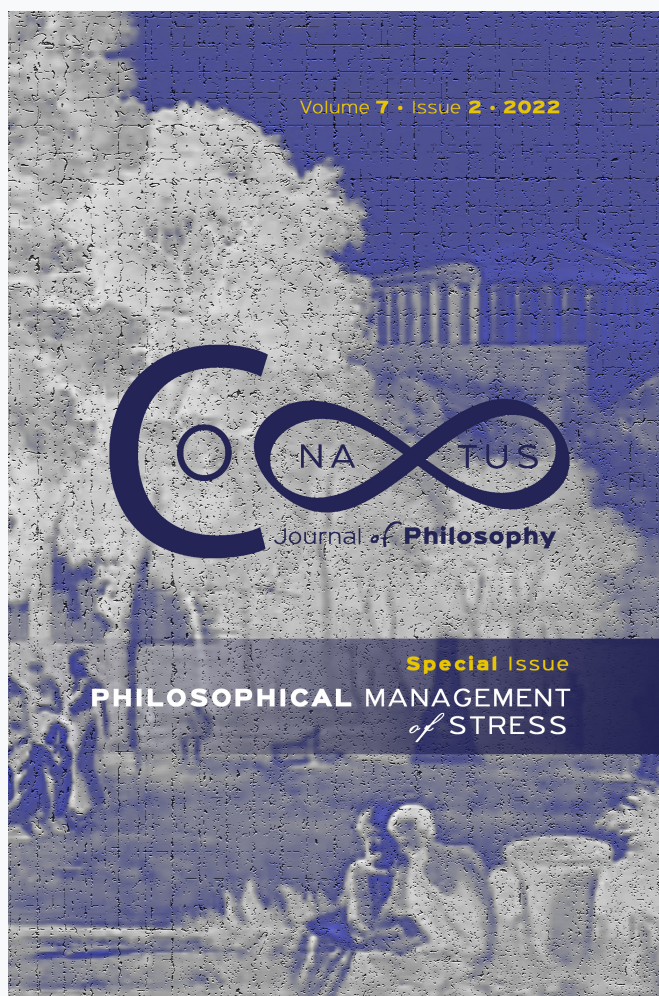


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Pornography and Stress

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Pornography and Stress

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Abstract

Pornography, especially in its compulsive form of viewing, is closely linked to ways of managing and reducing stress. Pornographic realism, which is the contemporary form of pornographic representation, is based on technological innovations such as photographic and digital recording of sexual reality. The description of the character of the two forms of recording demonstrates the historical development of pornographic realism. Moving away from pure psychology, we can discern in the field of human sciences the specificity of the relations between pornography and stress reduction through the distinction between the Principle of Pleasure (Lustprinzip) and the Principle of Reality (Realitätsprinzip) at the collective level or otherwise in the space of the co-being (Mitsein). On the other hand, the distance of sexual need from hunger and the plasticity of the former makes pornography a practicable way of dealing with the contradictions of ordinary existence. In sum, the above articulation explains how pornography makes the world of sexual satisfaction go hand in hand with coping with and managing stress.

Keywords: *pornography; stress; photographic realism; digital body; pleasure principle; reality principle; psychoanalysis*

I. Introduction

In the following article I propose to study pornography in relation to stress. Increasingly, the viewing of pornographic images, especially through digital media and on the internet, is becoming an object of great obsessive fixation. Beyond the ethical, social, gendered, political, economic and other dimensions of the phenomenon, here I intend to examine the weight of the specific factor of representation in relation to stress and its alleviation through pornographic viewing by individuals. The realism of

images is a key element in pornographic verisimilitude and what we are witnessing nowadays is an evolution in realistic imagery from photographic to digital illustration.

The digital flesh that is made real in this way will be subjected here to a comparative effort with psycho-social considerations as to the particular objective significance of the images. Stress, in view of the analysis, will be related to the double character of the ego, which consists in repelling the threatening element and in reconciling with it by processes of mental relaxation that are socially specific and coherently presented by Erich Fromm.

