

A RE-EXAMINATION OF FREUD'S USE OF THE TERMS 'MASCULINE'
AND 'FEMININE' IN HIS CONCEPTION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the formulation of his conception of female sexuality. There are three contexts in which the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' appear. Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' enable us to account for his use of these terms in each of the three contexts, as a secondary and unconventional use of words. In each case, this thesis finds that this account does not support the allegation that the function of these terms, in Freud's conception of female sexuality, is prescriptive.

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PREFACE

Discussion of questions pertaining to the role and status of women have not always been absent in theories of ethics.¹ However, to the extent that contemporary trends in ethics dictate that philosophers confine their discussions to how values are expressed rather than to how they are derived,² this mandate has normally been interpreted to exclude such discussions altogether. The necessity at present of coming to terms with the kind of material that Freud's theories about women represent and the kinds of questions that arise in attempting to do so, suggest that this dictate perhaps has been too narrowly interpreted. For, although Freud's work has been charged with being "the strongest individual counterrevolutionary force in the ideology of sexual politics

¹Such questions have been discussed in the writings of John Stuart Mill, The Subjection of Women (1869), (London: Oxford University Press, 1970); and Friedrich Engels, The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (1844), (Chicago: Charles Kerr, 1902), to mention but a few.

²For a discussion of what contemporary philosophers conceive their function to be in ethics, see G. J. Warnock's book Contemporary Moral Philosophy (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1969), and Philippa Foot's introduction to the anthology Theories of Ethics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). A recently published collection of essays entitled Moral Problems and edited by James Rachels (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), although it includes discussions of sexual values in general, does not examine the sexual values that pertain to the role and status of women in particular.

during the period", a move to re-examine that charge³ raises the very important questions of how sexual values are expressed and perpetuated. Insofar as questions pertaining to how values are expressed are considered to be the fundamental task of moral philosophers to examine, questions concerning the expression and communication of sexual values cannot reasonably be excluded, and represent an integral part of the kinds of questions that contemporary philosophers have given themselves a mandate to discuss. It is in anticipation of discussions of this kind of question that this paper is conceived.

³See especially the collection of essays on Freud's theories about women entitled Women & Analysis, edited by Jean Strouse (New York: Grossman, 1974). The above mentioned charge against Freud is a reference to Kate Millett's Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 178.

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INTRODUCTION

In the writings of Freud's most outspoken critic, Kate Millett, the charge against his theories about women is defended on the basis of the prescriptive function attributed to the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his works:

"... the general effect of Freudian thought ... was to equate, even to prescribe, what it defines as masculine with the biological male, feminine with the biological female."¹ If the general charge against Freud's theories about women is to be seriously re-examined, the first questions that we must ask are: 1) what is the basis of the allegation that 'masculine' and 'feminine' in Freud's theories about women are prescriptive?; and 2) is it justifiable? It is my purpose in this paper to consider both these questions. However, since Freud's theories about women are numerous, and the number of contexts in which Freud uses the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' varied, I will confine my discussion in this paper to a discussion of these two questions as they pertain to the interpretation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in only one aspect of his theories about women: his conception of female sexuality.

As concerns 'masculine' and 'feminine' in Freud's conception of female sexuality, I propose to show that the allegation that these terms are prescriptive is the result of an

¹Kate Millett, p. 191.

inadequate analysis of Freud's use of these terms. It will be seen that, insofar as Freud's conception of female sexuality is concerned, the prescriptive function attributed to 'masculine' and 'feminine' is derived from Freud's own explanation of the application of these terms. However, it will also be seen that Freud develops another explanation for this use in passages in which he addresses himself directly to the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. If such passages are taken into account in the interpretation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his conception of female sexuality, the allegation that these terms are prescriptive cannot be substantiated. Since in this thesis I am concerned with the interpretation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as concerns Freud's conception of female sexuality only, I would like to point out that the conclusions that are drawn here are not necessarily applicable to the interpretation of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as concerns other aspects of Freud's theories about women.

CHAPTER I

THE TERMS 'MASCULINE' AND 'FEMININE' IN FREUD'S CONCEPTION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

The purpose of this chapter is to show that it is Freud's use of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the formulation of his conception of female sexuality, and the explanation which in his writings about female sexuality he has given it, that are primarily responsible for the unfavorable response that his conception of female sexuality has received. In his definitive work on the subject of female sexuality, the article entitled "Female Sexuality", Freud formulates his theory regarding the nature of female sexuality thus: "The sexual life of the woman is regularly split up into two phases, the first of which is masculine in character, whilst only the second is specifically feminine."¹ Because Freud's application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is so intimately bound with the formulation of his thesis.

¹"Female Sexuality" (1931), Collected Papers, trans. and ed. J. Strachey, Vol. V, 5th impression (London: Hogarth, 1957), p. 255. Other works in which Freud discusses the subject of female sexuality are: "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. J. Strachey, Vol. VII (London: Hogarth, 1953); "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" (1925), Collected Papers, trans. and ed. J. Strachey, Vol. V, 5th impression (London: Hogarth, 1957); "Femininity" (1933), New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, trans. and ed. J. Strachey, Lecture XXXIII (New York: Norton, 1965).

concerning the dualistic character of female sexuality, it is necessary that, before considering his use of these terms, his thesis be more specifically outlined. Thus, the first section of this chapter will be devoted to outlining and examining this main thesis.

1. Freud's Conception of the Dualistic Nature of Female Sexuality

In this section I propose to show how Freud's thesis regarding the dualistic character of female sexuality, initially conceived to demonstrate a dualism between two alternate erotic possibilities in the female, ultimately demonstrates a dualism of a very different order. Freud's thesis is advanced with reference to three respects in which the characteristics exhibited by women in the first stage differ from those exhibited in the second. These include 1) changes in the primacy of erotogenic zone; 2) changes in the nature of sexual behavior; and 3) changes in the position of libido. I will outline and examine Freud's discussion of each individually, and with particular attention to the kind of dualism that each entails. It will be seen how the kind of dualism in question is a dualism between the expression of sexuality on the one hand, its repression on the other.

1.1 The Dualism of Female Erotogenic Zones

The distinction between the primacy of two alternate erotogenic zones in the female represents the basis upon which

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the entire notion of the dualistic character of female sexuality is developed. In "Female Sexuality", Freud maintains that in the female there are two erotogenic zones through which sexuality is expressed, the vagina and the clitoris.

We have long realized that in women the development of sexuality is complicated by the task of renouncing that genital zone which was originally the principal one, namely the clitoris, in favour of a new zone -- the vagina.²

The distinction between the erotogenicity of the clitoris and vagina dates from a much earlier point in Freud's work in which research into the nature of infantile sexuality discloses an original clitorid sensitivity marked by the absence of vaginal sexuality in the female.³ Following studies in adult female sexuality, the absence of any sensitivity of the clitoris led Freud to formulate a theory of the two-stage, dualistic, character of female sexuality in accordance with which the clitoris is the genital zone responsible for sexuality in the first stage, the vagina in the second. Despite the fact that notably little evidence is brought to bear on the existence of vaginal sensitivity as such, the dualism between first and second stage is nevertheless believed by Freud to constitute an identical share of erotic sensitivity insofar as each of the two genital areas are concerned. As

²"Female Sexuality", p. 252. For additional discussion of the distinction between clitoris and vagina, see also "Femininity", pp. 118ff.

³"Three Essays", pp. 220ff.

Freud proceeds to examine the other features of this dualism, this belief is progressively shaken and a very different one comes to take its place.

1.2 The Dualism of Female Sexual Behavior

Paralleling his observations regarding a change in the primacy of erotogenic zone in the female, Freud observed a corresponding change in the nature of the sexual behavior. Whereas the sexual behavior characteristic of the excitation and gratification of the clitoris is active, that characteristic of the vagina is passive: "We must now add that we observe [in the second stage] ... a marked diminution of the active and an augmentation of the passive sexual impulses."⁴ Freud's association of active instinctual impulses with the first stage, and passive ones with the second, is derived primarily from the observation that whereas the excitation of the clitoris is generally gratified through masturbatory acts, such positive self-generating sexual action is absent in the gratification of what may be said to constitute vaginal

⁴"Female Sexuality", pp. 267-68. Although Freud sometimes speaks of the active as well as passive instinctual impulses of the first stage ("Female Sexuality", p. 264), he seems more committed to the view that the first stage is primarily active (Ibid., pp. 267ff).

excitation.⁵ Thus, the distinction between active and passive behavior marks the second respect in which female sexuality is dualistic. This distinction, along with that between two erotogenic zones, suggests that the two stages of female sexuality in Freud's formulation correspond to a dualism between two alternate channels of sexual expression in the female. However, within the very notion of passive instinctual impulses is contained a contradiction which, when more fully explored in his analysis of the libido, reveals that a very different sort of dualism is in question.

1.3 The Libido in Female Sexuality

'Libido' is a psychological term conceived by Freud to express the notion of "sexual instinct", or "motive force" of sexual life.⁶ Because of its fundamental role in Freud's

⁵"Female Sexuality", p. 260. See also "Distinction Between the Sexes", p. 194, and "Femininity", pp. 118, 127. The change from active to passive sexual behavior is also associated with a corresponding change of love-object in the female. Whereas active behavior is manifested in connection with the original love-object, the mother, passive behavior accompanies the transition to father-love (see "Female Sexuality", pp. 256, 264 and "Femininity", pp. 118ff). This aspect of the distinction between first and second stage is developed in Freud's discussion of the Oedipus complex in women. However, since it is more directly relevant to female psychological development, I have omitted it entirely from this discussion of female sexual development.

