

NWRPA Newsletter October 2021

Enjoy your suffering

Philip Hill

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Summary by Frank Kelley

Philip Hill is a psychoanalyst in London and author of *Lacan for Beginners* and *Using Lacanian Clinical Technique: An Introduction*. His website is <https://philiphill.com/>

In this well received seminar he provided a clinically oriented workshop on the place of need, demand, desire and love in and out of the psychoanalytic clinic.

These concepts are interrelated and often paradoxical. They are hard to grasp for non Lacanians and this summary is my attempt to grasp these elusive ideas.

Pleasure and pain are intertwined. At the plateau of pleasure we experience pain. At orgasm we have the height of pain. Lacan used the term *Jouissance* for this extreme form of pleasure. It has the character of compulsivity and both the pain and pleasure are hard for us to give up. We fear that in giving up the pain we may not have any fun anymore. Not surprisingly *Jouissance* can be transgressive.

Lacan makes an important distinction between *Jouissance* and plaisir (pleasure). Pleasure obeys the law of homeostasis that Freud evokes in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, whereby, through discharge the psyche seeks the lowest possible level of tension. The pleasure principle thus functions as a limit imposed on enjoyment; it commands the subject to "enjoy as little as possible." *Jouissance* transgresses this law and, in that respect, it is beyond the pleasure principle.

We can usually manage other people's demands and our own. However hysterics experience others demands as huge and this distracts them from their own desires.

In sadomasochism the pain of the pleasure is conscious but more often our pain is unconscious. Compulsion is key. If we have freedom from compulsion we can chose to have these pleasures and pains or not. Working on the compulsion may help but psychoanalysis is not about removing these symptoms. Tactfully frustrating the patient is a big part of the work.

We can see this compulsion in our patients. Demand follows demand. One request follows another.

For Lacan although transference often manifests itself in the guise of particularly strong affects, such as love and hate, it does not consist of such emotions but in the structure of an intersubjective relationship. The transference is to the *Big Other* of Language and not to a person.

Most of the patient's work is between sessions. The sole criterion of progress is the production of new material. Neurotics have a strong relationship with language. This ego strength allows them to bounce back from setbacks. Psychotics have a vulnerability, sometimes hidden, and can suddenly collapse into psychosis. This is why Philip does not use the usually fruitful technique of pointing out contradictions in his work with psychotics.

Disgust is *The Others* judgement on our desire and transgression.

For Lacan if things go well the child is separated from the mother by the *Symbolic Father*. This is a function and not necessarily an actual father. This is the oedipal constellation. The child has to perceive that the mother's desire exists for someone else and not just for themselves.

Our enjoyments and excesses are parochial and local. Traditional communities were close knit and crucially this allows a greater functioning of the symbolic father. A person's name would closely fix them to a particular time and place.

Once upon a time the people in the next village were exotic. Globalisation is overriding these localisms to the point now where nothing is exotic and our enjoyments are threatened. Significantly there are higher rates of mental illness among immigrants. For example Afro Caribbean men in this country have much higher rates of psychosis than those living in the Caribbean.

Philip Hill thanked us for a fun seminar. The feeling is mutual, although I suspect a Lacanian idea of fun might be quite complex. After all his title today was *Enjoy your suffering* and there is a whole seminar in these three words.