II. Dr. Behrens and Dr. Klossowski: Pleasure and stress

As it is said, the digital age is proper for compulsory viewing pornography strongly associated with the decrease of stress.¹ The relevant process can be seen in the relation of pleasure and pain in the obtainment of the first by the diminution of tension in Freudian psychoanalysis. Thus according to Freud:

In the theory of psychoanalysis we have no hesitation in assuming that the course taken by mental events is automatically regulated by the pleasure-principle. We believe, that is to say, that the course of those events is invariably set in motion by an unpleasurable tension, and that it takes a direction such that its final outcome coincides with a lowering of that tension – that is, with an avoidance of unpleasure or a production of pleasure.²

According to Thomas Szaz who quotes the passage above, “it is simply the pleasure-principle which draws up the programme of life’s purpose.”³ And he refers to the following Freudian specification:

Its [i.e., the ego’s] activities are governed by considerations of the tensions produced by stimuli present within it or introduced into it. The raising of these tensions is in general

¹ See Beáta Bóthe, István Tóth-Király, Ágnes Zsila, Mark D. Griffiths, Zsolt Demetrovics, and Gábor Orosz, “The Development of the Problematic Pornography Consumption Scale (PPCS),” *The Journal of Sex Research* 55, no. 3 (2017): 2.

² Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 7.

³ Thomas Szaz, *Pain and Pleasure. A Study of Bodily Feelings* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1988), 189.

felt as *unpleasure* and their lowering as *pleasure*. It is probable, however, that what is felt as pleasure or unpleasure is not the absolute degree of the tensions but something in the rhythm of their changes. The ego pursues pleasure and seeks to avoid unpleasure.⁴

In Thomas Mann's novel *The Magic Mountain* (1924),⁵ we see the concept of symptom on three different levels: the symptoms of the tuberculosis that have gathered the heroes of the novel in the sanatorium, also the symptoms of the hysterical behaviour that is probably discernible through their relationships in the place of their confinement, and the symptoms of the cultural decline in Europe, a depressing idea that runs throughout the novel.

As regards the first two, the positions of two doctors in the novel are typical. Thus Dr. Behrens believes that the disease is entirely organic and refuses to attribute any other dimension to it. In contrast, Dr. Krokowski believes that the symptoms are nothing but transformations of the power of love. This position obviously echoes Freudian views and, as is well known, Thomas Mann held the work of the father of psychoanalysis in high esteem.

It is certain that Freud insisted for decades on proving the biological underpinnings of the phenomena he studied. Hence a degree of positivism that persists in his work. In this context, Karl Jung's rebellion is rather understandable; despite his "loose science," Jung has a certain right in his insistence on the autonomy of psychic phenomena and in his critique of reductionism in Freud's work, a reductionism linked to the special physiognomy of the libido that the latter advocates. However, the modern psychoanalysis is, for its part, right in arguing that the father of psychoanalysis abandoned biological reductionism, adopting a more structural and therefore more autonomous conception of his psychological and cultural analyses. On this latter point, one can read in Freud the following lines:

Although the act of repression demonstrates the strength of the ego, in one particular it reveals the ego's powerlessness [...]. For the mental process which has been turned into a symptom owing to repression maintains its existence outside the organization of the ego [...]. It does sometimes happen that the defensive struggle against an unwelcome instinctual impulse is brought to an end with the formation of a symptom [...]. But usually the outcome is different. The initial act of repression is followed by

⁴ Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949), 15-16.

⁵ Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain* (London: Penguin, 1996), chapter III. 14.

tedious and often interminable *manoeuvres* in which the struggle against the instinctual impulse is prolonged into a struggle against the symptom.

In this secondary defensive struggle the ego faces two ways. The one line of behaviour it adopts springs from the fact that its very nature obliges it to make what must be regarded as an attempt at restoration or reconciliation. The ego is an organization. It is based upon the maintenance of free intercourse and of the possibility of reciprocal influence between all its parts. [...]. The ego now proceeds to behave as though it recognized that the symptom had come to stay and that the only thing to do was to accept the situation in good part and draw as much advantage from it as possible. [...]. In this way the symptom gradually grows to be the representative of important interests; it is found to be useful for the maintenance of the self and becomes more and more closely merged with the ego and more and more indispensable to it.⁶

The symptom, in other words, becomes an element of personality, and this is, certainly and if anything, an idea extremely suitable for understanding the compulsory viewing of pornography.