⁶The concept of libido is discussed in greater detail by Freud in the following: Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex, trans. and ed. A. A. Brill (New York: Dutton, 1962), pp. 74ff and "The Theory of Libido", A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis, trans. and ed. J. Riviere (New York: Washington Square Press, 1966), pp. 419-437.

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study of sexuality, a discussion of the libido and how this instinct is manifested in the dualistic course of female sexuality was of utmost importance to Freud. Not wishing to compromise the unity of his concept of libido to fit the dual nature of female sexuality, Freud originally maintains that although the libido is equally manifest and operative at each stage of female sexual development, there are differences in the two stages concerning the so-called "position of libido", or "aims of libido". The aims or position of the libido represent in Freud's vocabulary the particular behavioral form of gratification that the libido seeks, and in female sexuality, this may be either active or passive.⁷ Corresponding thus to the notions of active and passive sexual impulses which were discussed in the previous section, the distinction between active and passive aims constitutes the difference between first and second stage as far as the libido, the very core of sexuality, is concerned. It is above all this feature of Freud's formulation of female sexuality that suggests more consistently than any other that the dualism in question is

⁷"Female Sexuality", pp. 268-69. For the definition of "aims" of libido, see "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915) in A General Selection From the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. J. Rickman (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1957), p. 74. The view that there is an equal share of libido, or of instinctual action, in the second stage of female sexuality is also suggested by the following: "One might consider characterizing femininity ... as giving preference to passive aims. This is not ... the same as passivity; to achieve a passive aim may call for a large amount of activity". (Italics mine, "Femininity", p. 115).

of a specifically sexual order. For, insofar as the active and passive aims of the libido are purported to represent an equal share of sexual gratification, the existence of a specifically sexual element of all the other manifestations of the second stage is presupposed.

Freud, however, remained dissatisfied with this formulation of how the libido is equally manifested in each stage of female sexuality. This dissatisfaction was primarily due to what he felt to be a contradiction in terms contained by the notion of "passive instinctual impulses", or "passive aims of libido". In "Female Sexuality" he writes:

Psycho-analysis teaches us to manage with a single libido, though its aims, i.e. its modes of gratification, are both active and passive. In this antithesis, above all in the existence of libidinal impulses whose aims are passive the rest of our problem is contained.⁸ (*Italics mine*).

The problem confronting Freud at this time is how instinctual impulses, libidinal aims which are by definition active, can be passive; how the libido, by definition active since it is an instinct, can be consistent with passivity in any form whatsoever. This difficulty led Freud not only to question, as he does here, but also to reject the view that the libido is equally manifest in both stages of female development. There are therefore passages in "Female Sexuality" and elsewhere in which Freud maintains that "more constraint has been applied to the libido when pressed into the feminine function"

⁸"Female Sexuality", pp. 268-69.

and that in the second stage of her development, "a considerable part of woman's sexual life is permanently injured".⁹

Statements such as these represent quite an about-face from Freud's previous position on the libido in female sexuality and alter significantly the kind of dualism which the two-stage theory entails.

Freud's indication that repression and constraint mark the status of the libido in the second stage of female development, suggest that neither of the two other characteristics of the second stage -- vaginal primacy and passivity -- are representative of sexual expression. On the contrary, their occurrence may be regarded as an indication of sexual repression itself. In this respect, the dualism contained in Freud's two-stage theory corresponds to the polarity between sexual expression on the one hand, and its repression on the other. This is indeed a far cry from what in the first instance appeared to be a dualism between two alternate modes of sexual expression in the female. Interestingly enough, it

⁹"Femininity", p. 131 and "Female Sexuality", p. 268. Freud's view regarding the repressed state of sexuality in the second stage is further supported and developed in his theory of the castration complex in women. Through the castration complex, Freud explains how the formation of the second stage is the result of the repression of the first. For reference to Freud's discussion of the castration complex in women, see the following: "Distinction Between the Sexes", pp. 189ff; "Female Sexuality", pp. 256ff; "Femininity", pp. 124ff. Since the theory of the castration complex is also more specifically connected with Freud's analysis of the psychological aspects of female development, I have omitted it from my discussion here.

is the version which states that the occurrence of the characteristics of the second stage is an indication of sexual repression that has been most widely substantiated to date. Findings in the field of female sexuality subsequent to Freud's have shown that as far as the distinction between the erotogenic capacity of the vagina and of the clitoris is concerned, the clitoris alone is responsible for any erotic sensitivity of the vagina.¹⁰ This proves Freud's theory correct in that absence of clitorid sensitivity, as characterizes the second stage, will duly ensure the absence of vaginal sensitivity, and hence of sexual response altogether. Thus, as an account of what characteristics constitute sexual expression, and which ones repression in the female Freud's two-stage theory has been empirically substantiated. However, as an account of the course which female sexuality actually follows, it has not. Whether or not females ultimately do succumb to repressive sexual tendencies and frigidity is a

¹⁰ According to the Kinsey Report on sexuality, as quoted by Simone de Beauvoir: "There is a great deal of anatomical and clinical evidence that most of the interior of the vagina is without nerves Nerves have been demonstrated inside the vagina only in the anterior wall, proximate to the base of the clitoris." See her book The Second Sex, trans. and ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Bantam, 1965), p. 349. These findings have also been substantiated by the further research conducted on female sexuality of Masters and Johnson. Their research has shown that the sensitivity of the vagina is entirely dependent upon the clitoris and that the absence of clitorid sensitivity is physiologically responsible for sexual frigidity in the female. See Mary Jane Sherfey's celebrated exposition of Masters and Johnson, The Nature and Evolution of Female Sexuality (New York: Vintage, 1973), pp. 93-94, pp. 115ff. See also The Hite Report, Shere Hite (New York: Dell, 1977).

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matter of some controversy, and largely depends on the particular instances at hand. However, insofar as Freud's psycho-sexual stage theory is as much a theory about what women go through, as it is one about what certain manifestations mean, the particular perspective that one has in terms of actual instances will greatly affect how Freud's theory is viewed. This is potentially a source of much difficulty with respect to Freud's conception of female sexuality and one which becomes apparent only in dealing with Freud's use of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

2. 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in Freud's Conception of Female Sexuality

In this section I propose to show how it is Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', a use which is represented in his discussion of each of the three aspects of female sexuality, and the explanation which in his writings about women he has given it, that are responsible for the interpretation and denunciations of his theory. In "Female Sexuality", Freud's explanation is primarily in terms of a comparison with male sexuality, in accordance with which the characteristics of the so-called masculine stage are paralleled by ones exhibited in the male, whereas those of the feminine one are not: "... in female development there is a process of transition from one stage to the other to which there is nothing analogous in the male."¹¹ I will examine Freud's

¹¹"Female Sexuality", p. 255.

application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as it appears in the context of his discussion of each of the three aspects of female sexuality. It will be seen how this explanation gives rise to the prescriptive function attributed to Freud's use of these terms in accordance with which his conception of female sexuality is interpreted and criticized.

2.1. The Masculine and Feminine Erotogenic Zones in the Female

Freud uses 'masculine' and 'feminine' repeatedly to characterize what are said to be the two erotogenic zones in the female: the clitoris and the vagina. For instance, the clitoris is called an organ of "masculine character", "analogous to the male organ", whereas the vagina is referred to as the "true female organ". Given that both these organs are exhibited by the female sex alone, the explanation at hand is that of a comparison between male and female erotogenic zones in accordance with which the female has two erotogenic zones, only one of which is comparable to the male's:

The bisexual disposition ... manifests itself much more plainly in the female than in the male. The latter has only one principal sexual zone -- only one sexual organ -- whereas the female has two: the vagina, the true female organ, and the clitoris, which is analogous to the male.¹²

This explanation presumably seeks to justify the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as a means of describing the

¹²Ibid., p. 255.

erotogenic character of the clitoris and that of the vagina by analogy with the male. However, the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' can only work, according to this explanation, if there are indeed two erotogenic zones in the female to be compared. But as it is, there is no evidence to substantiate a dualistic erotogenic capacity in the female, and the clitoris is alone held responsible for all erotic sensitivity. This means that on the one hand 'masculine' is being used to describe that which represents the sole source of erotic sensitivity in the female, and on the other, 'feminine' is used to describe an organ that in itself has none. This undermines the possibility of any descriptive reference of the term 'feminine'; for not only is there no erotogenic quality to the vagina, but there is also no conclusive evidence to the effect that women succumb to vaginal insensitivity. That 'feminine' cannot be used to refer to a specifically female phenomenon in this case, has implications in terms of 'masculine' as well; for the analogy with the male that the use of 'masculine' implies, even if its referential validity in terms of the erotogenic capacities of the clitoris can be ascertained, cannot be descriptively valid in the absence of a meaningful alternative.

2.2 The Masculine and Feminine Sexual Behavior in the Female

Freud also uses 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize the two forms of alleged sexual behavior in the

female. Active sexual behavior manifested in the pursuit of clitorid gratification is called masculine, and the passive behavior of the second stage, associated with vaginal gratification, is feminine.¹³ Here, too, the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' reflects the asymmetrical relation between the sexes in accordance with which active sexual behavior is typical of the male, the passive kind characteristic of women only:

With their entry into the phallic phase the differences between the sexes are completely eclipsed by their agreements. We are now obliged to recognize that the little girl is a little man.... But it is not, of course, going to remain so.¹⁴

However, the assumption that women achieve sexual gratification through two alternate forms of behavior -- the active and passive kind -- implicit in a justification for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', is not a well-founded one either. The fact that, on the contrary, passivity in association with an erotically insensitive organ is typical of sexual frigidity, rather than sexual fulfillment, in conjunction with the fact that such a state of frigidity is not necessarily typical of women at all, is generally incompatible with a descriptive use of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

¹³Ibid., p. 260. Elsewhere Freud writes: "... active as well as passive impulses ... if we relate them to the differentiation of the sexes ... we may call them masculine and feminine". ("Femininity", p. 120).

