divided in her mind, she may follow one of three lines of development. The first leads to her turning her back on sexuality altogether. The budding woman, frightened by the comparison of herself with boys, becomes dissatisfied with her clitoris and gives up her phallic activity and therewith her sexuality in general and a considerable part of her masculine proclivities in other fields. If she pursues the second line, she clings in obstinate self-assertion to her threatened masculinity; the hope of getting a penis sometime is cherished to an incredibly late age and becomes the aim of her life, whilst the phantasy of really being a man, in spite of everything, often dominates long periods of her life. This masculinity complex may also result in a manifestly homosexual object-choice. Only if her development

130 follows the third, very circuitous path does she arrive at the ultimate normal feminine attitude in which she takes her father as love-object, and thus arrives at the Oedipus complex in its feminine form. Thus, in women, that complex represents the final result of a lengthy process of development; castration does not destroy but rather creates it, and it escapes the strong hostile influences which, in men, tend to its destruction--in fact, only too often a woman never surmounts it at all. Hence too the cultural effects of the break- up of this complex are slighter and less important in women than in men. We should probably not err in saying that it is this difference in the interrelation of the Oedipus and the castration-complexes which gives its special stamp to the character of woman as a member of society.

140 We see then that the phase of exclusive attachment to the mother, which may be called

the *pre-Oedipus* phase, is far more important in women than it can claim to be in men. Many phenomena of feminine sexual life which were difficult to understand before can be fully explained by reference to this phase. For example, we had noted long ago that many a woman who takes her father as the model for her choice of a husband, or assigns her father's place to him, yet in her married life repeats with her husband her bad relations with her mother. He should have succeeded to her relation with her father, but in reality he takes over her relation to her mother. This is easily explained as an obvious case of regression. The mother-relation was the original one, upon which the father-relation was built up, in married life the original basis emerges from repression. For her development

150 to womanhood consisted mainly in transferring affective ties from the mother to the father-object.

With many women we have the impression that the period of their maturity is entirely taken up with conflicts with their husbands, just as they spent their youth in conflicts with their mothers. In the light of what I have now said we shall conclude that the hostile attitude to the mother is not a consequence of the rivalry implicit in the Oedipus complex, but rather originates in the preceding phase and has simply found in the Oedipus situation reinforcement and an opportunity for asserting itself. Direct analytic investigation confirms this view. Our interest must be directed to the mechanisms at work in the turning away from the mother-object, originally so vehemently and exclusively loved.

160 We are prepared to find not one solitary factor but a whole number of these contributing to the same end.

Amongst these factors are some which are conditioned by the circumstances of infantile sexuality in general and so hold good equally for the love-relations of boys. First and foremost we must mention jealousy of other persons— brothers and sisters and rivals, amongst whom is also the father. Childish love knows no bounds, it demands exclusive possession, is satisfied with nothing less than all. But it has a second characteristic: it has no real aim; it is incapable of complete satisfaction and this is the principal reason why it is doomed to end in disappointment and to give place to a hostile attitude. Later on in life, the lack of ultimate gratification may conduce to a different result. This very factor may

170 ensure the undisturbed continuance of the libidinal cathexis, as is the case in love-relations inhibited in their aim. But in the stress of the processes of development it regularly happens that the libido abandons its unsatisfactory position in order to find a new one.

There is another, far more specific motive for the turning away from the mother, arising out of the effect of the castration-complex on the little creature without a penis. Some time or other the little girl makes the discovery of her organic inferiority, of course earlier and more easily if she has brothers or other boy companions. We have already noted the three paths which diverge from this point: (a) that which leads to the suspension of the whole sexual life, (b) that which leads to the defiant over-emphasis of her own

180 masculinity, and (c) the first steps towards definitive femininity. It is not easy to say precisely when these processes occur or to lay down their typical course. Even the point of time when the discovery of castration is made varies and many other factors seem to be inconstant and to depend on chance. The condition of the girl's own phallic activity plays a part, as also whether it is discovered or not, and how far it is hindered after the discovery.

