Drive and relation. Freud’s theory of sexuality to day.

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Abstract

In 1995 André Green posed a question: Has sexuality anything to do with psychoanalysis? (Green, 1995). According to Green, because object relations theory had gained a dominant position, sexuality as a driving force had lost its central theoretical status. Peter Fonagy’s (2008) study of references to sexuality in journals, demonstrating a decreasing frequency, confirmed this viewpoint. The aim of my paper is to discuss what the weakening of the drive perspective implies theoretically as well as clinically.

Based on Freud’s theory of sexuality I discuss the connection between drive and relationship. Through the presentation of later psychoanalytic contributions (e.g. Laplanche, Lacan, Stein) I underline the importance of “the other” and of early affective communication. Furthermore, the paper highlights the experience of sexuality as a transcendent state of consciousness – the “otherness” of eroticism. The discussion emphasizes that the waning of sexual drive as a central motivational force entails a loss of theoretical complexity. Consequently, the psychoanalyst is less able to grasp archaic layers of patients’ personality and life experience as well as their sexual problems and difficult love relationships. The concept of drive comes forward as a guarantee against relational reductionism.