III. The photographic body and modern pornography

André Bazin sees mummification as one of the origins of the visual arts.⁷ This process was a kind of preservation against the ravages of time and Egyptian art is a reflection of this desire. The preservation of form through the work of mummification signifies the attempt to preserve what is real through its appearances. Therefore, along with the deceased, the Egyptians bury the objects that accompany them in an attempt to preserve what they were before death. The ulterior progress of the visual arts has led to their separation from this Ancient beginning.

Of course, pornography has a tradition of its own which largely demonstrates an interconnection with the realm of the sacred. This sacred pornography is found in many different cultures in conjunction with the phenomenon of sacred prostitution. Only in China, we do not see the presence of sacred prostitution and pornographic pleasure has to do with

⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* (London: Hogarth Press, 1949), 97-99.

⁷ See André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," trans. Hugh Gray, *Film Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1960): 4-9.

the realm of the profane. In ancient Athens, the pornographers were the ones who took care of the beautification of the prostitutes and not the ones who were engaged in representing voluptuous scenes.⁸ In Western Europe since the Renaissance and at least up to Neo-classicism the representations of erotic scenes (satyrs, fauns, nymphs) were strongly combined with the discourse of institutions: thanks to this official pornographic discourse, institutions appear not as cultural constructions but rather generated from Antiquity like almost physical creations.⁹

Nowadays, the phenomenality of a thing does not lead to the identification of the model and its representation as in Egyptian art; through representation we try to salvage the represented from oblivion and spiritual death that ultimately points to anxiety. The work of representation leads to a stage of idealization where a whole visual world is produced as an image of reality, beyond any anthropocentric utilitarianism (such as that of mummification). Realism, according to Bazin, is the psychological basis of virtual representation before any possible aesthetic evaluation.

Film thus appears as a stage of an evolution, in particular the path towards realism that occurs in painting after the Renaissance and in the midst of a crisis of representation. In other words, the sociology of photography and cinema focuses on the impasse of realistic representation that their emergence caused in the realistic representation of painting. At this point, we see both a rupture and continuity. Photography and cinema both challenge the painted realism, inaugurated during the Renaissance and at the same time continue and extend it.

Western painting had progressively moved from the spiritual realism of medieval painting to a more faithful imitation of the surrounding world, thanks also to the technique of perspective, which was both a mechanical and a scientific conquest. Due to perspective, painting was able to convey the illusion of three-dimensional space. Thus, painting oscillated between two opposing directions: the desire, on the one hand, to depict spiritual truths and, on the other, a second desire to render a copy of the real world. This second need for illusion completely absorbed painting after the Renaissance.

However, the Renaissance perspective covered only a part of the need for illusion since it rendered the relationships of forms in space but failed to represent movement. The copy of the real world was frozen. The need to extend realism towards movement meant the need for the dramatic expression inherent in movement. In the end, the need for illusion is not an aesthetic

⁸ Peter Hesse, "La prostitution," in *La sexualité II*, eds. Dr. Willy, and C. Jamont, 303-313 (Verviers: Marabout, 1964), 304-306.

⁹ Lyombe Eko, *The Regulation of Sex-Themed Visual Imagery. From Clay Tablets to Tablet Computers* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 51-62.

need per se but a psychological requirement that links the creation of a copy of reality with magic, understood as the magical omnipotence of creation. This psychological need was created by the new technological possibilities in Europe.

With photography, the reproduction of the external world from a painting technique moved into the world of technological immediacy. Photography gives the copy of the world in the moment. Satisfaction was greater, insofar as the reproduction of the world was not done through a painting technique that involved the artist but was mechanical and therefore more value-neutral (more objective). With the discovery of photography, painting is freed from the project of realism and moves, first of all, towards impressionism. The faithful reproduction of the world, the photographic, becomes now massive, it is for the satisfaction of the masses. The connoisseurs of pictorial art are turning to other modes of expression. This evolution reflects also the development of modern pornography.

