

A Democracy is Being Beaten

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I. Introducing Liberal “Excess”

My consideration of liberal guilt and shame begins with the “The Birth of Biopolitics,” where Michel Foucault initially defines liberal thought as a principle and as a method of rationalizing the activity of governing human behaviour “in the framework of, and by means of, state institutions.” It is, in this emerging moment, a “rationalization that obeys—and this is its specificity—the internal rule of maximum economy” (Foucault, “Birth” 74). Foucault subsequently observes that, in the course of its history, liberal thought breaks with the rationalization of government as a reason of state, an end in itself, and “governmentality” as such:

Liberal thought starts not from the existence of the state, seeing in the government the means for attaining that end it would be for itself, but rather from society, which is in a complex relation of exteriority and interiority with respect to the state. Society, as both a precondition and a final end, is what enables one to no longer ask the question: How can one govern as much as possible and at the least possible cost? Instead, the question becomes: Why must one govern? In other words, what makes it necessary for there to be a government, and

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what ends should it pursue with regard to society in order to justify its existence? The idea of society enables a technology of government to be developed based on the principle that it itself is already "too much," "in excess"—or at least that it is added on as a supplement which can and must always be questioned as to its necessity and its usefulness. (75)¹

Based on this definition, Foucault foregrounds liberalism's threefold function as "a tool for criticizing the reality: (1) of a previous governmentality that one tries to shed; (2) of a current governmentality that one attempts to reform and rationalize by stripping it down; (3) of a governmentality that one opposes and whose abuses one tries to limit" (75). There are two elements in this definition that I want to foreground as a departure point for a consideration of liberal-democratic subject formation and, specifically, the role of guilt and shame within it. The first concerns Foucault's abstract observation about "society" as "a complex relation of exteriority and interiority with respect to the state." Society, so defined, would function at once as the precondition and end of liberal criticism, which aims to demarcate it from state power that encroaches on the dignity of individuals. The state is hereby "envisioned as kind of political power that ignores individuals, looking only at the interests of the totality or [...] of a class or a group among the citizens" ("Subject" 332). Yet as Foucault underlines, "the state's power (and that is one of the reasons for its strength) is both an individualizing and a totalizing form of power" (332).

In "The Subject and Power," Foucault distances himself from the liberal opposition between society and the state by insisting that "[p]ower relations are rooted in the whole network of the social" (345). This stance supports the view of socialization that Foucault puts forward in *Discipline and Punish*, where he argues that microphysical networks of disciplinary power across various intersecting domains produce a visibility for subjects that compels them to internalize their own surveillance. The modern subject is here conceived on the model of a prisoner in the Panopticon. As Judith Butler notes, the subject's "soul is figured as itself as a kind of spatial captivity, indeed, as a kind of prison, which provides the exterior form or regulatory principle of the prisoner's body" (*Psychic Life* 85). Hence the boundary that divides the "outside" from the "inside," or governmentality from individuation, is "in the process of being installed, precisely through

¹ Foucault adds: "It cannot be said, then, that liberalism is a utopia never realized—unless the core of liberalism is taken to be the projections it has been led to formulate out of its analyses and criticisms. It is not a dream that comes up against a reality and fails to find a place within it" ("Birth" 75).

the regulation of the subject" (67). By implication, the task of managing population as an object and vehicle of "maximum economy" will be to make the "exterior" coercion of administration into the "interior" of the subject. This disciplinary inversion renders "society" endemic to the process of collapsing the individualized subject of discipline into the collective subject of biopolitics, which effectively blurs the distinction between governmentality and society as a liberal counterpoint to the former. Butler has recently argued that such a view of subject formation "depends upon an account of the subject who internalizes the law or, minimally, the causal tethering of the subject to the deed for which the institution of punishment seeks compensation." In this respect, Foucault "differs explicitly from Nietzsche by refusing to generalize the scene of punishment to account for how a reflexive subject comes about" (*Giving* 15).

Butler's comparison between Nietzsche and Foucault raises a question as to the intelligibility of the "excess" governmentality that liberalism targets. How does such excess become discernible in liberal guilt, or what Butler calls a "passionate attachment" to subjection? Indeed, how is the very reflexivity of this subject formation "excessive" in liberal critique's own terms? In her recent writings about tolerance, Wendy Brown considers how the identity of liberalism depends on the construction of a barbaric Other who is seen as viciously perverting the virtues and conventions that demarcate civil democratic culture and society.² Such virtues, she notes, are entrenched in the ideological opposition between "secular" individualist and "non-secular" organicist societies, or those "not subdued by liberalism" (*Regulating Aversion* 150). Citing his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, she argues that Freud himself fell prey to this binary construction in presupposing that "organicist societies are inherently less civilized than liberal individualistic ones because non-individuation signals a libidinally charged psychic economy that constrains rational deliberation and impulse control" (164). Brown observes that this opposition "renders individuation both an effect and sign of instinctual repression, conscience, and the capacity for self-regulation. It renders groups inherently dangerous because of the de-repressed human condition they represent" (164).

2 I am grateful to Wendy Brown for granting me permission to work from a printout of a keynote address entitled "The Tolerant and the Tolerable: Liberalism and Its Dangerous Others" that she presented at the conference on the Social at the University of Alberta in Edmonton in the spring of 2004. A revised version of the talk appears as Chapter 6: "Subjects of Tolerance: Why We Are Civilized and They Are Barbarians" in *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*.

Brown's reading of Freud's *Group Psychology* underscores the "a priori status of the individual" in his thinking: "regressed man, unindividuated man, isn't regressed *to* the group but *by* the group to a more instinctual psychic state. And his de-individuation derives from his relation not to others but to his own instincts. He is without the independence of will and deliberation yielded by a developed superego" (*Regulating Aversion* 158). As Brown remarks, "It could even be said that for Freud there is only ever the individual, that is, the individual is both the ontological a priori and the telos of civilization" (157). Brown calls attention to the putative secularity of the liberal ethic of tolerance because it actually disavows its religious underpinnings and hypocritically sponsors a paradoxical *intolerance* of religious intolerance *vis-à-vis* militant Islam as its "primitive" counter-face. Borrowing from Max Weber, I want to extend Brown's comment to suggest that a key component in the formation of this inherently contradictory attitude is a *secularized Christian asceticism* that calls for personal discipline in the social and bio-economic spheres. This asceticism takes the form of a work ethic that requires subjects to manage not only instincts, sickness, and "personal problems" for the common good of fulfilling workplace obligations; "subjective opinions" and "strong" judgments, particularly of a religious and/or political nature, must also be suppressed. Such "excrescences" trouble the efficient amiability of workspaces that ensures an appearance of equality, understood as neutral conformity and social "grace." In addition, they also disrupt the culture of small talk that reigns in many public domains, where it is crucial, above all, merely to get along.

Brown's recent writings on Freud are illuminating because they allude to a sadomasochistic excess that vexes a wounded attachment to the liberal-democratic ethic of protecting individual rights. Her critique of the liberal "intolerance of intolerance" invites us to explore the consonances and disparities between Freud's various theses on instinctual aggression with the aim of understanding political masochism and liberal guilt as subdemocratic conditions of democratic subject formation.

Freud speculates on the prospect that masochism derives from sadism in his 1919 essay, "A Child Is Being Beaten." As I will suggest, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), he reverses this grammar when he constructs evidence for a primary masochism from the repetition of painful scenes in veteran's dreams and his infant grandson's "*fort-da*" game. In that context, compulsive repetition seems, at first glance, to allow subjects to master anxiety-producing events and memories; however, such repetition is, as Freud will argue, goaded by unconscious patterns and forces and, specifi-

cally, by the death drive. In one register, this drive appears to serve the regulatory aims of the pleasure principle by aiding decathexis from traumatic anxiety. Yet Freud also adopts Barbara Low's thesis on the "Nirvana Principle" to delineate a radical destructive register. In this register, the death drive seeks to annihilate *all* tensions and, indeed, vitality itself. The masochism that lies "beyond" the pleasure principle is evinced in this radical register of the death drive, which is not only *primary* (unconscious) but also *primal* to the extent that, according to Freud, it repeats tendencies that originated in the simplest forms of organic life. It is thus the metapsychological sediment of a phylogenetically imbedded urge to return to a state of inorganic, tension-free existence.