¹⁴"Femininity", p. 118.

> here as well. What the implications of this are, become clearer in Freud's treatment of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine', in connection with the problem of libido in female sexuality.

2.3 The Masculine Libido in the Female

With reference to the libido in female sexuality, Freud altogether abandons the use of 'feminine', maintaining that "libido is invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature ... whether it occurs in men or in women", and that "... the juxtaposition 'feminine libido' is without any justification."¹⁵ The reason for this is self-evident in terms of how 'libido' is defined. For clearly, insofar as Freud explicitly maintained that the libido cannot be successfully channelled into that position required for the formation of the second stage of female development and still remain instinctually operative, the fact that there is no ostensible manifestation of the libido at this stage does indeed render the juxtaposition 'feminine libido' without justification. In this recognition, Freud seems to have anticipated in advance at least part of the difficulty engendered by his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. For, in this case, Freud has effectively avoided the problems resulting from the use of 'feminine' for what are neither sexual, nor necessarily female phenomena. However, his

¹⁵ "Three Essays", p. 219, and "Femininity", p. 131.

insistence in nevertheless using 'masculine' for the libido in the female only serves to bring the other aspect of the difficulty to the fore. For, more blatant than at any other point is the fact that Freud is using the term 'masculine' to characterize that which, by his own admission, represents and constitutes the sole incentive for sexual life in the female. One cannot help but be struck by the inappropriateness of the use of 'masculine' here, and even more so, of the analogy with the male so elicited. For this is an analogy which is itself only reasonable to make if its absence in the relevant context can be established. To the extent that there is but a single libido and that it is characteristic of the first stage of women's development only, one might reasonably argue that it is more suitable to describe it as 'feminine'.¹⁶ What, if any, is the descriptive value of Freud's use of 'masculine' in this, and all the other instances of his characterization of female sexuality, becomes the source of some consternation.

2.4 The Prescriptive Function Attributed to 'Masculine' and 'Feminine'

In lieu of descriptive use therefore, it has been suggested that 'masculine' in connection with the libido is

¹⁶ Simone de Beauvoir introduces the notion of a "feminine libido" in her discussion of Freud's reluctance to recognize the original and unique nature of the libido in the female in The Second Sex, pp. 35, 44ff.

prescriptive:

[that] Freud defined the libido ... as masculine ... gives one some insight into the Victorian character of Freud's own sexual attitudes, through its assumption that sexual activity is "for men."¹⁷

In the face of what turns out to be the repressive character of the second stage, as well as the difficulty of establishing the referential descriptive meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine', this easily lends itself to the suspicion that the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', in each and every context that these terms appear, is prescriptive; that in the context of female sexuality, these words are used to condone the development of certain characteristics in women, to prohibit that of others. In the light of what those characteristics corresponding to Freud's use are, this suggests that according to Freud, women must avoid the pursuit of sexual gratification, confine themselves to sexual passivity, and avoid sensations resulting from the major part of their sexual anatomy: be frigid, in short. Though such declarations are not explicitly made by Freud, the view that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are prescriptive implies that such declarations are at least suggested, and introduces a whole

¹⁷Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 192. Kate Millett interprets Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as prescriptive with respect to the characteristics of activity and passivity, and libido as well. See Sexual Politics, pp. 190, 192. This interpretation is also taken up by another of Freud's critics, Germaine Greer, in The Female Eunuch (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1971), p. 192.

other slant to his conception of female sexuality.

The importance of the interpretation of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' for an evaluation of his conception of female sexuality as a whole cannot be overestimated. The prescriptive function attributed to the use of these terms determines how Freud's work on female sexuality is interpreted and criticized. For, if it were not for this, Freud's theories about women are an account of the nature of female sexuality, the evaluation and criticism of which depends on the empirical validity of its claims. In the light of his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', however, and particularly the prescriptive interpretation which suggests itself, Freud's conception of female sexuality no longer looks like an account of how women are, or were. Instead, it emerges as a normative account of how they ought to be, which was only disguised as an empirical one. As such, Freud's conception of female sexuality becomes subject to far graver and more defamatory charges than any brought against a straightforward empirical account. For, the indictment which occurs in almost every critical evaluation of Freud's conception of female sexuality is that it maintains and advocates sexual values which are discriminatory.

and repressive for women.¹⁸ Such an indictment has tremendous force in an age of sexual liberation such as ours, with its emphasis on the value and benefit of sexuality and sexual expression for all, and has caused Freud's theories about women to receive a particularly unfavorable, even hostile reception; for, even if the sexual mores which seem to be reflected in Freud's theories still have some adherents, they are nevertheless disturbing or downright repugnant for others, and especially for those committed to their elimination. Thus, if any restoration of the value of Freud's work on female sexuality is to take place, it must begin with a re-examination of the meaning of 'masculine'

¹⁸This charge against Freud's formulation of female sexuality is best put forth by Kate Millett in her Sexual Politics; see entire section "Freud and the Influence of Psychoanalytic Thought", pp. 176-203. Others in whose work this charge is also echoed are: Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, pp. 45ff; Germaine Greer, The Female Eunuch, pp. 96ff; Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex (New York: Bantam, 1971), section entitled "Freudianism: The Misguided Feminism", pp. 61-70.

and 'feminine'.¹⁹ In the following chapter, I will examine passages of Freud's writings, other than those to be found in his writings about women, in which Freud directly addresses himself to the question of the meaning of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. In these passages, it will be seen that Freud presents grounds for a wholly different interpretation of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

¹⁹ Amongst the recent literature on Freud's conception of female sexuality, there has been one attempt to extricate Freud from the hostile reception he has been given. In books and articles, Juliet Mitchell attempts an argument in favor of the descriptive significance of Freud's conception of female sexuality whose major force lies with the claim that women are repressed in the very manner which Freud outlines, imposing upon themselves just those values which Freud's theories reflect. See particularly her book, Psychoanalysis and Feminism (New York: Random House, 1974). See also her article "On Freud and the Distinction Between the Sexes", in Women & Analysis, ed. J. Strouse (New York: Grossman, 1974), pp. 27-36; and an earlier work Women's Estate (Manchester: Penguin, 1971), pp. 162-71. However interesting and well-meaning Mitchell's argument is, the attempt to re-instate descriptive significance to Freud's conception of female sexuality reverts to a position regarding the condition of sexuality in women which cannot be definitively established. In The Feminine Mystique (New York: Dell, 1963), Betty Friedan presents a similar argument in favor of Freud, qualifying it, however, with mention of the fact that the descriptive significance of Freud's works on women is relevant to his own times only. (See chapter entitled "The Sexual Solipsism of Sigmund Freud", pp. 95-117). Friedan's is by far the most sensible position, though still limited as far as a re-evaluation of Freud's work is concerned.

CHAPTER II

FREUD'S REMARKS ON THE MEANING OF 'MASCULINE' AND 'FEMININE'

The purpose of this chapter is to examine passages in which Freud addresses himself directly to the question of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.¹ In a footnote added in 1915 to his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality", intended to clarify the application of 'masculine' in the preceding text to libido, Freud introduces three senses in which, according to him, 'masculine' and 'feminine' can be used: 1) the biological sense; 2) the sociological sense; and 3) the psychological sense.

'Masculine' and 'feminine' are used sometimes in the sense of activity and passivity, sometimes in a biological, and sometimes again in a sociological sense. The first of these three meanings is ... serviceable in psycho-analysis.²

The 1915 footnote represents Freud's major discussion of the

¹Freud discusses the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' primarily in a long footnote added in 1915 to his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality" (1905), pp. 219-220. Other passages in which Freud remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are to be found in the following of his works: "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman" (1920), Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud, ed. J. Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), pp. 202-203; Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), trans. J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), n. pp. 52-53; and "Femininity" (1933), pp. 113-115.

²"Three Essays", p. 219.

meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. However, in addition to his discussion in this footnote, there are passages throughout his work in which Freud develops the analysis of the three senses. For this reason, I will examine Freud's discussion of each sense individually, making reference to the relevant passages which appear elsewhere as well.

1. The Use of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in the Biological Sense

The use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the biological sense is a use which, according to Freud's remarks in the 1915 footnote, is primarily determined by the biological products: by the "presence of spermatozoa or ova respectively", and thus corresponds to the use of 'male' and 'female'. However, although in this footnote Freud regards this use as one whose "applicability can be determined most easily", there are indications in passages of later works that the biological criteria for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in this sense are not as definitive as they would seem. For instance, in 1933 Freud introduces a second criterion for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in this biological sense: the anatomical sexual characteristics of males and females. With respect to these characteristics, Freud maintains that an absolute distinction between the sexes is not so easily discernable. For, within the anatomical genital structure of each sex there are indications of the presence of organs characteristic of the opposite sex as

well: "... portions of the male sexual apparatus also appear in women's bodies, though in an atrophied state, and vice versa in the alternative case."³ This view concerning the equilateral distribution of anatomical/sex characteristics in males and females, represents one aspect of Freud's theory of bisexuality -- a theory according to which each individual exhibits both male and female characteristics⁴ -- and is extremely important in his discussion of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

In Freud's discussion of the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the biological sense, the theory of bisexuality is particularly important. In the first place, by emphasizing a distinction between types of anatomical qualities manifested in both sexes, as opposed to a distinction between the anatomical qualities manifested in each, this theory challenges the belief in an absolute anatomical distinction between the sexes. In the second place, it also challenges, in this respect, the decisiveness of the biological criteria on the basis of which 'masculine' and 'feminine' are terms

³"Femininity", p. 114.