The originality of photography lies in its essential objectivity. Between the external, objective world and its faithful representation another object (the camera) is inserted, for the first time in history. Reproduction obeys an absolute necessity (determinism), the technological, mechanistic one, while the human operator of the machine intervenes only secondarily (in the choice of the direction of vision, in the size of the frame, etc.). Photographic realism is fulfilled by the absence of the human factor in its production. Photographic realism, though mechanical, affects us as a natural phenomenon, like “a flower or a snow crystal” as Bazin writes.

Photographic representation has a huge psychological impact, it attracts the belief in the objectivity of the subject more than anything else. We can really speak of a transfusion of reality into the photographic image; it is literally an irrational force. Painting has now lost its realistically representational ambitions, yielding to the omnipotence of photography. The latter not only gives a faithful image of reality but freezes time, the moment-in-itself. Photography does not carry the ambitions that painting had, to depict or symbolize eternity. It suffices to rescue the moment (of photographic capture) from the ravages of time. This is the reason for its special charm, as we see in family photo albums. In this sense, film completes photographic objectivity in time, as it captures the very duration of things, a kind of embalming of the alternation of phenomena.

The aesthetic ambitions of photography always have to do with the revealing depiction of the real. Rather than the artist imitating objectivity, it is objectivity that imitates the artist in terms of creative productivity. To the extent that the reproduction of the real involves part of reality as testimony or evidence, photography also surpasses the artist.

With what has been mentioned above, it becomes obvious that realism in pornography is highlighted according to its position in the systems of representation of a historical era. Pornographic realism, on the other hand, is directly subject to pressures that have to do with the technique and economy of the medium in use. The inherent realism of a film, its very style, is the result of a series of “battles” fought between various factors of production and the efficiency, skill and vision of its director-creator. In this way, film is an exemplary art of modernism, as it falls neither into a popular tradition of creation (it is the result of a perfectly sophisticated technology and not of popular inspiration) nor into the profane idea of the sexual act (as the economic element cannot be overlooked in technological representation). We have seen that, often, realism in cinema tends to mean social realism. But the idea that the camera lens can by itself perceive both the external surface of things and the conditions of their reality is a misleading exaggeration.

IV. The digital body and postmodern pornography

What are the special effects in cinema, in our digital age? The presentation of the transition of a person (actor/role) in an imaginary space that consists of: (a) realistic elements that do not exist in front of the camera but we can imagine and represent what they would be like if they really existed, and (b), unrealistic forces and elements that appear as figures without knowing if this representation corresponds to something real.

What distinguishes today’s special effects from simple animation is the presence of the human body, which serves as a point of validation of “realism” or, better, the realistic contingency of what is happening on the screen. But this human body, whether floating in space or traversing potential environments, is not the body of realistic cinema. More specifically, it is not the body-idea that has been realistically depicted on film, endowed with the ontological fluency of the realistic depiction of the world. The alibi-body of digital special effects is a second body into which the existence of the actor’s physical body has been transfused. This is clearly shown in the title and theme of James Cameron’s recent film, *Avatar* (2009). The word *avatar* comes from the Sanskrit *avatara* meaning “transition into a new flesh,” in other words, reincarnation.

The special effects’ reincarnation is made possible by three characteristics of the media in our time: (a) the apotheosis of technological culture, (b) the attraction for an esoteric-scientific knowledge and (c) the possibility of representing certain pseudo-spiritual forms. The difference with previous media is that the latter are now engaged in an apology for the above characteristics which is based on a set of “new age” beliefs originating in

California, USA.¹⁰ These doctrines allow the representation of a potential body which is, however, identifiable and personal (i.e., it bears the form of this or that precise actor). It is a digital body, created on the ultra-powerful computers of the special effects laboratories. The body resulting from this processing is the product of a participatory anatomy or, even, a “disembodied body.” The seamless expression of this bodily potentiality was made possible by a total suspension of critical philosophies.