The little girl generally finds out spontaneously her mode of phallic activity-- masturbation of the clitoris--and in the first instance it is no doubt accompanied by phantasies. The way in which the tending of the child's body influences the awakening of this activity is reflected in the very common phantasy of seduction by her mother, her

190 wet-nurse or nursemaid. Whether little girls practise masturbation more rarely and from

the beginning less energetically than little boys is a point which we must leave undecided: quite possibly this is the case. Actual seduction is likewise common enough, either at the hands of other children or of nurses who want to soothe the child, send her to sleep or make her dependent on them. Where seduction intervenes, it invariably disturbs the natural course of development and often has profound and lasting consequences.

The prohibition of masturbation may, as we have seen, act as an incentive for giving the habit up, but it may also operate as a motive for rebellion against the person who forbids, *i.e.* the mother, or the mother-substitute who later regularly merges into the mother. The defiant persistence in masturbation would appear to open the way to masculinity. Even

200 when the child does not succeed in mastering her habit, the effect of the apparently unavailing prohibition is seen in her later efforts to free herself at all costs from a gratification which has been made distasteful to her. When the girl reaches maturity her object-choice may still be influenced by this firmly maintained purpose. Resentment at being prevented from free sexual activity has much to do with her detachment from her mother. The same motive recurs after puberty when the mother takes up the duty of protecting her daughter's chastity. Of course, we must remember here that the mother

opposes masturbation in the boy in the same way, thus providing him also with a powerful motive for rebellion.

When a little girl has sight of a male genital organ and so discovers her own deficiency, 210 she does not accept the unwelcome knowledge without hesitation and reluctance. As we have seen, she clings obstinately to the expectation of acquiring a similar organ sometime, and the desire for it survives long after the hope is extinguished. Invariably the child regards castration in the first instance as a misfortune peculiar to herself; only later does she realize that it extends to certain other children and at length to certain adults. When the universality of this negative character of her sex dawns upon her, womanhood, and with it also her mother, suffers a heavy loss of credit in her eyes.

Very possibly this account of the little girl's reaction to her impression of castration and the prohibition of masturbation will strike the reader as confused and contradictory. That is not altogether the writer's fault. A description which fits every case is in fact almost

220 impossible. In different individuals we find the most various reactions; even in the same individual contrary attitudes exist side by side. With the first intervention of the prohibition there begins a conflict which from that moment will accompany the development of the sexual function. It is particularly difficult to get a clear insight into what takes place because it is so hard to distinguish the mental processes of this first phase from the later ones by which they become overlaid and distorted in memory. For example, the fact of castration is sometimes construed later as a punishment for masturbation, and its infliction is ascribed to the father; of course, neither of these ideas can be the original one. With boys also it is regularly the father from whom castration is dreaded, although in their case, as in the little girl's, it is mostly the mother who utters the

230 threat.

However this may be, at the end of this first phase of attachment to the mother there emerges, as the strongest motive for turning away from her, the child's reproach that her mother has not given her a proper genital, *i.e.* that she was born a woman. A second reproach, not going quite so far back, comes as rather a surprise: it is that the mother gave the child too little milk and did not suckle her long enough. Under the conditions of modern civilization this may very often be quite true but certainly not so often as is maintained in analysis. It would seem rather that this complaint expresses the general dissatisfaction of children who under our monogamous civilization are weaned at the age of from six to nine months, whereas the primitive mother

devotes herself exclusively to

240 her child for two or three years. It is as if our children remained for ever unappeased, as if they had never been suckled long enough. But I am not sure whether, if one analysed children who had been suckled as long as those of primitive races, one would not encounter the same complaint. So great is the greed of the childish libido! If we survey the whole range of motives brought to light by analysis for turning away from the mother that she neglected to provide the little girl with the only proper genital organ, that she did not feed her enough, compelled her to share her mother's love with others, never fulfilled all the expectation's of the child's love and, finally, that she first excited and then forbade her daughter's own sexual activity--all these seem inadequate as a justification of the hostility finally felt. Some of these reproaches follow inevitably from the nature of