⁴Ibid., p. 114. Bisexuality is also discussed by Freud in his "Three Essays", pp. 219ff; and with specific reference to the biological distinction in Civilization and Its Discontents, n., pp. 52-53. There is also another aspect of the theory of bisexuality which concerns behavior. This aspect will be discussed in the section below, p. 26.

applicable to only one sex at a time.

Since, however, apart from the very rarest cases, only one kind of sexual product -- ova or semen -- is nevertheless present in one person, you are bound to have doubts as to the decisive significance of those elements ...⁵ (*Italics mine*)

With this challenge to the decisiveness of the biological products in establishing criteria for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', the theory of bisexuality furnishes grounds for a non-biological use of these terms. On the basis of this theory of the equal distribution of male and female characteristics in the anatomical structure of the genitals of each sex, 'masculine' and 'feminine' are terms applicable to either sex. It is such a departure from the conventional biological application of these terms that characterizes the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in each of the other two senses discussed by Freud in his remarks.

2. The Use of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in the Sociological Sense

In his 1915 remarks Freud also discusses the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in what he calls the sociological sense. The notion of a sociological sense is what we would normally translate as a behavioral sense; for, the characteristics in connection with which the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' in this sense are used are the characteristics of activity and passivity evidenced in the behavior of

⁵"Femininity", p. 114.

individuals.

The ... sociological meaning [of 'masculine' and 'feminine'] receives its connotation from the observation of actually existing ... individuals. Such observation shows that in human beings pure masculinity and femininity is not to be found Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture of character-traits belonging to his own and to the opposite sex; and shows a combination of activity and passivity whether or not these last character-traits tally with his biological ones.⁶

The role of the theory of bisexuality, in this case behavioral bisexuality, in terms of providing grounds for the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to either sex, is immediately introduced in Freud's discussion of this sense. However, Freud does not in 1915 go into a detailed examination of how bisexuality is manifested in the behavior of males and females, other than simply stating that both activity and passivity are manifested.

It is not until 1933 that Freud actually introduces instances of bisexuality in behavior. With examples ranging from animal to human behavior, Freud attempts to show how both activity and passivity are exhibited in the behavior of either sex.⁷ Curiously enough, however, Freud's examples of bisexuality in the human species do not at all show that two alternate kinds of behavior, the active and passive kind, are

⁶"Three Essays", n. (1915), p. 220. Further use of the term "character-trait" (see especially Civilization and Its Discontents, London: Hogarth, 1969, p. 33), provides good reason to interpret this term to mean behavioral trait.

⁷"Femininity", p. 115.

exhibited by each sex. On the contrary, emphasis is placed on showing how any one type of behavior -- be it manifested in the male or in the female -- exhibits both activity and passivity. Freud shows this by pointing out that the distinction between activity and passivity in accordance with which some behavior is classified as 'active' and other as 'passive', is primarily the result of a grammatical distinction. For instance, with respect to the characteristically female act, the act of lactation, Freud points out that this act "may equally be described as the mother suckling the baby or as her being sucked by it".⁸ By thus recognizing the function of our use of active or passive voices in characterizing behavior, Freud situates the distinction between activity and passivity which we ordinarily attribute to behavior, and in accordance with which we apply 'masculine' and 'feminine' when referring to behavior, within the structures of our linguistic or grammatical representation of behavior. In this way, without relying on evidence such that would confirm the presence of alternate kinds of behavior in males or females, Freud nevertheless supplies grounds for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', to characterize the behavior of either sex. With regard to the evidence of bisexuality insofar as male behavior is concerned, Freud relies on a similar sort of example,

⁸Ibid., p. 115.

maintaining that "men are not able to live in company with their own kind unless they develop a large amount of passive adaptability."⁹ In this example as well, though not as clearly as in the preceding one, the argument in favor of bisexuality makes use of the linguistic structures through which behavior is represented, rather than structures through which it is manifested.

Thus, whereas in his 1915 remarks on the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the sociological sense, Freud suggests that the use of these terms to characterize the behavior of both males and females is based on empirical facts relating to bisexuality, in his 1933 discussion of the evidence for bisexuality Freud does not produce any empirical evidence to this effect. On the contrary, his emphasis on the grammatical, or extra-behavioral, structure of the concepts of activity and passivity makes the matter of specific forms of behavior, as well as that of which forms are typical of what sex, irrelevant to the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. On the basis of observations regarding the nature of grammatical form and its relation to activity and passivity, Freud develops grounds for the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize the behavior of either sex, which do not in any way depend on observation of nature of the behavioral structures in question. This

⁹Ibid., p. 115.

departure from non-linguistic empirical structures, and corresponding emphasis on formal structures, in the formulation of grounds for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' becomes extremely important in Freud's discussion of the use of 'masculine' to characterize libido, and is taken up in his discussion of the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the psychological sense.

3. The Use of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine'
in the Psychological Sense

An explanation of the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in psychology, and specifically of the use of 'masculine' to characterize the psychological concept of libido, is the primary objective of Freud's entire 1915 footnote, as of all his discussions of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. The footnote was added in 1915 as a supplement to the text of 1905, in which Freud maintains that "libido is invariably and necessarily of a masculine nature". Aware perhaps of the difficulties that such an assertion might engender, Freud sought to clarify this use by situating it amongst those other senses in which according to him the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' can be used. For this reason, Freud's remarks on the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in psychology must be considered in the context of his remarks on the other two uses he outlines.

In his remarks, Freud stipulates that the sense in which 'masculine' and 'feminine' are used in psychology is

"in the sense of activity and passivity".¹⁰ In this stipulative sense, 'masculine' and 'feminine' would seem to correspond to what Freud calls the sociological sense, but this is not so. The difference is that in psychology, according to Freud, the use of 'masculine' alone is appropriate. The reason for this difference is two-fold, and constitutes the distinguishing feature of the psychological sense. In the first place, that to which in psychology terms like 'masculine' and 'feminine' are relevant is the libido. In the second place, 'libido' being the psychological term for the sexual instinct, must by definition be active. Therefore, if 'masculine' and 'feminine' are used in psychology in the sense of activity and passivity, it follows that 'feminine' cannot be appropriate in this context, and that 'masculine' alone must be used. Freud summarizes this as follows in the 1915 footnote:

When, for instance, libido was described in the text above as being 'masculine', the word was used in this sense of activity, for an instinct is always active even when it has a passive aim in view.¹¹ (Italics mine)

The mention here of the distinction between the libido and the "aims of libido"¹² is extremely important. It underlines the fact that although the aims of libido, its

¹⁰"Three Essays", n. (1915), p. 219.

¹¹Ibid., n. (1915), p. 219.

¹²See Chapter I above, p. 9.

behavioral expression, may be either active or passive, this dualism is not true of the libido itself. However, it also raises the question of why 'masculine', (or for that matter 'feminine'!) must be used for what in practical terms is divorced from any specific manifestations in male or female individuals. This is an absurdity which Freud himself was faced with when in a later work he wrote "you cannot give the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine' any new connotation. The distinction is not a psychological one."¹³ Yet in his attempts to formulate the problem, Freud himself provides us with the key to its solution.

In another footnote, to be found in Civilization and Its Discontents, Freud characterizes the difficulty of introducing a psychological meaning of 'masculine' or 'feminine' through the libido as follows: "...though anatomy, it is true, can point out the characteristic of maleness and femaleness, psychology cannot".¹⁴ The difficulty with which Freud thinks himself confronted is that whereas anatomy, or biology to be more precise, provides empirical referential criteria for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', psychology does not. For 'libido', insofar as this represents the conceptualization of sex in psychology is necessarily independent from whatever its actual

¹³"Femininity", p. 114.

¹⁴Civilization and Its Discontents (New York: Norton, 1961), n., p. 53.

manifestation. In this way, it does not provide a duality to which 'masculine' and 'feminine' might correspond. Nor does it provide a single identifiable element to which even one of these terms might be said to refer. It is in view of the cumulative effect of these two difficulties that the use of 'masculine' in psychology (to characterize the libido) is questionable, as would be of course the use of any one single sex-denomination.

However, formulated thus, it becomes possible to see what Freud, and those of us disturbed by the use of 'masculine' for the libido, may not have seen: that this is a pseudo-problem, the solution of which, if the rest of Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are taken into account, is self-evident. For though it is indeed true that 'libido', being a concept which is meaningful within the grammar of psychology alone, does not correspond to any empirically identifiable sexual element (either in behavior or in anatomy, or in anything else), this does not imply that it cannot nevertheless function to provide criteria for the use of 'masculine' or 'feminine' in psychology. There is no rule that states that the criteria for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' must be in the form of empirical features. On the contrary, as it is brought out by Freud's own remarks on the sociological sense of 'masculine' and 'feminine', the criteria for the use of these terms, where these apply to behavior, are essentially

grammatical (secondarily, even sociological, if we stop to think about how grammar functions), and not empirical at all. What it is essential to understand is that when Freud says that the libido is 'masculine', the term 'libido' here, and what it means, functions in very much the same way that language does, in providing grounds for the use of 'masculine' or 'feminine'. What we have in the use of 'masculine' in the psychological sense, is a different way of characterizing behavior than we do in the sociological sense. For, the claim that the libido is 'masculine' reflects the fact that in accordance with the grammar of 'libido', contrary to that of our ordinary language, there is no context for passivity; and consequently, no grounds for a corresponding use of 'feminine'.