The recall of the critical attitude towards digital reality as alienation led to the apotheosis of *personae digitalis*. It is certain that the whole issue lies in a cultural politics of the body. As we said, it is not the body-idea of the old cinema which was the result of the play of desire and fantasy. Here we have the positive creation of an additional body. The positivity of this creation indifferently transcends critiques aimed at demystification while its artificial character is not subject to the category of false consciousness. In essence, it is a new condition of corporeality, the anti-flesh, the embodiment of a body without flesh through a re-evaluation of the mechanistic spirit of the digital age.

A new practice of corporeality and a new corporeal existence emerge with strong mythological elements and on the basis of a medical-scientific, technical discourse. Corresponding to this new corporeality is the rise of ambivalence and monstrosity (human and mechanical body in mixture). An intense mystical motif is added to this composite in an attempted transition from the physical to the electronic frontier of corporeality combined with an intense technological *enthusiasm*, considered etymologically (= from “enthousiazein,” i.e. be inspired or possessed by a god, be rapt, be in ecstasy; and from *entheos*, i.e. the divinely inspired, possessed by a god – from *en* = in + *theos* = god). We ought to speak here of New-age spiritualism where the disembodiment of the physical body is achieved in cyberspace which resembles the Platonic transcendent country. In other words, it is a techno-spiritualism that does not constitute a renunciation of the body according to the ascetic spirit, but a digitalisation of the body. The cyberspace body obeys a body philosophy and a meta-physiology. Mechanism, theosophy and sci-fi culture intertwine and coexist while cyberculture moves from counter-culture to mythical reductionism and techno-mysticism.

It is an idealization of the archaic imaginary, of exoticism and gross generalizations in an atmosphere of syncretic changes and transpositions. In the digital space, virtual immateriality is combined with the ontic identity of the body through a discourse that invokes myths. It is a decontextualized and narcissistic reinvention of the themes of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*:

¹⁰ See Mark B. N. Hansen, “Seeing with the Body: The Digital Image in Postphotography,” *Diacritics* 31, no. 4 (2001): 54-84; Catherine Bernard, “Bodies and Digital Utopia,” *Art Journal* 59, no. 4 (2000): 26-31.

electricity as a magical force expressed in strange radiations that create new bodies. This constitutes the new form of dealing with anxiety through pornography. The mythical dimension of digital bodies facilitates the anti-stress magic. Thus, technology appears as an anti-stress warrant through pornography.

V. Pornography, stress and critique

Psychoanalysis as a type of critique claims to be both materialistic and scientific.¹¹ The initial insight is that the psyche is driven by libidinal movements (Triebregungen) and by (blind) needs that have a physiological background but are defined by mental structures. Consciousness is limited by the mere fact that many drives are not conscious. Ideologies are consequently driven by needs or desires founded on the drives and by motives (ideal and moral) that are hidden and rationalized manifestations of the drives.

Here we see a first reference to reason in relation to a theory of motivation. Motivation is neither subjective nor psychological; it is, therefore, objective and rationalized. Freud is consistent with the popular classification of drives into hunger and love and his analysis is therefore characterized by commonality. There are two kinds of drives: (a) self-preservation (see, in this connection, the thought of Baruch Spinoza) and (b) sexuality. The latter drives are structured by an energy called libido, and the mental acts subject to the above energy are called libidinal. Sexual urges are generalized, not only referring to the genitals but to areas of de-escalation of tension characterized as voluptuous. These areas are called “erogenous zones.” From here we can deduce the Pleasure Principle, which means the maximum de-escalation of the urges and thus the reduction of stress.