After 1920, in "The Economic Problem of Masochism" (1924) and, subsequently, in *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), Freud appears to contemplate a possible *rapprochement* between his theses on primary masochism and "bad conscience" in Nietzsche's sense of a self-punishing second nature that results from a repression of "animal" instincts.³ Nietzsche pointedly naturalizes the Will to Power as an instinct to individuate, cre-

3 Borossa and Rooney have connected Nietzsche's later philosophy with Freud's speculations on the death drive via Lou Salomé's influence. They cite Salomé's comments to Freud, five months before he sent her the completed manuscript of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: "[I]t is my view, in general, that as products of the unconscious they [sadism and masochism] are in fact identical in their oppositeness." According to Barossa and Rooney, she "goes on to posit a masochism beyond this, stating, 'I cannot get rid of the feeling that the primary masochism is a pre-sadistic one which is then resuscitated secondarily, after this has been made possible by the small portion of ego-consciousness which was necessary to produce the sadism'" (Barossa and Rooney 296, citing Freud and Salomé, *Letters* 103). In its bearing on my discussion here, one particularly provocative difference between Salomé and Freud emerges from Barossa and Rooney's account of her role as a significant interlocutor for both Nietzsche and the psychoanalyst. In their interpretation, Salomé indicates that while "she agrees with the gist of his argument [about the death drive], she would, in fact invert its terms. The passive instinct she refers to concerns the pre-egoic blissful experience of *life (jouissance)*, but the desire to return to it from the point of view of egoic consciousness could be considered as a return to the origins of life in terms of the imagined death of the egoic self." They summarize the key conjunctures and distinctions between Nietzsche and Freud via Salomé as follows:

Comparable to Nietzsche, she perceives that what is eternally original is life: whereby life instincts would be prior to anything such as a death drive, which Freud conversely sees as operating from the start of life. But, like Freud, she is concerned with the ways in which self-destructive capacities are paradoxically bound up with an eternal desire for life, or desire for eternal life. In effect, although not in these terms, Salomé shows that the proud will to

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ate, and dominate which is perverted through a “civilizing process” into a sadomasochistic desire to be punished and to hound those who betray their faulty discipline by forgetting themselves in a regression to “bestial” instincts and pleasures. As Scott Greer writes, it is through “the internalization of instinct,” that a “state of guilt became a permanent part of the human psyche, referred to by Nietzsche as our ‘bad conscience’” (Greer 310). Greer traces Freud’s “tentative and strangely qualified admissions” in early letters to Wilhelm Fliess (31 May and 14 November 1897) where the former alludes to Nietzsche’s importance in anticipating psychoanalysis before its official inauguration in 1900 (307). Although Freud is reported to have publicly disclaimed knowledge of Nietzsche’s work,⁴ Greer notes

affirm suffering and loss, which may actually constitute a defiance of their reality, can lead to an internalized sado-masochism, as opposed to a so-called primary masochism. (297)

For an insightful exploration of *jouissance* in light of partially overlapping concepts of morality between Kant, Nietzsche, and Freud, see also Mladek. On the relationship between Nietzsche and Freud, see Greer and Chapman and Chapman-Santana.

⁴ Richard Waugaman quotes the minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society from 1908 that record Freud’s disclaimer: “He does not know Nietzsche’s work; occasional attempts at reading it were smothered by an excess of interest. In spite of the similarities which many people have pointed out, he can give the assurance that Nietzsche’s ideas have had no influence whatsoever on his own work.” As Waugaman observes, the minutes subsequently report that “Freud followed this unequivocal denial with an amusing ‘Freudian slip’” in which he acknowledges the complex origin of ideas and refers, by way of example, to a refutation of his concept about the etiology of the neuroses that triggered him belatedly to recall its development through the influence of Breuer, Charcot, and Chrobak (Waugaman 459, citing Federn and Nunberg 359–60). Paul-Laurent Assoun joins Waugaman in attending to the implications of another of Freud’s ambivalent declarations about his relationship to Nietzsche:

In recent times I have denied myself the great benefit of Nietzsche’s work, with the express intent that in the gathering of psychoanalytic impressions I not be impeded by any conceptual anticipations. Therefore I had to be prepared—and I remain so—to renounce all claim to priority in the frequent cases where painstaking psychoanalytic investigation can only confirm the intuitively perceived insights of the philosopher. (cited by Waugamann 460)

Both Waugaman and Assoun take this admission as a justification to stage potential convergences between Nietzsche and Freud. Assoun offers a magisterial reading of the historical parameters of possible and virtual points of contact in their thinking on the instincts, the ego, and the body as well as the metaphor of chemistry to understand motivation and misrecognition. Yet he would also tend to acknowledge along with Waugaman that “profound divergences underlie almost every superficial similarity” (Waugaman 461).

that he purchased the philosopher's works "at some expense" in 1900 (citing Peter Gay 45). In the same year, he attended a lecture on Nietzsche given by Georg Brandes, the philosopher's "first proponent outside of Germany" (Greer 305). Greer also recalls Alfred Adler's statement to the effect that "Nietzsche's writings were closer than those of any other philosopher to the tenets of psychoanalysis" (Greer 306). Indeed, though he "publicly equivocated about his knowledge of Nietzsche, he was apparently never at a loss for a Nietzsche quotation" (314). This history leads Greer to contend that "Freud's theory on the emergence of civilization, morality, and conscience can be seen as derived directly from Nietzsche's *On the Genealogy of Morals*" (309). Greer thus follows K.R. Holmes in concluding that "Essentially, Freud extended Nietzsche's idea of the archaic bad conscience into a full-fledged psycho-anthropological theory of phylogenetic guilt" (Holmes 199, cited by Greer 310).

Greer's reconstruction sketches a horizon for my reading later in this essay of Freud's reference to the Will to Power in *Civilization and Its Discontents* in the course of demonstrating how conscience is imbricated in an economy of aggression that is internalized as guilt and depression and externalized in the scrutiny, regulation, and punishment of others. Weber's formulation of the "Protestant work ethic" indicates that this economy of aggression is nurtured by the rationalization of ascetic self-denial under capitalism, which precipitates alienation from and resentment against socio-economic control. Taking Foucault's lead, I want to re-imagine Weber's ethic as a disciplinary technology that inverts the exterior-interior boundaries of liberal subject formation. My aim is to make the liberal ethic of tolerance intelligible as a byproduct of this technology in view of certain ambiguous points of contact between Nietzsche and Freud on the vexed relationship between the instincts and socialization. These potential convergences resonate with Weber's critical scrutiny of the repressive ethos that he ascribes to Christian asceticism, which compels subjects to monitor their "instinctual natures." The specific issue I seek to open up through this reading is whether the sadomasochistic fantasy structure that Freud connects to the death drive and guilt is the condition or the effect of a secularized asceticism, the "spirit" of capitalism in Weber's sense, and "bad conscience" in Nietzsche's. One possible implication is that liberal intolerance exposes the "bad conscience," which results from an ascetic code requiring civilized subjects to repress their drives in order to prove their democratic "grace." This thesis frames a speculative attempt to address the question I have posed above concerning the status of guilt as an "excess" of liberal subject formation. Ultimately, I will return to

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Brown in order to argue that somasochistic fantasy is a refraction of this ascetic lineage. It is a fantasy structure that may effect political paralysis in nurturing wounded attachments to the failed ideals of a democratic state as well as pleasure- and shame-saturated identifications with images of its suffering victims.