250 infantile sexuality; others look like rationalizations devised later to explain the uncomprehended change in feeling. Perhaps the real fact is that the attachment to the mother must inevitably perish just because it is the first and the most intense, similarly to what we so often find in the first marriages of young women, entered into when they were most passionately in love. In both cases the love-relation probably comes to grief by reason of the unavoidable disappointments and an accumulation of occasions for aggression. As a rule second marriages turn out much better. We cannot go so far as to assert that the ambivalence of emotional cathexes is a universally valid psychological law, that it is quite impossible to feel great love for a person without the accompaniment of a hatred perhaps as great, and vice versa. Normal adults do, undoubtedly, succeed in

260 separating these two attitudes, and do not find themselves compelled to hate their love-objects and love as well as hate their enemies. But this seems to be the result of later development. In the first phases of the love-life ambivalence is evidently the rule. Many people retain this archaic habit throughout life; it is characteristic of obsessional neurotics that in their object-relations love and hate counterbalance one another. In members of primitive races also we may say that ambivalence predominates. We shall conclude, then, that the little girl's vehement attachment to her mother is strongly ambivalent and that, reinforced as it is by the above other factors, it is precisely this ambivalence which determines the child's turning away from her. That is to say, it is the consequence once more of one of the universal characteristics of infantile sexuality.

270 An objection immediately presents itself to the explanation I have suggested: "How is it that boys succeed in keeping intact their attachment to the mother, which is certainly no less strong than the girl's?" An instant answer is: "Because boys are able to deal with their ambivalent feelings towards her by transferring all their hostility to the father" But, in the first place, we should be chary of asserting this until we have exhaustively studied the pre-Oedipus phase in boys and, secondly, it would probably be more prudent altogether to admit that we have not yet got to the bottom of processes which, after all, we have only just come to know of.

III

Another question is this: "What exactly is it that the little girl demands of her mother? 280

What is the nature of her sexual aims during the period of exclusive attachment to her mother?" The answer which we gather from the analytic material is just what we should expect. The little girl's sexual aims in relation to her mother are both active and passive and are determined by the different libidinal phases through which the child passes. Here the relation of activity to passivity is specially interesting. It is easy to observe how, in every field of psychical experience and not merely in that of sexuality, an impression passively received evokes in children a tendency to an active response. They try to do themselves what has just been done to them. This is part of their task of mastering the outside world, and may even lead to their

endeavouring to repeat impressions which they would have good reason to avoid because of disagreeable content. Children's play, too, is

290 made to serve this purpose of completing and thus, as it were, annulling a passive experience by active behaviour. When, in spite of resistance, a physician has opened a child's mouth to examine his throat, the same child will, after he has gone, play at being 'the doctor' and will repeat the same forcible procedure on a little brother or sister, as defenceless against him as he was against the physician. We cannot recognize here a revolt against passivity and a preference for the active role. This swing-over from passivity to activity does not take place with the same clarity and vigour in all children: in some it may not occur at all. From behaviour in this respect we can draw some conclusion as to the relative of the masculine and the feminine tendencies which will be revealed in sexual life.

300 The first sexual or sexually tinged experiences of a child in its relation to the mother are naturally passive in character. It is she who suckles, feeds, cleans, dresses it, and instructs it in the performance of all its physical functions. Part of the child's libido goes on clinging to these experiences and enjoys the gratifications associated with them, while another part strives to convert them into activity. First, the process of being suckled at the mother's breast gives place to active sucking. In its other relations with its mother the child either itself with independence (*i.e.* with successfully performing itself what was previously done to it) or with actively repeating in play its passive experiences, it does really make the mother the object in relation to which it assumes the role of the active subject. This last reaction, which comes into play in the form of real activity, I long held

310 to be incredible, until experience removed all my doubts.