The Pleasure Principle is subject to the modifications imposed by the Reality Principle. In essence, it is a manipulation of time in order to avoid dissatisfaction or to obtain greater pleasure at a later time. The decisive factors in the structuring of the drives are (a) the organic constitution from birth and (b), the existential destiny (das Lebenschicksal). The *Leben* of the above term has the meaning of biography (historical and individual of existence) referring to individual lives. *Schicksal* (destiny) is that of the first childhood. Organic constitution and lived experience are complementary or, more precisely, constitute a complementary series. The psychoanalytic method, then, is a historical method and the libidinal construction is not universal but must be understood in relation to a singular destiny. Ultimately, normality and

¹¹ Erich Fromm, “Über Methode und Aufgaben einer analytischen Sozialpsychologie,” *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* 1 (1932): 28-54. Published in English as “The Method and Function of an Analytic Social Psychology in Erich Fromm,” *The Crisis of Psychoanalysis: Essays on Freud, Marx and Social Psychology* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970), 110-134.

pathology are distinguished by optimal adaptation to the actual needs of an existence while maladaptation leads to neurosis.

Some clarifications are needed here: rationalization (Rationalisierung) always comes a posteriori and is pseudo-rational, therefore ideological. The real here (Reel) is understood as the opposite of the imaginary, the delusional, the de-realization process. It is therefore psychological, based on the Principle of Reality and distinct from the philosophical real (Wirklich). Another distinction is that between the individual which constitutes the objects and the personal which is based on the social interaction and, above all, that between psychoanalyst and analysand. The personal, therefore, is always due to be understood within a specific context and not as universally ontological.

Sexual drives are distinguished from self-preservation drives in that they are adaptable and malleable and thus more susceptible to representation, including pornography. Self-preservation urges are compelling, physiologically unbearable, and failure to satisfy them leads to death. This is not to say that self-preservation drives in situations of internal personality conflict emerge without doubt more powerful. Another difference between the two kinds of drives is that sexual drives may be repressed in the unconscious (Verdraenbar) while self-preservation drives are ever-present in consciousness; furthermore, sexual drives can be idealized (Sublimierbar).

Idealization means that the satisfaction of the initial sexual targeting can be removed through a rationalizing calculation combined with some ego excellence (performance) and thus substitute immediate satisfaction. In contrast, self-preservation cannot be idealized and its satisfaction is always in need of real means in the sense of *Wirklich*. The satisfaction of sexual drives can be imaginary, de-realized pornography. More specifically, a drive like sadism can be satisfied by murder or the re-enactment of murder (in the Roman arenas, for example). Finally, expressions of sexual urges are interchangeable with each other and are shifted in time within a process of seeking possible satisfactions of sexual urges. Sexual drives are of course adaptable, but to what end? The adaptability of sexual drives is the central idea of psychoanalysis and thus the beginning of a rational psychology but, at the same time, it explains irrationality in social life. Rational psychology does not deal with individuals but with socialized individuals, i.e. the social Being as the sum of such individuals.

The problem of the family context or, in other words, the “family novel” of psychoanalysis is, for Fromm, a pseudo-problem. The family refers always to the social structure from which it derives. The family is the psychological representation of society. The family, then, as I understand Fromm, is emblematic of the social structure and, thus, the expressions of the libido

have a double meaning: they are personal as drives but socio-familial as expressions. In order to move from psychoanalysis to critique, one must:

- see how the bourgeois family turned out to be humanly typical and physiologically absolute.
- demonstrate that the interpersonal is neither social nor familial – it is either therapeutic or revolutionary (as it happens with technological revolution).

Here, the libidinal structure becomes a universal foundation. However, individual destiny is played out on an accidental and socio-personal level. The task of critique is to discover the libidinal attachments (Bindungen) of persons. From individual therapeutics, this discovery is used in analytical thinking. The term “analytic” is understood here as an abandonment of analogical expression in science, that is, the use of analogies instead of an analysis of the co-Being. Analysis, instead of analogy, insists on the accidental, the personal and the historical elements.

For Fromm, the oedipal complex is typical only of the patriarchal society. It does not constitute a human universality at all, and on this point Freud for him has committed an error. However, we can move from an initial error to a fruitful analysis. Libidinal structure is adaptable only contextually, that is, in relation to its environment and to its characteristic limits. Material production is much less adaptive than libidinal momenta. Thus pornography is subject to technological determinism and mentally relaxing for the existing anxieties. The instinct of pornographic relaxation, in fact, refers to narcissistic needs that are among the most elementary and powerful, dependent on the given structure of a society.