II. The Somasochistic Grammar of Liberal Guilt

In his 1919 essay, “A Child Is Being Beaten,” Freud investigates the fantasy among his patients diagnosed with hysteria and obsessional neurosis of an adult (or parent) beating a child. In preparation for my discussion of Brown’s reading of this essay, it will be helpful to review the stages of this fantasy, which, for Freud, depicts the derivation of masochism from sadism, before looping back to a sadistic voyeurism. While his patients apparently did not enjoy actual scenes of corporeal punishment, Freud observes that, “The phantasy—‘a child is being beaten’—was invariably charged with a high degree of pleasure and had its issue in an act of pleasurable, auto-erotic gratification” (180). Freud hereby emphasizes that such somasochistic pleasures are available only on the level of fantasy. In the three phases of the fantasy that Freud delineates, the first is not only marked by oscillating identities but also by inversions in the syntax from a passive “A child is being beaten” (*Ein Kind wird geschlagen*), in which the identities of the child and adult are ambiguous, into “My father is beating the child” (*Der Vater schlägt das Kind*), which subsequently becomes “My father is beating the child whom I hate” (*Der Vater schlägt das mir verhasste Kind*). Initially, amnesia obscures the identities of both the adult and the child, but these eventually coalesce into the beating father and a hated child who is, perhaps, a sibling but is, in any case, a rival for the parent’s love. Freud suggests that this initial phase affords the fantasizing subject sadistic pleasure, which is then reversed in the second phase of the fantasy. In this phase, the child is identified as the subject him or herself: “I am being beaten by my father” (*Ich werde vom Vater geschlagen*). The syntax of this sentence configures the enunciating subject as its focal point, albeit as a passive object. It thus underscores the masochistic dimension of the scenario, which revolves around the subject’s own punishment. The third phase already plots a movement away from this masochistic identification with the figure of the beaten child. The father is replaced by another adult, possibly a teacher, while the child’s identity remains male but is otherwise anonymous. This phase is thus distinguished by an intensified voyeuristic identification with the unknown spectators of a public scene

of punishment. The idea of the other's humiliation and shame serves as the primary locus of enjoyment.

Freud remarks that the second, masochistic phase is never remembered but is merely a construction of the analysis, which implies that it occasions the highest degree of repression in contrast to the sadistic phases that precede and follow it. He also speculates that the sadistic and incestuous component of the first phase spurs guilt and is duly punished in the second phase. In his words, "a sense of guilt is invariably the factor that transforms sadism into masochism" (189). Freud confronts the thorny issue that arises from evidence that the child remains a naughty boy in phases 1 and 3 even in the fantasies of girls. Indeed, if sibling rivalry is at stake, then spanked girls should also figure in this fantasy. His exertions along this path lead him to Alfred Adler's Nietzschean thesis about "masculine protest" to the effect that "every individual makes efforts not to remain on the inferior 'feminine line [of development]' and struggles toward the 'masculine line,' from which gratification alone can be derived" (201).⁵ Freud critiques Adler's "masculine protest" because it monolithically attaches

5 To debunk Adler, Freud reiterates his thesis about the "bisexual constitution of human beings" based on the assumption that, "The motive force of repression in each individual is a struggle between the two sexual characters." Hence "with men, what is unconscious and repressed can be brought down to feminine [drive stirrings] [*Triebregungen*]; and conversely with women" ("Child" 200, 201; "Ein Kind" 222). It is telling that Freud reanimates the bisexual constitution thesis in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* where his definition of the regressive nature of the drive as "a need to restore an earlier state of things" (57) suddenly veers into a consideration of the origin of sexual drives inspired by Plato's *Symposium* (also cited in the 1919 essay) as if the psychoanalyst were deferring the grim implications of his own speculations (*Beyond* 57–58). Following this definition, Freud cites Aristophanes' characterization of primeval humans as doubled in all of their parts before Zeus cut them into two. Aristophanes' narrative is subsequently made to resonate with a biochemical notion of the "living substance" at work in sexual attraction and repulsion as portrayed in Goethe's *Elective Affinities*. The following is Strachey's translation of the passage in question (here and elsewhere I have substituted *drive* for *instinct* where *Trieb* appears):

Shall we follow the hint given us by the poet-philosopher, and venture upon the hypothesis that living substance at the time of its coming to life was torn apart into small particles, which have ever since endeavoured to reunite through the sexual [drives]? that these [drives], in which the chemical affinity of inanimate matter persisted, gradually succeeded, as they developed through the kingdom of the protista, in overcoming the difficulties put in the way of that endeavour by an environment charged with dangerous stimuli—stimuli which compelled them to form a protective cortical layer? that these splintered fragments of living substance in this way attained a multicellular condition and finally transferred

a repressing agency to a “masculine” impulse while the repressed would always be attributed to a passive “feminine” one. As Freud notes, such an identification distorts an understanding of the symptom, which would “also be the result of a feminine impulse, for we cannot discard the characteristic feature of symptoms—that they are substitutes for the repressed, substitutes that have made their way out despite repression” (201). This is to say, “the doctrine of masculine protest is altogether incompatible with the fact of repression” (203). Freud therefore corrects Adler by “democratizing” the symptom: “In the last resort, we can only see that both in male and female individuals masculine as well as feminine [drive] impulses [*Triebregungen*] are found, and that each can equally well undergo repression and so become unconscious” (202; “Ein Kind” 224).⁶

It is worth asking how Freud’s disciplining of Adler in this context and elsewhere influences his understanding of Nietzsche’s concept of the Will to Power as an “instinct to dominate,” which is then consonant with the psychoanalyst’s own thesis about a destructive drive. For the time being, I would like to leave this question aside in order simply to emphasize that, in

the [drive] for reuniting, in the most highly concentrated form, to the germ-cells?—But here, I think, the moment has come for breaking off. (*Beyond* 58)

The literary sources of Freud’s bisexual constitution thesis indicate its status as a fantasy that serves as a theoretical explanation. The very modes of condensation and substitution that Freud describes in his formulations of the dream work and symptoms transpire at the level of his theory itself as a dynamic bricolage of elements from various discourses. What about this chain of associations compels Freud momentarily to break off? How does this self-conscious cut connect to the long footnote that concludes the sixth chapter of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (60–61; *Jenseits* 62–63) where he considers his methods of induction and synthesis and delineates the shifts that have transpired in his theory of the drives between 1914 and 1920?

⁶ This move is consistent with his prior thinking on hysterical symptomatology as a model for neurosis among both men and women. It is perplexing, then, that Freud nevertheless reneges on the egalitarian promise of his theory when he states that drives “with a passive aim must be taken for granted as existing, especially among women” (“Child” 194). Though he admits that such passivity is not “the whole of masochism,” in 1924, he subsequently delimits a “feminine” from the “erotogenic” and “moral” forms of masochism and locates it in men whose fantasies place them in “characteristically female situations; they signify, that is, being castrated, or copulated with, or giving birth to a baby” (“Economic” 162). In the 1919 essay, Freud acknowledges that so many features of what he labels “feminine” masochism point to infantile sexuality and, more specifically, to the guilt that surrounds unconscious Oedipal fantasies lying at the root of childhood masturbation (“Child” 195).

1919, the three stages of the child-beating fantasy confirm, for Freud, “that masochism is not the manifestation of a primary [drive] [*keine primäre Triebäußerung ist*], but originates from sadism which has been turned around and directed upon the self, that is to say, by means of regression from an object to the ego.” He adds, “The transformation of sadism into masochism appears to be due to the influence of the sense of guilt which takes part in the act of repression” (194). The sadistic first phase in the 1919 essay precedes the masochistic phase (triggered by guilt) in the child-beating fantasy, a logic that Freud will nevertheless appear to reverse in 1920.