We seldom hear of a little girl's wanting to wash or dress her mother or tell her to perform her bodily functions. Sometimes she says: "Now let's play that I'm the mother and you are child"; but generally she fulfills these active wishes directly in playing with her doll, she herself representing the mother and the doll the child. The fact that girls are fonder of playing with dolls than are boys is commonly interpreted as an early sign of awakened femininity. That is quite true, only we must not overlook the fact that it is the *active* side of femininity which finds expression here and that the little girl's preference for dolls probably testifies to the exclusiveness of her attachment to her mother, accompanied by total neglect of the father-object.

320 The very surprising sexual activity of the little girl in relation to her mother manifests itself in chronological succession in oral, sadistic and finally even phallic impulses directed upon her. It is difficult to give a detailed account of these, because often they are dim impulses which it was impossible for the child to grasp psychically at the time and which were only interpreted later, express themselves in analysis in forms that are certainly not the original ones. Sometimes we find them transferred to the later father-object, where they do not belong and badly interfere with our understanding of the situation. We find aggressive oral and sadistic wishes in a form forced on them by early repression, *i.e.* in the dread of being killed by the mother, a dread which on its side justifies the death-wish against her, if this enters consciousness. It is impossible to say

330 how often this dread of the mother draws countenance from an unconscious hostility on her part, which the child divines. (The dread of being *eaten* I have so far found only in men; it is referred to the father, but is probably the result of the females' transformation of oral aggressive tendencies directed upon the mother. The person the child wants to devour is the mother who nourished him: in the case of the father there is no such obvious occasion for the wish.)

The women patients characterized by a strong attachment to the mother, in whom I have been able to study the pre-Oedipus phase, have all told me that when their mother gave them enemas or rectal douches they used to offer the strongest possible resistance and react with fear and screams of rage. This is probably very usual or even universal with

340 children. I only came to understand the reasons for this specially passionate struggle through a remark by Ruth Mack Brunswick, who was studying these problems at the same time as I was. She said that she would compare the outbreak of fury after an enema with the orgasm following on genital excitation. The accompanying anxiety should be construed as a transformation of the desire for aggression which had been stirred up. I believe that this is actually the case and that, on the anal-sadistic level, the intense passive excitation of the intestinal zone evokes an outbreak of desire for aggression, manifesting itself either directly in the form of rage or, as a consequence of suppression, as anxiety. In later years this reaction seems to die away.

In considering the passive impulses of the phallic phase we are struck by the fact that 350 girls regularly charge their mothers with seducing them, because their first or at any rate strongest genital sensations came to them when they were being cleansed and tended by their mothers (or the nurses representing them). Mothers have often told me that they have observed that their little daughters of two or three years old enjoy these sensations and try to get their mother to heighten them by repeated touching and rubbing of the parts. I believe that the fact that the mother so unavoidably initiates the child into the phallic phase is the reason why in the phantasies of later years the father so regularly appears as the sexual seducer. When the girl turns away from the mother she transfers to the father at the same time the responsibility for having introduced her to sexual life.

Finally in the phallic phase strong active wishes towards the mother also make their
360 appearance. The sexual activity of this period culminates in clitoral masturbation; probably the child accompanies this with images of her mother, but whether she really imagines a sexual aim and what that aim is my experience does not make clear. It is only when all her interests have received a fresh impetus through the arrival of a baby brother or sister that we can clearly recognize any such aim. The little girl, just like the boy, wants to believe that she has given her mother this new child, and her reaction to the event and her behaviour towards the child are the same as his. I know this sounds quite absurd, but perhaps only because the idea is such an unfamiliar one to us.