Viewed in this light, 'libido', aside from its significance as a concept which is informative within the structure of psychology as a whole, has a very specific function in terms of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. In one passage, Freud points out about the libido what on first glance might appear paradoxical and absurd: that there is only one libido, and "to itself we cannot assign any sex".¹⁵ This statement captures something of the significance that the concept of 'libido' has in terms of the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. For 'libido' is unique in that,

¹⁵"Femininity", p. 131.

although it is a concept formulated to characterize the sexual element par excellence, it remains disengaged from the kind of polarity of opposites which is normally invoked by our conception of sex. As a result, it also permits us to disengage this polarity from the concepts of 'masculine' and 'feminine' as well. In this respect, the use of 'masculine' in the psychological sense is a function of neither the distinction between the sexes, nor of any distinction whatsoever. Once the grammatical priorities of this use are admitted, it becomes possible to see that the determining principle is here that of asexuality, and this affects the meaning of 'feminine' in the psychological sense as well. For, although there is no basis for the use of 'feminine' within the grammar of 'libido', this does not imply that 'feminine' does not have a psychological sense. It would on the contrary be meaningful to use this term in such cases where the absence of libido is being expressed. How such cases are to be decided upon is another issue which must call upon other psychological principles than those governing 'libido', and does not concern us here. However, what does concern us is the fact that insofar as the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the psychological sense is concerned, we have before us a case in which the application of 'masculine' or 'feminine' is governed by factors belonging to neither an empirical, nor even dualistic structure. This point is of fundamental importance in terms of understanding what it

means to use 'masculine' (or 'feminine') in psychology, and represents perhaps one of the most significant insights to be derived from Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

To sum up: Freud's remarks on each of the three senses in which the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' can be used, explore the possibilities of a non-biological application of these terms. In each case, grounds are developed for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' other than those suggested by the biological sexual distinction. Such grounds justify the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize the anatomy, behavior, and libido of any given individual, of male or female sexual gender. In the following chapter I will examine how the grounds that Freud develops in his remarks justify his own application of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine', in the formulation of his conception of female sexuality, to women.

CHAPTER III

THE USES OF 'MASCULINE' AND 'FEMININE' IN FREUD'S CONCEPTION OF FEMALE SEXUALITY

The purpose of this chapter is to show that, in light of Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine', the allegation that his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his conception of female sexuality is prescriptive, is not justifiable. In the first chapter it was seen how the prescriptive function attributed to 'masculine' and 'feminine' is primarily the result of the explanation which, in "Female Sexuality", Freud provides. However, in the last chapter it was seen that Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine', also provide an explanation for this use. In this chapter it will be seen that an interpretation of his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in light of those remarks suggests a comparison with what is called the use of words in a secondary sense, in accordance with which an alternative to a prescriptive function can be established. Since Freud's remarks deal with each of the three contexts in which 'masculine' and 'feminine' appear in Freud's conception of female sexuality, I will deal with each context individually.

1. The Biological Sense and the Use of
'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in the
Expressions "The Clitoris is Mas-
culine" and "The Vagina is Feminine"

In this section I will show that given Freud's remarks on the biological sense, it is possible, contrary to what his explanation in "Female Sexuality" suggests, to establish the descriptive function of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize the female genitalia.

The use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize the two female sexual organs -- the clitoris and the vagina -- and the purportedly erotogenic distinction they represent, is a use which falls within the scope of Freud's remarks on the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the biological sense. This does not mean that this is a biological use; for, as was seen in the previous chapter, Freud supplies grounds, through the theory of anatomical bisexuality, for an application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' which is very different from their use in a biological sense. From such grounds, nothing follows regarding the existence of an erotogenic distinction between the vagina and the clitoris. The theory of anatomical bisexuality is not a theory about the neurological character of the sexual organs, but about their anatomical one. As a result, findings that deny the existence of an erotogenic distinction between the vagina and the clitoris are of little consequence to the question of whether or not the expressions "the clitoris is masculine" and "the vagina is feminine" are descriptive. The explanation that appears

in "Female Sexuality", insofar as it summons the existence of an erotogenic distinction, leads us into supposing that the descriptive function of 'feminine' has something to do with reference to an erotogenic capacity specific to the vagina. It is in this way that it also leads us into supposing that, because no such independent capacity is found to exist, the descriptive function of 'masculine', too, is questionable. However, given anatomical bisexuality, the fact that the meaning of 'feminine' does not presuppose such reference to erotogenicity makes it now possible to establish its descriptive function, as well as to distinguish more clearly the particular problems that the use of 'masculine' involves.

Although the theory of anatomical bisexuality provides different grounds for the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' from those of a biological distinction, this is not as such reflected in the expression "the vagina is feminine". In this expression, the meaning of 'feminine' is essentially the same as in "the ovum is feminine". For the vagina, like the ovum, is a property of the female sex only. In this respect, the biological meaning of 'feminine' is retained, and this word makes reference to the female, in this context, in the same way that it does in the context of the expression "the ovum is feminine". Consequently, we can easily establish the descriptive function of 'feminine'. However, the use of 'masculine' is a far more complex matter.

Clearly we cannot, in a like manner, establish the descriptive function of 'masculine' in the expression "the clitoris is masculine". The clitoris is not a male organ, and 'masculine' does not have a biological reference. This makes it necessary to distinguish somewhat more clearly, between the referential meaning that 'feminine' has in "the vagina is feminine", and the kind of meaning 'masculine' has in "the clitoris is masculine".

A useful way of characterizing the difference, and of representing the peculiarities with which the use of 'masculine' presents us, is through the notion of secondary sense. First introduced by Wittgenstein and later developed in the article "Secondary Sense" by Cora Diamond,¹ this is a notion which serves to distinguish the meaning of words in cases in which words are used outside their ordinary and familiar contexts from their meaning in the ordinary one. By not implying that in such cases the words mean something different than they ordinarily do, (hence the notion of a secondary sense), yet at the same time acknowledging that they are used differently, the notion of secondary sense provides the means of avoiding certain conflicts. In particular, it helps avoid the kind of conflict which arises when, given a use of a word which departs from the familiar or original

¹See Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963); and Cora Diamond's article "Secondary Sense", in Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 1966-67.

one -- as happens with 'masculine' in the expression "the clitoris is masculine" -- we cannot explain what the word means in a manner analogous to how we explain what it means in its more familiar context. Diamond describes this in the following:

... when we talk about meaning, we don't always mean use The fact that the secondary use use in a secondary sense/ is different from the primary need not lead us to think that the meaning must be different and then to cast about for what that meaning might be.²

With the application of 'masculine' in "the clitoris is masculine", since the clitoris is a female organ, we cannot explain what this word means as we ordinarily do; in other words, we cannot explain it in the way that we do when dealing with the expressions "the penis is masculine" and "the sperm is masculine". However, this need not lead us away from the possibility of a descriptive use. What the notion of a secondary sense brings out is that meaning is not always a function of use.³ It is nevertheless possible that, although the word 'masculine' in this context does not retain its descriptive meaning by virtue of reference to a male property, it has a descriptive use. Unlike the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the expressions "the penis is

²"Secondary Sense", pp. 207-208.

³Understanding the meaning of a secondary sense is discussed by Diamond, pp. 191ff, and by Wittgenstein, p. 216.

masculine" and "the vagina is feminine", the use of 'masculine' in "the clitoris is masculine" is not a function of the referential meaning of this word. The question whether 'masculine' here is used to describe is therefore not a question about the word 'masculine', but about the sentence, "the clitoris is masculine", in which this word appears.

Although the use of words in a secondary sense reflects the creative or inventive possibilities of language, and represents that means whereby new thought about the world, new perceptions of relationships, are expressed,⁴ this does not mean that all instances in which words are used in a secondary sense are intelligible. According to Wittgenstein, both the expressions "I am calculating in my head", and "the vowel e is yellow", are examples of the use of words in a secondary sense.⁵ However, whereas the former is a very popular metaphor, and in this respect intelligible to us all, the latter is not. Though we might not distinguish as clearly as is necessary between saying "I am calculating on paper", and "I am calculating in my head" (hence the number of philosophical problems about "private" thinking that

⁴"Secondary Sense", pp. 191ff. Wittgenstein also talks about figurative expressions, or expressions that primarily give us a picture, with examples from the use of words in a secondary sense (Philosophical Investigations, pp. 178, 184).

⁵Philosophical Investigations, p. 216.

result), nevertheless we can't reasonably say that we don't understand what is meant by this expression. At least not in the sense in which someone who never learned to calculate on paper (or out loud) will say that he or she doesn't, and presumably everyone in our society has learned to calculate out loud at least. Now the case is slightly different with "the vowel e is yellow". Wittgenstein does not go into the differences, except in suggesting that the associations that this use, or metaphor, implies are of a more individual or subjective order,⁶ which makes what is meant by this expression a relatively less accessible matter than in the case of "I am calculating in my head". Now in dealing with the expression "the clitoris is masculine" as a use of the word 'masculine' in a secondary sense, the question that we must ask if we are to know whether this expression is descriptive, is how accessible the comparisons that it makes are to us, and how they are so?

Diamond distinguishes between what we might call accessible and inaccessible comparisons elicited by the use of words in a secondary sense when she talks about the truth-status of expressions in which words are used in a secondary sense.⁷ This takes Wittgenstein's distinction between the two expressions "I am calculating in my head", and "the vowel

⁶Ibid., p. 216.

⁷"Secondary Sense", pp. 205ff.