Fromm seeks the language of real life, the intellectual relations (der geistige Verkehr). Consciousness is none other than the conscious human being. The irrationality of social life springs from historical life just as the inversion of objects in the retina of the eye springs from a natural process. For Fromm, material conditions can only be ascertained by the experimental method and the historical work consists in examining the physical foundations and their transformation. Psychoanalysis offers the knowledge of the mental constitution of man. Here, the libidinal structure is the physical foundation but not in general, as some axiomatic theory, but rather as a biological primordial form (Urform) that is always socially framed. From these observations, only one conclusion can be drawn: “human nature cannot be identified.” Thus it is construed and can be technologically articulated even during sexual intimacy.

The technological condition of the subject is transferred to the spirit through the passions, a position almost classically philosophical, a transfer

that can be achieved, according to Freud, through (a) the organization of the ego or (b) idealization. Nature, in either case, is the interiority of man and ideology is founded on the unconscious. Through psychoanalysis, one can put forward the idea that ideas are rationalized impulses. This completes the reduction of the ideal, the ideal motives (*Bewegruende*) to their earthly core, but without avoiding the technological determination. The absence of a rational psychology had led to an idealistic psychology of the social instinct, which is none other than the innate moral axiom. But the nature of man is a natural force. More simply, we would say, it is a force. Ideology does not operate and its function cannot be explained without an understanding of the structure of libido. Thus, we cannot overlook the unconscious element at the theoretical level where one understands “perfectly” the phenomenon of the production of ideologies.

For example, the problem of social cohesion cannot be explained only by the use of coercion. There are also the feelings of (a) solidarity and (b) submission and domination. The libidinal appetite of common people is added to coercion. Sovereignty is not only the product of cunning or deceit as the Enlightenment wrongly held; it is therefore by no means a conspiracy alone. Fromm seems to desire a substantial extension of the Enlightenment project whereby libidinal adaptation is added to the science of submission. The pornographic relaxation can be extended to collective anti-stress strategies. During libidinal adaptation, the psychological foundation is added to the technological superimposition; this latter means, above all else, the attitude towards the father. Attention must be paid to the fact that the true father is not identified with the patriarchal society *in toto* and that, therefore, the true father is different from the social father. Patriarchal society ascribes to existence the meaning of obedience to the father as moral obligation. The cultural mechanism refers to socially required behaviour. Fromm attacks, at the axiomatic level, any idea of *pater familias* like most liberal thought before him (see John Locke’s tolerance as an anti-authoritarian – anti-patriarchal – strategy).¹²

Despite the above general observations, every society has its own libidinal structure.¹³ Therefore, any research must be related to given societies. The present path is from technology to the libidinal structure and to the intellectual sphere. The libidinal structure is changing as the technological structures do.

¹² Fromm’s detachment from psychoanalysis is evident in the way he assesses positively – like an Enlightenment intellectual – Freud’s book *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) and the critique of religion attempted there while criticizing the work *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930) and its condemnation of culture. Fromm sees here a real contradiction between Freud’s two books.

¹³ For example, in regard to the libidinal structure of Western modernity and Kantian erotica, see Murat Mümtaz Kök, “The Masturbator and the Ban,” *Conatus – Journal of Philosophy* 5, no. 2 (2020): 47-64.

VI. Conclusion

The libidinal structure of pornography cannot be identified with the libidinal economy of prostitution. Pornography is related to stress inasmuch as this last is at the origin of the first, while feelings of anxiety are the result of what we would call the hedonic failures that contaminate a social Being or a co-Being. One could match and balance the progression from photographic to digital verisimilitude by specifying the methods of diffusion of resistance or manipulation of stress that occur during the ascent from modern (photographic) realism to postmodern (digital) realism. The above specificity is important in order to understand the non-unified and ultimately multiple character of the pornographic phenomenon, which is not homogeneous but proportional to the stress that triggers it according to the analysis of Erich Fromm. Realism appears thus as a factor of stress management in the form of pornography.

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