The turning-away from the mother is a most important step in the little girl's development: it is more than a mere change of object. We have already described what
370 takes place and what a number of motives are alleged for it; we must now add that we observe, hand in hand with it, a marked diminution in the active and an augmentation of the passive sexual impulses. It is true that the active impulses have suffered more severely from frustration: they have proved totally impracticable and therefore the libido has more readily abandoned them. But the passive trends also have not escaped disappointment. Frequently, with the turning away from the other there is cessation of clitoral masturbation, as very often when the little girl represses her previous masculinity a considerable part of her general sexual life is permanently injured. The transition to the father-object is accomplished with the assistance of the passive tendencies so far as these

have escaped overthrow. The way to the development of femininity then lies open to the
380 girl, except in so far as she is hampered by remains of the pre-Oedipus mother-attachment which she has passed through.

If we survey the phases of feminine sexual development I have described there is a definite conclusion about femininity as a whole which we cannot resist: the same libidinal forces, we have found, are at work in female and in male children, and we have been able to convince ourselves that for a certain period these forces take the same course and produce the same results.

Subsequently, biological factors deflect them from their original aims and conduct even active

and in every sense masculine striving into feminine channels. Since we cannot dismiss the notion that sexual excitation is derived from the operation of certain chemical

390 substances, it would at first seem natural to expect that some day biochemistry will reveal two distinct substances, the presence of which produces male and female sexual excitation respectively. But this hope is surely no less naive than that other one which has happily been abandoned nowadays, namely, that it would be possible to isolate under the microscope the different causative factors of hysteria, obsessional neurosis melancholia, etc.

In sexual chemistry too, the processes must be rather more complicated. For psychology, however, it is a matter of indifference whether there is in the body a single sexually stimulating substance, or two, or an endless number. Psychoanalysis teaches us to manage with a single 'libido' though its aims, *i.e.* its modes of gratification, are both

400 active and passive. In this antithesis, above all in the existence of libidinal impulses whose aims are passive, the rest of our problem is contained.

A study of the analytical literature on this subject makes evident that it already contains everything that I have said here. This paper would be superfluous were it not that in so obscure a field of research every account of any worker's direct experience and the conclusions to which he personally is led may be of value. I have, moreover, I think, defined certain points more precisely and shown them in stricter isolation than has hitherto been done. Some of the other writings on the subject are confusing because they deal at the same time with the problems of the super-ego and the sense of guilt. This I have avoided, and also in describing the various outcomes of this phase of development, I

410 have refrained from touching on the complications which arise when a child, disappointed in her relation with her father, returns to the abandoned mother-attachment, or in the course of her life repeatedly shifts over from the one attitude to the other. But just because this article is only one contribution amongst others I may be dispensed from an exhaustive survey of the literature on the subject and will confine myself to indicating the more important points on which I agree with some or differ from other writers. 4

Abraham's (1921) description of the manifestations of the female castration complex is still unsurpassed, but one would have liked it to include the factor of the original exclusive attachment to the mother. With the principal points in Jeanne Lampl-de Groot's important work I am in agreement. She recognizes that the pre-Oedipus phase is

420 completely identical in boys and in girls, and she affirms (and proves from her own observations) that the little girl's attitude towards the mother includes sexually phallic activity. The turning-away from the mother is traced by this writer to the influence of the child's perception of castration, which forces her to abandon her sexual object and often at the same time the practice of masturbation. The whole development is described in the following formula: the little girl has to pass through a phase of the 'negative' Oedipus complex before arriving at the positive. There is one point in which I find her account inadequate: she represents the turning-away from the mother as merely a change of object and does not show that it is accompanied by the plainest manifestations of hostility. To this factor complete justice is done in Helene Deutsch's latest paper on the subject (1930),

430 in which she also recognizes the little girl's phallic activity and the strength of her attachment to her mother. Helene Deutsch states, further, that in turning to the father the little girl follows her passive tendencies (already awakened in her relation with her mother). In her earlier book (1925) this author was still influenced by the endeavour to apply the Oedipus scheme to the pre-Oedipus phase and for this reason she interpreted the little girl's phallic activity as an identification with the father.