"e is yellow" a step further, by replacing his notion of individual and collective associations, with that of arguable and non-arguable ones. On the question of the truth-status of expressions in which words are used in a secondary sense, Diamond writes:

It is obvious that the truth-status [whether there can be truth or falsity] of what is said in a primary linguistic activity does not settle the question of the truth-status of what is said in linguistic activities secondary to it ... if one wants to know about the truth-status of a secondary use, what one must do is look and see whether there is assertion and denial within the linguistic activity with which one is concerned, and if so, what form it takes.⁸

In other words, the question whether there can be truth or falsity in an expression in which a word is used in a secondary sense, is not determined on the basis of its use in the primary sense. This means that as far as the expression "the clitoris is masculine" is concerned, the question of its truth or falsity cannot be settled in the manner appropriate to the expression "the penis is masculine". It cannot, in other words, be settled by virtue of empirical verifiability and reference. What, therefore, we must look for in determining whether the expression "the clitoris is masculine" is descriptive, is whether there is assertion or denial of any kind involved, and if so, what form it takes.

Looked upon thus, it becomes possible to see how the expression "the clitoris is masculine" is descriptive,

⁸ Ibid., pp. 205-206.

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although not in the biological way that "the vagina is feminine" is descriptive. In the expression "the clitoris is masculine", the clitoris is described by way of alluded reference to the male penis. This allusion, achieved through the presence of the word 'masculine', asserts a relationship between the clitoris and the penis which is neither unintelligible nor particularly difficult to defend. The evidence that can be brought to bear in favor of it, is in the form of pointing out the similarities between features of the clitoris and ones of the penis. However, insofar as it is equally possible to point out the differences, this is the kind of evidence that we might call "cumulative evidence"; evidence that suggests a particular conclusion, or way of seeing things.⁹ Of course, the question of truth or falsity becomes a far more arguable matter than with regard to a biological description; but, to the extent that it can be argued for, this is sufficient to give the expression "the clitoris is masculine" a descriptive character. To deny in this respect that it is descriptive, is to deny a great range of new perceptions that a secondary, or figurative use of words can bring about. It is noteworthy, in this connection, that the particular perception of the clitoris that a description of it as 'masculine'

⁹See Philosophy and Psycho-analysis (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), the article "Gods", p. 157, and "Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psycho-analysis", pp. 268ff and p. 277.

entails, is not one that is generally accepted. The features of the clitoris that its comparison with the penis emphasizes, are not ones that have been conventionally acknowledged to exist. That a growing awareness that this is so has begun to express itself, may very well be a tribute to Freud himself, and to his unconventional use of 'masculine' here.

2. The Sociological Sense and the Use of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in the Expressions "Active Behavior is Masculine" and "Passive Behavior is Feminine"

In this section I propose to show that it is equally possible, if Freud's remarks on the sociological sense are taken into account, to establish a descriptive function of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' by analogy with the use of words in a secondary sense in this instance as well. However, it will be seen that here differences in the manner in which the theory of bisexuality as it pertains to sexual behavior is defended, although they do not alter the assertion-character of these expressions, have some bearing on the form that it takes.

The use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to characterize female sexual behavior in the two alternate stages of development, outlined by Freud in his theory of female sexuality, is an instance of what Freud also calls the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the sociological sense. In his discussion of the sociological sense it was seen that

a theory of bisexuality similar to that introduced in the remarks on the biological sense governs the application of 'masculine' and 'feminine'. As does the theory of anatomical bisexuality, the theory of behavioral bisexuality also offers an alternative to Freud's explanation in "Female Sexuality", and one which yields an alternative treatment of this use as well.

Given his remarks on the sociological sense, Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the context of discussions about female sexual behavior is, in both cases, a use of these words in a secondary sense. The theory of bisexuality discussed in the remarks, contrary to the explanation in "Female Sexuality", does not entail a distinction between active and passive modes of behavior either in males or in females. In this respect, although Freud is talking about the sexual behavior of the female in the expressions "active behavior is masculine" and "passive behavior is feminine", the term 'feminine' does not here make reference to female behavior. This takes both 'masculine' and 'feminine' outside the primary and biological contexts in which these words refer to properties of maleness and femaleness. As a result, we must look at the truth-status of the expressions in which they appear to determine the nature of their use here as well.

The theory of bisexuality outlined in Freud's remarks on the sociological sense is extremely important in determining the truth-status, or descriptive-status, of the

expressions "active behavior is masculine" and "passive behavior is feminine". The manner in which this theory is defended in connection with behavior, however, although it does suggest that these expressions have an assertion-character, has implications with respect to the form that their assertion-character takes, that distinguish them from the expressions "the clitoris is masculine" and "the vagina is feminine". For in Freud's remarks on the sociological sense and the examples of bisexuality in the human species which he provides, no evidence reflecting a distinction between modes of behavior, or behavioral patterns, is brought to bear.¹⁰ Whereas Freud's theory of anatomical bisexuality is defended on the basis of a projected relationship between the male and female anatomical sexual organs, and represents a distinction between the sexual organs that constitute the female anatomy, Freud's theory of behavioral bisexuality (as we might call it), and whatever distinctions it represents, is not in a like manner defended on the basis of a projected relationship between male and female modes of behavior. As was seen in my section dealing with Freud's remarks on the sociological sense, the notion of a behavioral bisexuality is defended on the basis of grammatical, rather than behavioral relationships, as a result of which the two expressions "active behavior is masculine" and "passive

¹⁰ See Chapter II above, pp. 26ff.

behavior is feminine" cannot be taken to suggest a distinction between alternate behavior in the female. The distinction between 'active' and 'passive' that is relevant here is a distinction between modes of linguistic representation of behavior, rather than a distinction between modes of behavior itself. In this respect, we might consider these sentences punctuated thus: "active" behavior is masculine and "passive" behavior is feminine. For the distinction that they entertain is the distinction between our representation of any behavior as either 'active' or 'passive', and not at all a distinction between active and passive types of behavior.

That this is the kind of distinction in question does not deny or reduce the assertion-character of these expressions. For there are certainly arguments one can produce against or in favor of them, and indeed Freud himself has produced some of the best.¹¹ He has also shown in passages much maligned by his critics (who have perhaps not quite understood, or examined Freud's point in writing them!), quite consciously in fact, how the use of the active voice in representing a male action persistently occurs in the representation of male sexual action: "The male pursues the female ... seizes hold of her and penetrates into her".¹²

¹¹ See Chapter II above, p. 27.

¹² "Femininity", p. 114.

This is one passage which is frequently quoted in condemnations of Freud, and often with little regard to the context in which it occurs.¹³ It is believed that in this passage Freud is expressing and perpetuating the polarization between activity and passivity as concerns male and female sexual behavior. The fact is overlooked that in the following lines Freud calls this sort of polarization (commonly attributed to him) as "the error of superimposition"¹⁴ brought about by the adaptability of our language to both active and passive voices in representing behavior. That such polarizations should be attributed to Freud himself only goes to show just how perspicuously Freud has identified the problem. For, not only are these the kind of arguments that might be produced in favor of making the assertions that the expressions discussed in this section entail, they are also the kind of arguments that might be brought up against the association of activity with males and passivity with females. That such associations can now be seen to be the result of how our ordinary language behaves, and not necessarily of how males and females behave, is extremely important. The possibilities, in terms of a modification of ordinary language, that this recognition presents can provide us with an additional means, alongside that of social,

¹³See Kate Millett's outraged reference to this passage in Sexual Politics, p. 193.

¹⁴"Femininity", p. 115.

political or sexual change, of controlling whether these associations are rejected or retained.

3. The Psychological Sense and the Use
of 'Masculine' in the Expression
"Libido is Masculine"

In this section I propose to show that in light of Freud's remarks on the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the psychological sense, although it is not possible to establish the descriptive function of his use of 'masculine' in "the libido is masculine", the reasons for this are such that it is equally difficult to establish its prescriptive function. It will be seen that not only is the use of 'masculine' here comparable to the use of words in a secondary sense, but that, moreover, the kind of assertion involved in "the libido is masculine" is a secondary-assertion activity such that it does not conform to the kind of assertions implicit in what we call either the descriptive or the prescriptive function of propositions.

Although Freud's remarks on the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the psychological sense are not a drastic departure from the explanation of the use of 'masculine' to characterize the libido given in his writings about women, there are nevertheless a few additional factors that are brought to bear on the use of 'masculine' which are absent from his explanation in "Female Sexuality". These are primarily the relation of activity and passivity to the libido, and the notion of asexuality that is derived from

this relation. In terms of the tendency to attribute a prescriptive function to 'masculine' in the proposition "libido is masculine", and especially in terms of the kind of reasoning that induces it, these factors are extremely important. For, as it was seen in my first chapter, the position that 'masculine' is prescriptive -- in this as well as all the other contexts of Freud's use -- seems to be a position reasoned for on the basis of the fact that it is not descriptive. Although the shortcomings of this sort of reasoning have already been discussed with respect to the other instances of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', it is not the same problems that arise with it here. In this case, it is the reason why it is believed that 'masculine' is not descriptive not the conclusion that it isn't, that is inappropriate. For, the view that 'masculine' is not descriptive is somehow connected with the fact that it is used in speaking of the female libido, female sexual activity. Consider again for example the following critique:

... in 1905, Freud defined the libido ... as masculine This not only seems to invalidate the theory of bisexuality, but gives one some insight into the Victorian character of Freud's own sexual attitudes, -- through its assumption that sexual activity is "for men".¹⁵ (Italics mine)

Setting aside the fact that it is not bisexuality, but asexuality that is relevant here, this whole passage seems to suggest that it is only to the extent that 'masculine' is

¹⁵Sexual Politics, p. 193.

not used to mean "of men" that it means "for men". That, in other words, if 'masculine' was used in discussions about male sexuality, this use would not be objectionable. However, to suggest this is to overlook a fundamental fact about the concept 'libido' itself. For, if we consider Freud's remarks, and in particular the notion of asexuality as concerns the libido,¹⁶ there are good reasons that emerge why 'masculine' cannot, in this context, mean "of men" under any circumstances. To imply that it could is to treat the term 'libido' as we do the term 'sperm' (for instance), or any other term which represents a property of some kind. That 'libido' does not represent such a property is made clear by the notion of asexuality so fundamental to it; for how can the notion of asexuality be consistent with sexual properties? Again, a parallel with secondary sense emerges to the extent that we cannot account for the meaning of 'masculine' here as we do when reference to a specifically male property is being made. Therefore, here as well, we must examine the entire sentence "the libido is masculine" before any questions about its use can be decided on.