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud refers back to his clinical observations of the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) and “[Drives] and Their Vicissitudes” (1915), which led him to regard masochism “as sadism that has been turned round upon the subject’s own ego” (*Beyond* 54). He goes on to acknowledge that “there is no difference in principle between [a drive] turning from an object to the ego and its turning from the ego to the object,” which is the point “under discussion.” As the “turning round of the [drive] upon the subject’s ego,” masochism would “in that case be a return to an earlier phase of the [drive’s] history, a regression.” Freud subsequently admits that he must emend his earlier thesis about the priority of sadism in relation to its component masochism “as being too sweeping in one respect: there *might* be such a thing as primary masochism” (“*der Masochismus könnte auch ... ein primärer sein*”) (*Beyond* 54–55, Strachey’s emphasis; *Jenseits* 58–59).

This prospect of primary or unconscious masochism is an “excess” of the psychoanalytic subject—the “beyond” which emerges as Freud arrives at the disturbing conclusion that the death drive does not merely serve the regulatory and homeostatic aims of the pleasure principle but may also transcend them in its radical register determined, since the origins of life, to return the psycho-physical apparatus to a state of inorganic calm. The systemic paradox of a destructive drive that aims to neutralize life itself propels “The Economic Problem of Masochism” (1924) as well as his consideration of guilt in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In the 1924 essay, Freud delineates a form of “moral masochism” that allows subjects to bind their death drives through guilt-spurred fantasies of punishment and martyrdom. It is in his definition of moral masochism that Freud once again rethinks his 1919 supposition that masochism derives from sadism:

We have said that, by their behaviour during treatment and in life, the individuals in question give an impression of being morally inhibited to an excessive degree, of being under the

domination of an especially sensitive conscience, although they are not conscious of any of this ultra-morality. On closer inspection, we can see the difference there is between an unconscious extension of morality of this kind and moral masochism. In the former, the accent falls on the heightened sadism of the super-ego to which the ego submits; in the latter, it falls on the ego's own masochism which seeks punishment, whether from the super-ego or from parental powers outside. We may be forgiven for having confused the two to begin with; for in both cases it is a question of a relationship between the ego and the super-ego (or powers that are equivalent to it), and in both cases what is involved is a need which is satisfied by punishment and suffering. It can hardly be an insignificant detail, then, that the sadism of the super-ego becomes for the most part glaringly conscious, whereas the masochistic trend of the ego remains as a rule concealed from the subject and has to be inferred from his behaviour. (168–69)

Here, Freud distinguishes between the imaginary structures of sadism and masochism as a reflection of the division between the ego and the super-ego in his second topography. This articulation undermines the 1919 genesis of masochism from sadism since both are co-present and potentially interactive.⁷ What is confounding about this passage is that it naturalizes the “powers” split between the super-ego and ego by introducing a distinction between “excessive moral inhibition” and moral masochism. This distinction implies that, in the instance of excessive moral inhibition, a sadistic desire to punish is experienced by the subject as stemming from the super-ego and that it is experienced *consciously* as a mode of domination, which leads to severe inhibition; in contrast, in the case of moral masochism the desire to be punished issues *unconsciously* from the ego, which is to say, that the subject does not recognize or cannot avow his or her enjoyment of suffering and punishment. The problematic character of Freud's ego psychology thus comes to the fore in his apparent disregard here for the significance of the reciprocity he himself has delineated between primary and secondary impulses. For if moral masochism is unconscious, then how is it possible to distinguish between those instances when the super-ego's sadistic punishment of the ego is conscious from those when it is the byproduct of primary mas-

7 As Judith Butler notes, Freud also asserts the priority of sadism in “Mourning and Melancholia,” which his later emphasis on the death drive will invert (*Psychic* 189).

ochistic desires? Would not primary masochism on the part of the ego underlie super-egoic sadism?

I want to connect the problematic emergence of primary masochism in Freud's work to the question I posed in the introduction to this essay about the "excess" of governmentality. I am proposing that liberal criticism not only seeks to regulate this excess but also acts it out masochistically at the level of a wounded and guilt-ridden identification with democratic state ideals. It is guilt with unconscious causes that will ultimately provide the bridge between Freud's understanding of the grammar of sadomasochism in 1919 and its revision in 1924. Such guilt, in Freud's conceptualization, is not merely a residue of repressed Oedipal fantasies or the product of socialization from which the need for self-censorship and discipline ensues. It reaches back to a primordial meeting between the libido and the death drive:

In (multicellular) organisms the libido meets the [drive] of death, or destruction [*Todes-oder Destruktionstrieb*], which is dominant in them and which seeks to disintegrate this cellular organism and to conduct each separate unicellular organism [composing it] into a state of inorganic stability (relative though this may be). The libido has the task of making the [destroying drive] innocuous, and it fulfils the task by diverting [the drive] to a great extent outwards—soon with the help of a special organic system, the [musculature]—towards objects in the external world. [It is] then called the destructive [drive] [*Destruktionstrieb*], [drive] for mastery [*Bemächtigungstrieb*], will to power [*Wille zur Macht*]. A portion of the [drive] [*Ein Anteil dieses Triebes*] is placed directly in the service of the sexual function, where it has an important part to play. This is sadism proper. Another portion does not share in this transposition outwards; it remains inside the organism and, with the help of the accompanying sexual excitation described above, becomes libidinally bound there. It is in this portion that we have to recognize the original, erotogenic masochism. ("Economic" 163–64, Strachey's translation modified; "Das ökonomische" 376)

This derivation for "erotogenic" or "original" masochism (masochism proper) extends the implications of Freud's speculations from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* that the sex and death drives are inextricably tied up together insofar as sexual tensions activate a primal destructive urge to return to an inert state. This derivation is also significant because it endows

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the libido with the vital protective role of binding the death drive through its attachment to objects in the external world. Masochism internalizes the excess of the death drive as the metaphysical and phylogenetic figure for Freud's compromise between Eros and Thanatos.⁸

Of particular interest for the present discussion is the reference in the passage to Nietzsche's *Wille zur Macht*, which Freud links to the death drive and to sadism as its libidinal outgrowth. Paul-Laurent Assoun notices a "remarkable functional homology" between the Will to Power and the economic concept of the Libido. "Thanks to the intervention of this [economic] principle," Assoun writes, "the inflation of instincts is reattached in the Nietzschean dynamic to a unifying principle" such that "every instinct becomes in the last instance a specific articulation of the Will to Power" (91). Assoun historicizes Nietzsche's recourse to a theory of instincts as shaped by Schiller, Hölderlin, Schopenhauer, Emerson, and Wagner. In contrast, Freud's thoroughly physicalist and entropic conception of "instinct is less a principle than a given or a condition" (61). It therefore cannot assume the virtue with which Nietzsche endows it. With this qualification in mind, Assoun's analysis ultimately constructs a homology between the egoistic and somatic nature of Nietzsche's Will to Power and the libido as Freud's energetic source for the drives and as an expression of affectivity. Assoun's contention that the Will to Power "is another name for *energy*, but specified and qualified, that out of which every human phenomenon is formed" (92) supports Claudia Crawford's delineation of Nietzsche's understanding of the essence of force, which "lies in its affect upon other forces." Force is, in his view, "inseparable from its capacity for being affected by other forces" (Crawford 285). Affect for Nietzsche does not merely bring about a change in forces but, as Crawford stipulates, "he also means it in the emotive sense." According to Crawford, then, the Will to Power is "the primitive form of affect" from which "all other feelings are derived. Thus, all sensibility is a becoming of forces" (285).

