Masochism, Film, and Psychotherapy

Malcolm Bonnheim, PhD and Dale C. Godby, PhD
Spring 2008

Using popular film, readings, and clinical vignettes, we will explore the psychotherapy of masochism as well as masochistic features in the therapist.

1. **March 14, Friday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**
   Mature Sexual Love and Masochistic Pathology

Film: "Body Heat"—The interplay of seductive fantasies, omnipotent dreams and masochism in a narcissistically vulnerable man. What is the role of sexuality in the development of male masochism?

Kernberg, O.F. (1995). Mature sexual love in O.F. Kernberg (Ed.) *Love relations: Normality and pathology*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Kernberg, O.F. (1995). Masochistic pathology In O.F. Kernberg (Ed.) *Love relations: Normality and pathology. New Haven and London:* Yale University Press.

Novick, K. and Novick, J. (1987). The essence of masochism. *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child, 42,* 353-384.

2. **April 11, Friday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM**
   Surrender, submission, and the excitement of sadomasochism

Film: "Belle du Jour"— Eroticism and the foreground/background shift of sado-masochism, dominance and submission. What is the role of power in sexual excitement and how does it relate to masochism?

Coen, S.J. (1992). The excitement of sadomasochism in S. J. Coen *The misuse of persons: Analyzing pathological dependency.* New York: Analytic Press

Ghent, E. (1990). Masochism, submission, surrender—Masochism as perversion of surrender. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 26,* 108-136.

Novick, J. and Novick K. (1991). Some comments on masochism and the delusion of omnipotence from a developmental perspective. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association, 39,* 307-331.

3. May 9 Friday 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM
Masochism in the therapist and in the therapy

Film: " Suzzanne Farrell: Elusive Muse." An intimate look at George Balanchine's protégé. Exploring the boundaries of artistic passion and masochism in an in-depth character study of a legendary ballerina. How can we distinguish a passion for our work from a masochistic submission that eventually sabotages our work?

Racker, H. (1958). Psychoanalytic technique and the analyst's unconscious masochism. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly, 27,* 555-562.

Seinfeld, J. (1990). Negative therapeutic reaction. In J. Seinfeld *The bad object: Handling the negative therapeutic reaction in psychotherapy.* London: Aronson.

Waska, R. T. (1997). Precursors to masochistic and dependent character development. *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 57,* 253-267.

Breaking the Waves, Gods and Monsters, and Fight Club were all on the short list for movies to be seen. You may want to see them as they all illustrate some important points.

Presentation of Clinical Material

1. What model of listening and cure is the therapist working from.

2. Distinguish between: "What the patient said."

3. "What the therapist felt."

4. "What the therapist thought about this."

5. "What the therapist said."

6. "What the patient said after the therapist spoke."

Reference

Tuckett, D. (1993) Some thoughts on the presentation and discussion of the clinical material of psychoanalysis. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 74,* 1175-1189.