To take 'masculine' as a secondary sense, and the use of 'masculine' in "the libido is masculine" as a use of the term in a secondary sense, we are still left with the question of whether this sentence describes anything. Freud's

¹⁶See Chapter II above, p. 34.

notion of asexuality, and particularly the relation of activity and passivity to libido from which it is derived, is equally relevant here. For, insofar as the libido is not a characteristic or property, (even if it does represent the sexual instinct!) which can be singled out in any way, it becomes evident that if the sentence "the libido is masculine" is to be understood at all, it is not sufficient here to understand the meaning of 'masculine' in order to understand what it means to say that "libido is masculine". 'Libido', being a concept, or term, which does not incorporate a distinction between alternatives, does not at all reflect the biological distinction which is so fundamental to the familiar distinction between 'masculine' and 'feminine': a distinction through which we understand the meaning of these terms in their primary contexts. Thus, it is not by understanding 'masculine' in its primary sense that we understand "libido is masculine". It is by understanding 'masculine' in Freud's stipulative sense of 'active',¹⁷ that we understand this proposition. In this respect, the question whether there is assertion in this sentence must first address itself to the question whether there is assertion in the sentence "libido is active". Now there is no doubt that there is assertion here. What is being asserted is the active character of all sexual

¹⁷See Chapter II above, pp. 29-30.

expression no matter what particular form it takes. Showing this to be true might include bringing out the active element in what are ordinarily considered passive acts. Showing for instance how the so-called "passive" female sexual behavior requires a great deal of activity. Using the active voice in describing her sexual behavior might help in accomplishing this.

However, that there is assertion in "libido is active" does not imply that there is assertion in "libido is masculine". For, when it is said that "libido is masculine", more is meant than is meant by "libido is active"; it is implied that a similar relationship might hold true between 'masculine' and 'feminine' with respect to libido, as holds true between 'activity' and 'passivity'. In other words, to understand the "libido is masculine", we must first see the distinction between 'masculine' and 'feminine' in terms of the distinction between 'activity' and 'passivity' rather than in terms of the distinction implicit in their primary senses, the distinction between ova and semen. What it would call for to see it this way gives us some idea of what it would require for the proposition "libido is masculine" to have an assertion-character. It would require above all a modification of our conception of sex, such that it would no longer revolve around the biological distinction, as it certainly does -- a fact to which the primary senses of

'masculine' and 'feminine' attest.¹⁸ In this event, 'masculine' and 'feminine' might have some other primary senses, perhaps even the senses of activity and passivity that Freud so wanted them to have. This not being the case might lead us to suppose that "libido is masculine" is not an assertion at all. It is certainly not what we would ordinarily call an assertion. At least not in the sense in which we understand descriptions or prescriptions to be assertions.¹⁹ However, to deny that it is an assertion fails to take into account the kind of representation of sex that the grammar of 'libido' entails. For this reason, a possibly better way to characterize its assertion-character, is through Diamond's notion of a "secondary assertion-activity".

¹⁸Wittgenstein discusses the kind of circumstances that are required for understanding some secondary uses in #282 of Philosophical Investigations. These often require a modification of the very basic concepts in question. It is the possibility of being able to imagine such circumstances that suggest to Wittgenstein, and others following him, that statements featuring this kind of use cannot be thought of as either true or false, or as nonsensical (P. I. #282). Stanley Cavell develops the notion of "new categories of criticism" for dealing with such statements: "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy", Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations, ed. G. Pitcher (New York: Anchor Books, 1966).

¹⁹We understand prescriptions to be assertions in the sense that they are telling us what to do. This "action-guiding" character of prescriptions is discussed in G. J. Warnock's account of R. M. Hare's prescriptivism in Contemporary Moral Philosophy (New York: Macmillan, 1969); see also R. M. Hare's The Language of Morals (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 12ff.

There may be activities secondary to what we elsewhere call assertion and denial. To recognize that they are secondary assertion-activities is to see the mistake of analysing them as merely disguised expressions of will or feeling Moreover to recognize that they are not just plain assertions is not to be committed to saying that they are merely fictional or make-believe.²⁰

In this way, we can avoid the mistake of treating the sentence "libido is masculine" as an assertion in the ordinary sense; a mistake made when one treats this sentence as an expression of Freud's sexual mores. At the same time, however, we avoid denying that in terms of Freud's psychological principles, it is a meaningful statement. For if we can divorce from our understanding of this statement what we mean by 'masculine' and 'feminine', there is no reason to assume that Freud meant this proposition to prescribe anything at all. The kind of doubts that Freud himself felt about using 'masculine' in connection with the libido²¹ is an indication of how little he meant it to do so.

4. The Function of 'Masculine' and 'Feminine' in Freud's Conception of Female Sexuality

Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' enable us to account for his use of these terms, in each of the three contexts in his conception of female sexuality that they appear, as a secondary and unconventional

²⁰"Secondary Sense", p. 207.

²¹See Chapter II, above, p. 31.

use of words. To account for it thus, not only has implications in terms of our recognition that these words can be used to express a new perception about women, it also has implications in terms of the kinds of insights that we can derive from it. In this section, I will discuss the function of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in terms of providing insights regarding what the old-established models governing our perception of women are, and how they are perpetuated.

On the question of what an unconventional use of words can bring about, John Wisdom writes the following:

In order to grasp complex and unmanageable patterns we are always using models, other patterns which we have grasped. With every name we apply we compare one thing with another

The metaphysician brings into the light certain old-established and invaluable models which we use in order to grasp the characters of sorts of questions, statements, proofs

The psycho-analyst also tries to bring into the light models which dominate our thought, our talk, our feelings, our actions, in short our lives.²²

The possibility of bringing into the light traditional and old-established models through the use of familiar words in new and unfamiliar ways, has for Wisdom invaluable potential. For, although a traditional use may by virtue of the associations it brings about "bring order into bewildering flux", it may also "in the interests of unity blind [us] ... to the diversity of the individual".²³ When talking about how

²²"Philosophy, Metaphysics and Psycho-analysis", p. 274.

²³Ibid., pp. 274-75.

the psycho-analyst brings into the light, old-established models, Wisdom is not specifically discussing the models that a conventional use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' brings out, nor is he discussing what an unconventional use can do. Yet it is very much such insights, derived from Freud's application of 'masculine' and 'feminine', that are relevant here.

In the section outlining Freud's conception of female sexuality, I pointed out that Freud's thesis regarding the dualistic nature of female sexuality, given the kind of dualism it sets forth, is not wholly persuasive in strict empirical terms. For, although its claims regarding what constitutes repression in the female have been empirically substantiated, its claim that women are by and large thus repressed, has not.²⁴ Now if we take the kind of position on Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' that his remarks on the meaning of these terms suggest -- that it is a secondary and unconventional use through which the old-established and traditional models governing our perception of women are revealed -- this adds a different dimension to his work. In this case, it is a dimension that gives it the kind of value that surpasses its value as a straightforward empirical account, and does not presuppose that it must have a value as a normative one. For, instead of deciding

²⁴ See my Chapter I above, pp. 11-12.

about the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' on the basis of what Freud says about women, we will look at what new insights can be derived from what Freud says about women, on the basis of what we now know about the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in his conception of female sexuality, and the unconventional way in which these terms are being used. To this end, an examination of the assumptions underlying criticisms of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is particularly revealing.

One of the deepest felt criticisms of how Freud uses the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' is that, in associating activity with 'masculine' and passivity with 'feminine', he is suggesting that men are active and women passive.²⁵ There is the implicit and erroneous assumption in this criticism that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are analogous to 'male' and 'female'. It is ironical indeed that this assumption is attributed to Freud himself;²⁶ for there is little in the manner in which he uses the terms to indicate that this is an assumption that is his. Yet, not only is the association of activity with 'masculine' and passivity with 'feminine' a quite commonplace association, the assumption often is that men are active and women passive. This is because it is also generally believed that the

²⁵ Kate Millett, pp. 190ff.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 190ff.

association of 'masculine' with the characteristics of activity, aggression and sexuality, and 'feminine' with those of passivity, and repression, comes about as a result of how women are or have been. That this is what is generally believed, is suggested by the particular misinterpretation that, in the above-mentioned criticism, Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' has received. For, the fact that the conviction that 'masculine' and 'feminine' are analogous to 'male' and 'female' -- that, in other words, 'masculine' represents male characteristics, and 'feminine' female ones -- should persist, where it is clearly not a case of this at all, is particularly revealing. It reveals the extent to which it is we, and not Freud, who believe that the association of 'masculine' with activity and 'feminine' with passivity, is bound to the particular characteristics that males and females are observed to display.

However, what tends to happen as a result of this belief is that, when we no longer find that women are passive, when we see that they are expressing themselves in unprecedented ways, or when, as in Freud's conception of female sexuality, we are told that they can be both active and passive and that they can undergo expression and repression of their sexuality, we feel faced with only two possibilities for the use of 'masculine' and 'feminine': either we accept the association of 'masculine' with activity

and 'feminine', with passivity but treat it as prescriptive, or we reject it altogether and return to a biological application in accordance with which only 'masculine' is used to characterize men, and only 'feminine' to characterize women.²⁷ At this point, we cannot help asking ourselves whether these are, indeed, the only two possibilities available; and more significantly, whether they are that distinct. If we consider Freud's remarks on the meaning of 'masculine' and 'feminine', we come to the conclusion that they are not as distinct as it would appear.