Assoun's interpretation is consonant with Crawford's delineation of the Will to Power "as affectivity, sensibility, and sensation [that] encompasses and directs individual affects and their becoming of force"; however, she also goes on to attribute "sensation of affects," for both Nietzsche and Freud, to the "qualitative interpretation of quantity," which is, then, "what

8 This compromise is evinced in Freud's phylogenetic speculations concerning the very first multicellular organism that divided in order to defer a death brought on by exhaustion. For further discussion, see Ball, "The Substance of Psychic Life."

constitutes our consciousness and is the conscious basis upon which we react to stimuli” (285–86). Crawford is interested in bridging Nietzsche’s and Freud’s standpoints on the basis of a common “energetics.” It diverges in Nietzsche’s affirmation of the vitality of active power and Freud’s concern with the paradoxes of an unconscious libidinal economy that pits the pleasure principle against the introjected modes of socialization that discipline instinctual aggression. Assoun’s reading of Nietzsche’s various assertions about consciousness indicates that it would be reductive to conjoin him with Freud along these lines. He argues that Nietzsche ironically subtends the valuation of “the Conscious” by philosophers and psychologists who are heirs to the Enlightenment tradition, which bestows this concept with a measure of clarity. Instead, Nietzsche subordinates the Conscious to the instinctive in order to valorize power: the former is a “precarious intermediary formation,” an adaptive effect of the external world and a response to the need for communication (113). According to Assoun, the Conscious is, for Nietzsche, the “*cause of nothing*” whereas “the *Will to Power* is in the last instance the final *cause*” (113). As the site of an illusion or a false morality that both masks and deforms a natural, instinctual, and creative egoism, the Conscious is, thus, a symptom of the decline of the Will to Power as a source of health.

In Assoun’s characterization, consciousness is opposed to Freud’s *Es* as the site of the drives and, likewise, to Nietzsche’s *Selbst* with the body as its locus. “The Self,” Assoun remarks, is “the corporal identity of the individual, which is also domination (*Herrschaft*) and materializes Will to Power, the body being the creation of Will (*Herrschaftsgebilde*). Thus it is the *truth* of the Ego, defined at the same time as power and wisdom” (117). Assoun writes:

From the beginning of Nietzsche’s writing corpus, the call to the Self is a command: “Wish for a Self!” It leads the campaign against those who deny the body, who deprive themselves of the health furnished by the great wisdom of the Body. All of morality, seen as a sickness, is in this sense a negation of the voice of the Body. The Superego would thus only be a sickness, an infection in the wisdom of the Body: that is why it would be a pathological symptom rather than an apparatus! (117)

Assoun’s prediction about Nietzsche’s hypothetical attitude toward the super-ego is compelling, though it seemingly bypasses a crucial aspect of Freud’s understanding of metapsychology, which allows for an unconscious and conscious dimension to the guilty ego in relation to a punishing

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super-ego. It is the dynamic interrelation among these agencies as objects and mediators of libidinal forces that tracks the unconscious impact of social formation.

In the terms of Butler’s reading of Nietzsche and Freud, this problem might be understood as a question about whether punishment precedes the construction of conscience, which would mean that the latter’s “peculiar reflexivity” takes place “prior to, or in some form of complicity with, a set of externally posed demands” (*Psychic* 70). Freud’s conscience is “a force of desire—although sometimes a force of aggression—as it turns back on itself,” while prohibition is not “a law external to desire,” but “the very operation of desire as it turns on its own possibility” (63). For Nietzsche, too, as she notes, bad conscience is a moral reflexivity affected by the will recoiling on itself. As an “illness” that results from an internalization of external influences, “morality performs that violence again and again in cultivating the subject as a reflexive being.” This is to say that self-consciousness cannot simply oppose violence in the name of nonviolence “for when and where it is opposed, it is opposed from a position that presupposes this very violence” (64). Butler calls on us to consider whether “the model by which an instinct or a will expresses or discharges itself in a deed” is “in any sense prior to this self-thwarted expression of bad conscience” (76). What makes this question particularly vexatious is that, for Freud, “the strength of conscience is nourished precisely by the aggression that it forbids” (70). The internalization of prohibition cannot, for this reason, be unilaterally plotted in relation to the libidinal economy.

Butler understands the “recoil” of conscience on the imaginary body as the source of Nietzsche’s instinctual will. This conceptualization hints at the strategic value of a provisional distinction between instincts and drives for a theorization of the liberal “libido,” which refracts the “reason of state” as an excess. As is well known, James Strachey’s translation of *Trieb* as *instinct* obscures the metapsychological specificity of the drives in relation to instincts, though admittedly Freud himself does not rigorously sustain this distinction. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he defines a drive or *Trieb*, as “an [inner] urge [*innewohnender Drang*] to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure [*Einflüsse*] of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the expression of the inertia [*Trägheit*] inherent in organic life” (*Beyond* 36; *Jenseits* 38).⁹ This

9 In the original: “Ein Trieb wäre also ein dem belebten Organischen innewohnender Drang zur Wiederherstellung eines früheren Zustandes, welchen dies Belebte unter dem Einflüsse äußerer Störungskräfte aufgeben mußte, eine Art

formulation implies that there is a systemic self-destructive need inherent in organic life, which is a fundamental expression of the drive's conservative nature: the organism is inclined to die in its own fashion (39; *Jenseits* 41). Indeed, Freud will even speculate that the aim of all life is death, and, reciprocally, that lifelessness was prior to life (38; *Jenseits* 40). Such a proposition has the effect of making the death drive originary and paradigmatic for all drives, thereby attenuating its metapsychological distinctiveness from an instinct. Whereas Freud proposes a phylogenetically regressive drive that *results* from external influences, Nietzsche's employment of the word *Instinkt* in his characterization of the Will to Power suggests that such influences corrupt a *prior* natural and thus instinctual egoism. In a certain sense, then, Nietzsche resolves the problem of distinguishing between Freud's general definition of a drive and an instinct: Freud's regressively conservative drive is the *denatured inversion* of Nietzsche's instincts to live, create, and dominate. The drive is, thus, a vehicle for the corrupted "second nature" that Nietzsche calls "bad conscience."

In the Second Essay from *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche exco-riates bad conscience, defined as an internalized deformation of the Will to Power. According to Nietzsche, the religious body-soul split is merely another effect of the hemming in and internalization of "*alle Instinkte*":

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward*—this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his "soul." The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was *inhibited*. Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instincts of freedom—punishments belong among these bulwarks—brought about that all those instincts of wild, free prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction—all this turned against the possessors of such instincts:

von organischer Elastizität, oder wenn man will, die Äußerung der Trägheit im organischen Leben" (*Jenseits* 38). It is worth noting that Strachey's English translation has converted the plural *Einflüsse*, or "influences," to a more mechanistic and monolithic *pressure*. The German thus allows for various sensory and potentially political, social, economic, cultural, and libidinal influences to act upon the psychophysical organism.

that is the origin of the “bad conscience.” (84–85; Nietzsche’s emphasis)¹⁰

Whether or not we agree with Nietzsche’s iconoclastic and ironic reversal of the condemnation of cruelty that supposedly defines “civilized” societies, it is nevertheless difficult in view of human history to dismiss his near mythical supposition that taking delight in domination is primal and, by implication, natural. If, as Nietzsche suggests, there is a prior natural instinct to dominate, then punishment-induced memory warps it into an “unnatural” bad conscience and morally masochistic guilt as such. Moreover, to view the Will to Power as an aggressive and egoistic instinct rather than a drive is to assume that it is even more primal than so-called “primary masochism.” Masochistic fantasies would merely provide a means for subjects to invert and libidinally bind their more fundamental “life” energies. This logic of subjectification is consistent with Freud’s thesis in the 1919 essay concerning the genesis of masochism from sadism in fantasies about children as the objects or voyeurs of corporeal punishment. It also suggests an impetus for the return to the sadism of the first phase in the voyeuristic third as the child beating fantasy rises up in reactive protest against the shame that it provoked and that is dramatized in the second phase.