Fenichel (1930) rightly emphasizes the difficulty of recognizing in the material produced in

analysis what represents the unchanged content of the pre-Oedipus phase and what has been distorted in the course of regression (or some other process). He does not accept Jeanne Lampl-de Groot's view on the little girl's phallic activity and she protests against

440 Melanie Klein's (1928) 'displacement backwards' of the Oedipus complex, whose beginnings she assigns to the commencement of the second year of life. This view of the date of origin of the complex, in addition to its necessitating a modification of our view of all the rest of the child's development, is in fact not in accordance with what we learn from the analyses of adults and is especially incompatible with my findings as to the long duration of the girl's pre-Oedipus attachment to her mother. This contradiction may be softened by the reflection that we are not as yet able to distinguish in this field between what is rigidly fixed by biological laws and what is subject to change or shifting under the influence of accidental experience. We have long recognized that seduction may have the effect of hastening and stimulating to maturity the sexual development of children,

450 and it is quite possible that other factors operate in the same way; such, for instance, as the child's age when brothers or sisters are born or when it discovers the difference between the sexes' or again, its direct observation of sexual intercourse, its parents' behaviour in evoking or repelling its love, and so forth.

Some authors are inclined to disparage the importance of the child's first, most primal libidinal impulses, laying stress rather on later developmental processes, so that— putting this view in its extreme form all that the former can be said to do is to indicate certain trends, while the amounts of energy [*Intensitäten*] with which these trends are pursued are drawn from later regressions and reaction-formations. Thus for example, K. Horney (1926) is of the opinion that we greatly overestimate the girl's primary penis-envy and

460 that the strength of her subsequent striving towards masculinity is to be attributed to a *secondary* penis-envy, which is used to ward off her feminine impulses, especially those connected with her attachment to her father. This does not agree with the impressions that I myself have formed. Certain as it is that the earliest libidinal tendencies are reinforced

later by regression and reaction-formation and difficult as it is to estimate the relative strength of the various confluent libidinal components, I still think that we must not overlook the fact that those first impulses have an intensity of their own which is greater than anything that comes later and may indeed be said to be incommensurable with any other force. It is certainly true that there is an antithesis between the attachment to the father and the masculinity-complex— this is the universal antithesis between activity and

470 passivity, masculinity and femininity— but have no right to assume that only the one is primary, while the other owes its strength merely to the process of defence. And if the defence against femininity is so vigorous, from what other source can it derive its strength than from that striving for masculinity which found its earliest expression in the child's penis-envy and might well take its name from this?

A similar objection applies to Jones's view (1927) that the phallic phase in girls represents a secondary, protective reaction rather than a genuine stage of development. This does not correspond to either the dynamic or the chronological conditions.

Footnotes

1. ["Über die weibliche Sexualität." First published *Int. Z. Psychoanal.*, 17 (1931), 317; reprinted *Ges. Schr.*, 12, 120, and *Ges. W.*, 14, 517. Translation, reprinted from *Int. J. Psycho-Analysis*, 13 (1932), 281, by Joan Riviere.]

2. In the well-known case (of delusional jealousy) reported by Ruth Mack Brunswick (1928a) the direct source of the disorder was the patient's pre-Oedipus fixation (to her sister).

3. It is to be anticipated that male analysts with feminist sympathies, and our women analysts also, will disagree with what I have said here. They will hardly fail to object to such notions which have their origin in the man's 'masculinity complex', and are meant to justify theoretically his innate propensity to disparage and suppress women. But this sort of psychoanalytic argument reminds us here, as it so often does, of Dostoevsky's famous 'knife that cuts both ways'. The opponents of those who reason thus will for their part think it quite comprehensible that members of the female sex should refuse to accept the notion that appears to gainsay their eagerly coveted equality with men. The use of analysis as a weapon of controversy obviously leads to no decision.
4. [Freud does not mention his own earlier paper on the subject (1925b).
5. In the *Zeitschrift* the author's name was given as 'A. lampl de Groot', and I make this correction at her request.