In the discussion of Freud's remarks on the 'sociological' sense of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the preceding section of this chapter,²⁸ it was seen that Freud did not believe that the association of 'masculine' with activity and 'feminine' with passivity comes about as a result of how ~~men and women are~~, or of observation of the characteristics that their behavior displays. On the contrary, his emphasis on how little any given mode of behavior has to do with whether we characterize it as 'active' or as 'passive' leads us away from supposing that women, as such, have anything to do with the matter here. In this respect, the fact that Freud makes it clear that any given kind of behavior can be characterized in both ways, leads us to suspect that the

²⁷Ibid., p. 192.

²⁸See above, pp. 45-50.

association of activity with 'masculine' and passivity with 'feminine' expresses a cultural rather than an empirical definition of men as active and women as passive. To the extent that a cultural definition is a prescription of sorts, we can see now how the two alternatives suggested by the notions of a biological and a prescriptive application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For, it is not the fact that women are passive, but the fact that culture defines them as passive, that is reflected and expressed in the association of activity with 'masculine' and passivity with 'feminine'. In this respect, it is to the extent that we implicitly recognize this, that we take issue with that association. For, it is not essentially with that association itself that we wish to quarrel, but with the particular definition of women that it represents to us. However, to suggest that we could revert to a conventional, biological application of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in order to avoid the association of 'masculine' with activity and 'feminine' with passivity, is to quarrel with the wrong issue.²⁹ The association does not itself

²⁹I should point out here that when speaking of the conventional and unconventional uses of 'masculine' and 'feminine', I am referring to the primary biological use on the one hand, and the secondary, non-biological ones on the other. Since, in general, the critiques of Freud have a tendency to suggest that Freud's is a conventional use, I wish it to be kept in mind that in the context of this paper, Freud's uses of 'masculine' and 'feminine' to the extent that they are secondary uses (with the exception of his use of 'feminine' for the vagina), are considered unconventional.

represent that definition; for as we have seen, it is not represented in Freud's use of the association. This definition is primarily represented in the more fundamental model of associating 'masculine' with male characteristics, and 'feminine' with female ones, and only secondarily with the association of 'masculine' with activity and 'feminine' with passivity itself. Consequently, it is essentially with the model of associating 'masculine' with the 'male' and 'feminine' with the 'female', inherent in the conventional biological application of 'masculine' and 'feminine', that we must contend. In this respect, to reduce the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' to a strictly biological meaning, is actually to the interest of the cultural definition of women. For this reason, any suggestion that we do so to avoid the prescriptive element, is ultimately self-defeating. On the contrary, it is the conventional biological use itself that is to be questioned if the prescriptions suggested by the cultural definition of women are to be divorced from the non-biological use of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine' and from the association of activity with 'masculine' and passivity with 'feminine'. For, what Freud has shown us, through his unconventional use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' about the old-established cultural definition of women, is the extent to which this definition is contained, expressed, and perpetuated through the conventional biological application of 'masculine' and

'feminine'. In this respect, only a move to drop, or at least modify, the biological uses -- uses which, given the existence of the terms 'male' and 'female' are redundant anyway -- can frustrate the perpetuation and expression of the cultural definition of women through the use of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'.

It is unfortunate that critics, in their interpretations of Freud, have sought to attribute a prescriptive function to Freud's own application of the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine'. This has not only blinded them to the value of a descriptive non-biological application of these terms, it has also blinded them to the dangers of a biological one. In the advice to return to the biological and reject the non-biological one, they have merely re-enforced the particular prescriptions and definitions they were trying so desperately to expose. They have instilled in women a fear of being 'passive', and an indignation at being 'masculine' as well. And they have in this way, led them to feel threatened by any one of their potentialities, and by all of their diversity. In this case, we have a considerably more acute case than what Wisdom called a blindness to "the diversity of the individual"; what we have is a blindness to the individual altogether. By not recognizing that, in his application of 'masculine' and 'feminine', Freud has borrowed the vocabulary of our culture while leaving its presuppositions behind, critics who object to Freud's use of

these terms on the grounds that they are prescriptive, permit themselves, and those of us who go along with them, to remain manipulated by the very forces we are trying to overcome. For it is when like Freud we too are able to borrow the vocabulary of our culture without retaining its pre-suppositions, that our own definitions of what we are can begin to come into play. We might begin by more freely identifying with the characteristics that both 'masculine' and 'feminine' describe.

CHAPTER IV

THE PHILOSOPHICAL IMPLICATIONS

An examination of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' has implications that go beyond a strict evaluation of his theories themselves. It can serve to clarify the use of these terms in general. It is not unusual in the course of everyday conversation to speak of women (or for that matter, men) as being "masculine" in their display of certain characteristics, pursuits, and roles, or "feminine" insofar as others are concerned. When this happens, we do not know always whether there is prescription or description involved; yet it is important to know this if we are to know what the communication is about, and how to deal with it.

In attacking Freud's theories about women on the basis of his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine', Freud's critics have enabled us to recognize that these terms can act as value terms, expressing those values that the notion of a sexual politics implies. But they have not enabled us to understand how the terms act in this way. In remaining primarily concerned with discrediting Freud's theories themselves, the critics have not in their discussions recognized the necessity of examining the particular conditions under which 'masculine' and 'feminine' acquire their status as value terms. Consequently, we are given to believe either that this status is inherent in the vocabulary of 'masculine'

and 'feminine' as such, or inherent in Freud's use only, and the particular difficulty of distinguishing between the prescriptive and descriptive applications of these terms is ignored. This has made it extremely difficult to discern when a given communication is prescriptive, as well as what the values underlying its prescriptions are. For, getting clear about whether there is prescription involved, or about what the presuppositions and values underlying the prescriptive applications of 'masculine' and 'feminine' are, means getting clear about the particular conditions under which these terms acquire their prescriptive meaning. This requires a general study of how 'masculine' and 'feminine' behave; a study which takes into account both the number of descriptive as well as prescriptive uses.

When in this thesis I defend Freud against the allegation that his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is prescriptive, my object is not primarily to defend Freud's theories themselves, or to generalize about his use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' insofar as other contexts are concerned. On the contrary, my concern is to show how we cannot generalize about Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' without overlooking the particular conditions under which these terms acquire a prescriptive status. For as I have shown, in the context of his conception of female sexuality, the use of these terms is descriptive. The prescriptive application of these terms requires acceptance

of the biological standard, and although this standard is accepted in our culture, it is not one adopted by Freud in this particular context of his work. In terms of a general study of how 'masculine' and 'feminine' behave, the implications of this are twofold. It suggests to us that an examination of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is not solely relevant to an understanding of the fact that these terms behave as value terms, but to an understanding of the particular conditions under which they do so. It also suggests that particular attention should be paid to each individual context in which 'masculine' and 'feminine' appear.

There are at least three other contexts, in addition to that of his conception of female sexuality, in which Freud uses these terms. They include (1) his conception of female psychological development, (2) female social development, and (3) his theory of dream interpretation, as well as those contexts in which Freud is concerned with male sexual, psychological and social development. Each of these provides a valuable model for analyzing and examining the behavior of 'masculine' and 'feminine' and the particular conditions under which these terms acquire prescriptive meaning. In confining the present study to an examination of the context of his conception of female sexuality, I have deliberately excluded from my discussion Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in each of the other contexts. My reason for

doing so has been that in this work I have been concerned primarily with examining, and challenging the allegation that Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' is prescriptive. It is only after the presuppositions that this allegation engenders have been challenged that the full benefits of an examination of Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' can be appreciated. If, in other words, an examination of Freud's use is to have implications for a study of how 'masculine' and 'feminine' acquire their status as value terms, and not remain limited to an evaluation of his theories about women, then it is the particular conditions that characterize Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in each individual context, and the differences between them, that must be examined. I should like at this point to stress that, in arguing that Freud's use of 'masculine' and 'feminine' in the context of his conception of female sexuality is not prescriptive, I am not suggesting that it is not prescriptive in the other contexts. What I am suggesting is that we cannot argue about any one use, on the basis of generalizations about other uses, or even on the basis of indications external to the particular context at hand, and still hope to arrive at an understanding of how these terms act as value terms. If for instance we wish to argue that Freud's uses are all consistently prescriptive on the grounds that there is a standard of normality and mental health built into the very notion of psycho-analysis, then we are

defeating our purpose. Not only is it questionable whether Freud believed in this standard (it is much more typical of Freud's popularizers, and the institution of psycho-analysis itself than of Freud's work as such), it is precisely the possibility of uncovering a range of standards whereby 'masculine' and 'feminine' become prescriptive that an examination of Freud's use affords.

By way of conclusion, let me mention the kind of direction that I envisage for subsequent studies. It goes without saying that a truly cogent picture of the dynamics of sexual politics cannot exclude an examination of Freud's use of these terms in each of the contexts in which they appear, including of course his use of these terms in the context of the formulation of his theories about men, as well as women. For, in providing a variety of contexts, Freud provides us with an extremely rich and vast repertoire or index of uses in which to examine the behavior of these terms. How 'masculine' and 'feminine' are used in these contexts, how their use in one context compares to their use in another, whether there is prescription involved and, if so, what are the particular standards appealed to in each case, are but some of the questions that such future studies could consider. In addition, it might be useful to compare how 'masculine' and 'feminine' acquire their significance as value terms, with how such words as 'good' and 'bad' do so. In this respect, although the principles

governing moral values are not necessarily those governing the kinds of values that the notion of sexual politics implies, nevertheless, the similarities and differences between what the values of each are, and how they are derived, is worth investigating.

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