Following his “discovery” of primary masochism in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in 1920, the Freud of “The Economic Problem of Masochism” can no longer deflect the threat to civilization insinuated by Nietzsche’s individualist celebration of the primal urge to live free, create, and dominate. Indeed, what comes to the fore in Freud’s reference to the Will to Power in 1924 is that his thinking on masochism has shifted since 1919. Between 1920 and 1930, he must increasingly come to terms with what Nietzsche calls the Will to Power, which he identifies as a transcultural and transhistorical instinct toward egoistic aggression and transcendence, and with the essence of the will to life. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud employs the term *conscience* to reflect on the ubiquity of guilt and the entrenchment of sadomasochistic fantasy structures in death-driven subjects. The subject is captive to a sadistic super-ego that castigates the ego for its asocial urges. This super-ego is itself the effect of the subject’s secondary narcissistic desire to be accepted by others whose expectations

10 Foucault rewrites this point in *Discipline and Punish*: “The man described for us, whom we are invited to free, is already in himself the effect of a subjection much more profound than himself. A ‘soul’ inhabits him and brings him to existence, which is itself a factor in the mastery that power exercises over the body. The soul is the effect and instrument of a political anatomy; the soul is the prison of the body” (30).

he or she internalizes in an idealized form—what Freud calls the *ego-ideal*. Because this idealization sets up an impossible standard, attempts to regulate drives will always fail at some level. These failures produce refractions in other subjects: the unconsciously masochistic subject feels aggressive toward those who not only frustrate his or her sexual desires and regressive drives but who also exacerbate his or her guilt about having them in the first place. This guilt-limned aggression must then be consciously and unconsciously internalized or externalized in ways that bypass the ascetic codes against allowing nature to escape.¹¹

By 1930, then, Freud has grimly come to accept the standpoint that aggression is primal and that it infects all social relations:

The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. (*Civilization* 111; *Das Unbehagen* 470–71)

Freud subsequently stresses that because of this “primary mutual hostility among human beings, civilized society is perpetually threatened with disintegration. The interest of work in common would not hold it together; instinctual passions [*triebhaftige Leidenschaften*] are stronger than reasonable interests” (112; *Das Unbehagen* 471). His equally dire prognosis is that civilization “has to use its utmost efforts in order to set limits to man’s aggressive [drives] and to hold the manifestations of them in check with psychical reaction-formations.” Of course, the incitement to “love thy neighbour” along with institutional efforts to restrict sexual life and criminality have proven futile in eliminating the vicious cycle of aggression because they employ the right to use violence in order to regulate it.

11 Brown writes that “If the staging of punishment against one’s peers confirms identity rooted in injury without making the subject suffer the injury directly, then presumably this displacement also spurs guilt that itself must be assuaged or expiated. [...] Moreover, the guilt would produce its own new economy of obligation and aggression toward the suffering and toward the world that induced that suffering” (“Desire” 54).

III. Liberal “Bad Conscience”: Between the “Protestant Work Ethic” and Sodomasochistic Fantasy

Freud’s deepening pessimism in 1930 indicates a potential intersection with Nietzsche’s polemic in the *Genealogy* against the repressive effects of interdicted will as a modality of bad conscience and Weber’s analysis of the ascetic formation of hard-working subjects. This formation propels aggression toward those who are not “sufficiently” repressed and what Brown has identified as the liberal intolerance of religious intolerance. My reading of this formation highlights the aims of “civilization” in Freud’s account as the secular counterpart of the ascetic Protestant protocols identified by Weber in his sociological history of the work ethic. Such protocols require subjects to differentiate themselves from animals and savages by regulating “the barbarism within.” The liberal conscience that enjoins tolerance is a variation on the Calvinist principle that “grace” must be proven through systematic self-denial and a methodical monitoring of natural urges. Grace, in Weber’s words, is “a status that separates man from the depravity of the creaturely and from the ‘world.’” It must be demonstrated in “a specific form of conduct unambiguously distinct from the style of life of the ‘natural’ man.” The consequence for the individual was, as Weber notes, “the drive to *keep a methodical check* on his state of grace as shown in how he conducted his life and thus to ensure that this life was imbued with asceticism” (104).

In explaining the impetus of the work ethic, Weber alludes to the “traditionalism” of workers who, from their employer’s perspective, will not take advantage of an opportunity to make more money by labouring longer hours and whose “sluggishness” or “inertia” flies in the face of capitalist profit and progress. He fallaciously attributes such “*Trägheit*” to the workers’ monastic idealization of poverty and humility, which permits them to sublimate the “simple life” that traditionalism ensures. The worker’s “recalcitrant” investment in merely fulfilling his needs must be offset with an ascetic investment in a Calling so that the ideal of self-martyrdom in the interests of a higher goal will become inspirational. This traditionalism in Weber’s account is therefore not as primordial as the regressive death drive defined by Freud; Christian ideology inculcates ascetic values that rationalize and thereby restructure a destructive urge to return to an archaic inert state as a morally masochistic fetishism of hard work for its own sake.

Nietzsche anticipates Weber’s considerations of an ascetic of self-sacrifice by underscoring the violence that shadows the promise in the context

of the debtor-creditor relationship as a paradigm of Western morals. The Second Essay in *The Genealogy of Morals* traces the vicissitudes of bad conscience in a history of punishment that links individual responsibility with the ability to fulfill one's promises and to pay one's debts. In this connection, Nietzsche cites a medieval policy of allowing the unpaid creditor to extract the "choicest morsel" of flesh from a negligent debtor.¹² The creditor's compensation comes in the sadistic pleasure of partaking in the "entitlement and right to cruelty" or what Nietzsche refers to as the *right of the masters* when, at last, "he, too, may experience for once the exalted sensation of being allowed to despise and mistreat someone as 'beneath him'—or at least, if the actual power and administration of punishment has already passed to the 'authorities,' to see him despised and mistreated" (65). Punishment thus serves the aim of reminding debtors of their promises to creditors as a function of their responsibility to society at large. It thus cows the "*instinct for freedom*," which is "forcibly made latent [...] pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself" (87). Nietzsche associates this instinct for freedom with the "soul" of an animal, now inverted and denatured. The beast that forgets, aggresses, and enjoys without debt, conscience, or guilt is now one who is "forcibly confined to the oppressive narrowness and punctiliousness of custom. Impatiently lacerated, persecuted, gnawed at, assaulted, and maltreated himself; this animal that rubbed itself raw against the bars of its cage as one tried to 'tame' it" (85). Bad conscience is, for Nietzsche, the instinct for freedom "rubbed raw" against the punishing morality that incarcerates it.

The corruption of the Will to Power is evinced in an ascetic morality that requires us to prove that we remember our debt to society by repressing our natures. Indeed, from Nietzsche's standpoint, the martyrdom narrative of Jesus dying for our sins is just another version of the creditor-debtor relationship that culminates in the extraction of a chunk of flesh in exchange for an unpaid and unpayable debt. Hence the Christian partition of the monotheistic God allows the Father to act as a creditor who requires his own Son to expiate humankind's debt of sin with his life.¹³

12 I am paraphrasing 64–65 of the Second Essay here. For the German, I consulted *Philosophie von Platon bis Nietzsche* (CDROM).

13 Regarding "that stroke of genius on the part of Christianity," Nietzsche writes: "God himself sacrifices himself for the guilt of mankind, God himself makes payment to himself, God as the only being who can redeem man from what

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In Nietzsche's view, various forms of Christian asceticism would merely be sublimations of a more basic underlying cruelty. Yet while Weber seemingly extends Nietzsche's polemic against Christian asceticism as a perseveration of bad conscience, Weber's theses on Calvinist self-denial vex the natural primacy Nietzsche bestows upon an aggressive instinct that external influences pervert into a masochistic conscience. For Weber, these influences are contingent upon the demands of capitalist progress to provide a well-oiled machinery through compliant and long-suffering workers who conscientiously prove their "grace" by making profits for paternalistic bosses. In a certain respect, then, the standpoint of political economy alters and complicates the grammar of the Will to Power—the natural priority of Nietzsche's "instinct" to dominate in relation to its inversion as bad conscience, or Freud's destructive "drive." Liberal guilt is the masochistic fruit of a secularized Calvinist emphasis on self-denial as the proving ground of grace: one affirms one's "Election" to democratic civility by internalizing its ascetic codes and punishing oneself for failing to live up to them.

