

My Addiction by Rich Norman

I am an addict. I can not get enough of them, no matter how many I uncover or create, it is never enough, and I always need more. I am addicted: to new ideas. So I will share one with you. Here, pull up a chair and roll up your sleeve. This won't hurt a bit.

Where is it to be found—the location and source, the genesis of the strangest human instinct of all: the death instinct? This drive is the very most perplexing, so undeniable in its existence, evidenced everywhere in human behavior, from obvious examples such as suicide, to the more subtle ones, such as aggression in the face of superior strength, to the very most perplexing: masochism. The masochist is an unusual sort to be sure, so very familiar in his guilty need for punishment, and yet, so sick and strange...so inexplicable! As Freud worked and learned, he came toward the end of his writing to posit masochism, not surprisingly, as the representative of the death instinct proper—the first and most clear example. Indeed, suicide, and aggression in the face of superior strength themselves, can be thought of as examples of masochism. Here a mystery is found, the question can not be refused, so uneasy are we to acknowledge the existence of this plain and obvious fact, we must wonder aloud and ask—Why? From whence comes an instinct seemingly endemic to the human organism, an instinct *toward* its own destruction?

I will impart two ideas which will yield the unexpected and paradoxical answer. Firstly, we need bring to mind the Freudian principle of the Repetition Compulsion. Once an instinctual state has been achieved, the instinct to repeat the state becomes a drive: the repetition compulsion. This elasticity which wishes to return to a previous form, this inertia of the psyche, is found as a primary element in the dynamic structure of neurotic symptoms, which in the main, evidence the need to return to, and repeat, earlier states of development, in the present (Freud, 1920, p. 36; 1905). So the first idea is that of the repetition compulsion, by virtue of which early impressions assert themselves from the unconscious to produce behaviors based on the need to repeat those early repressed systemic conditions and states. The repetition compulsion is the driving force in so very many of man's "inexplicable" behaviors, which are but symptoms formed through this mechanism.

Next, one must understand the picture of masochism from analysis of masochistic fantasy and memory. All of us, if we are unlucky enough to uncover the fact, have unconscious representations of masochistic fantasy, and, actual memories of masochistic experience. Generally, as one delves into the unconscious and attempts to discover such a memory, a fantasy or series of fantasies representing the memory in a distorted fashion, are allowed into consciousness first, as a substitute and representative of the repressed memory, and those, once analyzed will yield by recovery or construction the real memory (Norman, 2011, pp. 72-73). As one analyzes a few such memories and/or fantasies, one element alone connects them: *overstimulation of a both simultaneously painful and pleasurable quality*. Perhaps now we can attempt to solve the riddle and uncover the source of this drive, the death instinct, so apparently endemic and illogical.

Although Freud postulates an "erotogenic masochism," a masochism endemic as a native constituent or drive, I believe it is otherwise, and that we have as endemic only the capacity for masochistic *experience*. It is the ability to experience overwhelming overstimulation of a simultaneously both pleasurable and painful quality which is endemic, not an erotogenic masochism, but a capacity for overstimulation, for masochistic experience which is endemic. Freud did wonder at the possibility of a fundamental impression, an experience which may be at the root of the erotogenic masochistic drive.

Birth, that most overwhelming experience, so painful and undoubtedly also, so voluptuous: to breathe the first bright breaths, to feel the slap and the light, gasping to fill new lungs, and then, to breathe in the very first of life, and thusly overwhelmed to cry, and cry out— Birth is the masochistic stimulus par excellence. Once the impression of this primary masochistic stimulus is placed under repression, we have the source of Freud's erotogenic masochism revealed: it is not biologically endemic, but a particular experience which reasserts itself via the repetition compulsion from the unconscious in the usual way. So, the source of the primary example of the death instinct, masochism, is the experience of birth, the start of life itself.

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Oregon resident Rich Norman, editor in chief of *The Journal of Unconscious Psychology*, is a writer and musician with degrees in philosophy and music. Known as "The Laughing Recluse," he is the author of books spanning philosophy, psychology, and novels, with topics ranging from psychoanalytic theory to existential philosophy, verse and fiction. All text in this column is printed with the permission of, and remains the sole property of, the author, Rich Norman. Contact: rich@richnorman.com