I would like to suggest, in agreement with Brown, that the Calvinist underpinnings of Weber's work ethic have evolved into an increasingly hegemonic force in neo-liberal ideology that "equates moral responsibility with rational action" and thereby configures "morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences." Brown notes that a neo-liberal interpellation "carries responsibility for the self to new heights: the rationally calculating individual bears full responsibility for the consequences of his or her action no matter how severe the constraints on this action." A neo-liberal fall from grace would thus correspond to the "mismanaged life," which "becomes a new mode of depoliticizing social and economic powers and at the same time reduces political citizenship to an unprecedented degree of passivity and political complacency" ("Neo-liberalism" 5). Yet if neo-liberalism *moralizes* "the consequences of individual freedom," as Brown suggests, then it also converts the individual into a micro-managing mini-version of the entrepreneurial state (6). Nietzsche gestures at the ways in which bad conscience sediments the history of states whereby "the oldest 'state' thus appeared as a fearful tyranny, as an oppressive and remorseless machine, and went on working until this raw material of people and semi-animals

has become unredeemable for man himself—the creditor sacrifices himself for his debtor, out of *love* (can one credit that?), out of love for his debtor!—" (*Genealogy* 92).

was at last not only thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also *formed*" (86; Nietzsche's emphasis). Subjectification, in Nietzsche's terms, would be the effect of our willingness to suppress our natural instincts to dominate by internalizing the "remorseless" machinery of the punishing powers that once belonged to the state.

Revising Nietzsche, the genealogical Foucault distances himself from the liberal prioritization of individual rights over and against the excesses of the state in order to locate bad conscience in the microphysics of power and the pleasures of discipline: we are civilized subjects because we internalize our own surveillance. According to Foucault, institutional and other socio-cultural practices "implant" categories of perversion and criminality in subjects. The technology of categorization renders various "behaviours" intelligible as such, and they thereby become visible for regulation. Citizens internalize the gaze of their surveyors in order to avoid punishment. It is this internalization that guarantees the automatic reproduction of disciplinary technologies, as Foucault characterizes them, which makes citizens "kneaded and pliant" in Nietzsche's words, "but also *formed*." To extend Nietzsche's critique of morals is to seek to recognize, with Foucault, the process of forming malleable subjects in liberal democracies. This process sustains an economy of guilt among individuals who recognize their failure to live up to the universal ideal of tolerance because they cannot completely neutralize their will to punish and to dominate. Such guilt is the mnemonic surfeit of internalized social regulation that refracts the excesses of state reason.

Yet while Foucault acknowledges in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* that subjects enjoy the disciplinary technologies constituting them, his post-psychoanalytical explanation does not obviate sadomasochistic fantasy, which organizes the aggression spurred by wounded narcissism and the desire for love. Brown's emphasis on narcissistic projection as a mode of structuring socio-political desire thus points to a missing step in the logic that permits Foucault to posit a disciplined subject as the hapless byproduct of disciplinary power. In her critique of liberal tolerance, Brown recalls Freud's "oft-rehearsed tale" that in the beginning "there is only sexual desire" (*Regulating Aversion* 160). Hence what "we call *love* precipitates out of the inhibition of this desire." She goes on to reflect that,

Aim inhibition entails a displacement or rerouting of libidinal energy; in the case of love, this energy goes into idealization of the object. But idealization itself, Freud explains, is more

than reverence for the object. Rather, it is a way of satisfying one's own need to be loved through projecting one's ideals of goodness onto an other. Idealization thus involves a circuitry of projection from the ego ideal of the lover onto the love object, a projection that produces a feeling (being in love) that in turn gratifies the lover's ego's own desire for love or self-idealization. [...] Idealization is narcissistic projection necessitated by aim inhibition. (160–61)

Brown's observations lead to the conclusion that a secondary narcissistic idealization of liberal-democratic ideals conditions subjects to take pleasure in the suffering of those who thwart or compete with a narcissistic desire for (paternal) love. Such subjects therefore also crave punishment for their own failure to inhibit their sexual and aggressive aims. Freud's conceptualization of a sadistic conscience and a morally masochistic ego should therefore be viewed as a metapsychological component of subjectification in Foucault's sense.

In "The Desire to Be Punished: Freud's 'A Child Is Being Beaten,'" Brown turns to Freud's 1919 analysis to investigate different facets of "political masochism." For Brown, the alternation between sadistic and masochistic phases that distinguishes the beating fantasy is reflected on a political level in universalist fantasies that subjects produce in order to protect their investment in a liberal democratic order. In idealizing this order, a liberal subject shores up a secondary narcissistic projection of his or her inherent goodness and entitlement to love onto another; however, such an entitlement is fraught with the danger that the desire for love will be thwarted by others or poisoned by the subject's own faulty self-control. The need to protect a liberal-democratic identification can therefore paralyze critics as well as their suffering and marginalized victims whose identity may seem rooted in a traumatic history. This situation arises because identity of any kind will not *appear* to remain the same without its continual performative activation. In addition, if identity is formed out of trauma, then, as Brown writes, "there would also be a certain reassurance, and possibly even erotic gratification, in restaging the injury, either at the site of our bodies (masochism) or at the site of another (displaced masochism in which we are split off from that with which we identify as we are 'passively looking on,' to use Freud's phrase)." This restaging serves to stabilize "an identity whose traumatic formation would render unstable its political or public face; it forges a politically coherent, continuous, and conscious identity out of conflicting unconscious desires" ("Desire" 55).

Brown delineates a parallel between a masochistic identification in the second phase and the critical logic of identifying with the suffering of oppressed groups that comprises the affective impetus of multiculturalist discourse.¹⁴ In Brown's words, "reliving a certain punishing recognition reassures us not only of our own place (identity) but also of the presence of the order out of which that identity was forged and to which we remain perversely beholden. The repetition gratifies an injured love by reaffirming the existence of the order that carried both the love and the injury" ("Desire" 56). Yet "if as Freud argues, the desire to punish issues from felt impotence or disregard, if it issues from guilty or unrequited love, then the punitive desire is an inherently ambivalent one insofar as it installs (relatively impotent) violence at the site of a hoped-for tenderness and capaciousness" (57). Unreciprocated love may also foster rage against the ideal that potentially humiliates the narcissistic subject. As my own reading of Freud's analysis of the masochistic second phase suggests, such rage is a form of aggression that cannot be tolerated in civilized societies: it is a misdeed that begs for due punishment.

This relatively impotent violence explains the paralytic effect of a sado-masochistic fixation on a status quo in which the abuse of certain groups is permitted within democratic nations whose governments are presumed to protect the rights of minorities against majorities. In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Slavoj Žižek argues that it is naïve for critics to point to the exceptions to democratic principles as failures that might and should be fixed since the existence of these "particularities" actually confirms the universalist fantasy that structures liberal identification. Reading Brown with Žižek implies that such a disavowal is organized by the socio-politics of enjoyment: liberal democratic defenders *need* exceptions in order to continue to enjoy their universalist fantasy and, reciprocally, these same

14 Brown asks:

[D]o scenes of social punishment for a marked identity broker a complex and largely unexcavated relationship between identity and guilt on one side, and identity and aggression on the other? And if these opposing (yet mutually constitutive) impulses *require* the oscillation between punishing and being punished that is suggested by Freud's three-phase interpretation [...] if these dual impulses keep alive a certain investment in marked identity, are they also a source of political paralysis, a constraint on a subject's willingness to surrender this investment? If so, might they also constrain the desire for emancipation from the injuries that constitute the identity, insofar as they require the incessant restaging—in abstract, ambivalent, and above all oscillating terms—of scenes of punishment? ("Desire" 56)

defenders require this fantasy in order to enjoy their guilty investment in its suffering and marginalized exceptions. Butler's analysis of Nietzsche and Freud underscores this point in suggesting that a passionate attachment to subjection presumes both the passion and the aim to attach it to some kind of object (*Psychic* 71). One could say, in Žižek's Lacanian terms, that a portion of this "passionate attachment" would consist of transgressive enjoyment as an ambivalent residue of subjectification through fantasies that bind subjects to society. The prospect of such *jouissance* arises, as Klaus Mladek proposes, "once we become aware of the stark difference between usefulness and enjoyment, between the officially legitimized ends and the non-theorizable surplus of punishment" (Mladek 212). According to Mladek, the legal concept of *usufruct* as "the right to temporarily enjoy the use of certain rights of others," which Nietzsche precociously visualizes the unpaid creditor's "enjoyment of the rights over someone else's body," also introduces limits into *jouissance*, "for one is allowed to enjoy this power, but not to abuse or squander it." As Lacan articulates it, "Precisely this is the essence of law—to divide, to distribute, to spread out that which is *jouissance*" (Mladek 212, citing Lacan 10).

In Mladek's reading, "Nietzsche sides with *jouissance* against *ressentiment*, precisely because it runs counter to contentment, pleasure or happiness" (Mladek 234). While Mladek insists on distinguishing the "carnal delight" in pain, death, and suffering, which transpires as an extra-legal result of and supplement to legal punishment, from *ressentiment*, I am more persuaded by attempts to understand how the "unequal distribution" of *jouissance*, so defined, may underlie various experiences of melancholy as enjoyment-saturated vicissitudes of sociohistorical anger and *Lebensneid* (life envy) among the agents and bearers of domination in liberal democracies. Writing on racial melancholy in national and postimperial contexts respectively, Anne Anlin Cheng (2001) and Paul Gilroy (2005) have emphasized that melancholic fixations on wounded identities are just as constitutive of the dominant subjects who enact them—sometimes violently, as Gilroy demonstrates in the case of socio-economically emasculated soccer hooligans subsisting in the postcolonial ruins of a declining British empire—as they are of the disenfranchised racially marked or immigrant "objects" who internalize these narratives of loss while recoiling against them. Gilroy notes that among the painful obligations that attend the task of working through the "grim details of imperial and colonial history" is the transformation of "paralyzing guilt into a more productive shame that would be conducive to the building of a multicultural nationality that is no longer phobic about the prospect of exposure

to either strangers or otherness” (99). I question whether such shame can be detached from a sadomasochistic imaginary that precipitates liberal guilt. As a qualification of Gilroy’s recommendation, I would add that to sympathize with victims of oppression is also to visualize their suffering by drawing on a cultural repertoire of images. I have elsewhere argued that the sympathetic imagination feeds on fantasies that permit pleasurable identifications with images of persecution and marginalization.¹⁵ In the present context, I am contending that the sadomasochistic organization of these images allows left-leaning academics not only to enjoy visualizations of minority suffering but also to enjoy a pleasurable punishing liberal guilt triggered by those images. This guilt fulfills an attendant need to be castigated for an incestuous love, for desiring the abusive father, a “crime” they delightfully do penance for through entrenched masochism. As Butler writes, the origin of bad conscience is “the joy taken in persecuting oneself, where the self persecuted does not exist outside the orbit of that persecution” (*Psychic* 75). Hence the masochistic second phase of the beating fantasy translates into political paralysis among liberal democratic subjects who cannot escape the vicious cycle of punishing themselves for unconsciously deriving satisfaction from the very abuses they decry.

Moreover, if, as Brown suggests, liberal subjects must protect their love for wounded democratic ideals, then identity politics provides them with the abstract victims of a beating fantasy that alternately obscures and reveals the beaters and the beaten in imaginary scenes of punishment and humiliation. First, such a fantasy permits liberal subjects to believe that democracy loves them more than the marked other who is a rival for public and state attention. Second, in spurring their masochistic identification with persecuted others who stand in for their own disappointed hopes, this fantasy also allows such subjects to punish themselves for resenting the democracy that has failed them by perpetrating abuse. Ultimately, then, the “beaten other” fantasy allows wounded liberal subjects to see the naughty victim publicly punished for exposing the shoddy universality of their beloved democratic ideals.

Brown’s rewriting of Freud’s three stages furnishes a disturbing answer to the question I posed in the introduction with reference to Foucault about how liberal subject formation manifests and rationalizes the very “excess” of governmentality that it purports to repudiate. My explanation, drawing on Brown and Butler, is that the “excess” of sadomasochism constitutes the condition of possibility for liberal democratic subjectification:

¹⁵ See Ball, “Unspeakable Differences.”

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My fantasies *must* allow me to enjoy discipline and identify with its targets along with its administration in order to reproduce my membership in a liberal democracy that officiates the ethic of “civilized tolerance” in opposition to a “hateful” and “undisciplined” Other. What this means for marginalized and disenfranchised subjects is that in order to fill the slots delimited for them in liberal ideology and, perhaps, *to exist intelligibly at all within it*, they must “earn” attention by continually revisiting their oppressed histories. Though identity politics might be narrowly viewed as a mode of protest against enforced masochism, as Rey Chow has argued in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002), it may serve to reconsolidate the masochistic circularity of identity by requiring the marginalized other to bear her traumatic cross in order to ensure the loving devotion of bleeding hearts. The conventional American racists in Cheng’s analysis must develop elaborate ideologies and compensatory narratives to accommodate their actions with democratic ideals. Meanwhile, as Cheng writes, “white liberals need to keep burying the racial others in order to memorialize them” (11). This is why it is important not to fixate exclusively on the other’s trauma at the expense of the violator’s own dynamic in acts of denigration (12). Nevertheless, “the racialized minority is as bound to racial melancholia as the dominant subject” (19). Because of its assimilative reflexivity, the “talk” about racial grief “also runs the risk of repeating a tool of containment historically exercised by authority. [...] In short, it can be damaging to say how damaging racism is” (14). Yet if, as Cheng observes, such melancholia has always existed for raced subjects “both as a *sign* of rejection and as a psychic *strategy* in response to that rejection” (20), then the issue is whether or not the racially marked subject should or even *can* rail against a liberal-masochistic “work ethic” by partaking in the privilege of the masters.

I have speculated that Freud’s third phase of the beaten child fantasy could be seen as a venue for a hedged counter-formation of Nietzsche’s Will to Power when sadism re-emerges to recuperate the subject from a shameful masochism. This counter-formation may therefore be seen as staging something akin to Gilles Deleuze’s model of masochism, which suggests that the beating fantasy allows a subject to atone for his or her resemblance to the father and the “miniaturized” father’s likeness in him or her that is “ridiculed and humiliated” (Deleuze 60–61; cited by Mladek 230). As Mladek characterizes Deleuze, “In the cunning theater of pain and pleasure, neither the child nor the self is being beaten by the father, but the father himself is beaten” (230). Yet it is important to bear in mind that while the liberal-democratic version of this counter-formation perverts the

Will to Power into masochism, a sadistic supersession of this masochistic second phase is also potentially blocked for the marginalized (or actually beaten other). In light of Brown's extrapolation from Freud's analysis, I therefore want to emphasize that the voyeuristic third phase of the beaten child fantasy will remain inaccessible to the disenfranchised if such subjects are locked into masochistic interpellations by wounded liberal fantasies. A new question thus arises about the political consequences of sadomasochistic subjectification: How can the fantasy of protest become a reality for groups who are restricted to masochistic self-expression by liberalism's "wounded attachments" to the democratic state? Even if marginalized others move on from masochism to a voyeuristic third phase, they will merely be engaging in a rather quietist form of biting the hand that beats them. To transcend perverse liberalism, perhaps there is a need to call for a politicized fourth phase in which the other stops loving the punishing hand and rises up to spank an unfulfilling democracy. Among "us" guilt-ridden progressives, some will reject this "terrorist" fourth phase. Others among us will not allow ourselves to forget our liberationist agendas as a guilty symptom of our masochistic second phase. We will writhe in our complicity with domestic and global state aggression that provoked such violence despite and because of our liberal-democratic masochism (which is to say, that watching "Daddy" wage a preemptive war on televised news might be a fifth phase). However, such writhing is merely another recoil of bad conscience that permits us alternately to take pleasure in and feel ashamed of our anti-authoritarian lust for the phantom limb that extends from a lacerated bloody stump after the father's beating hand has been spectacularly cut off to become the "choicest morsel" of them all.

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