

Sexuation and Sexuality in Psychoanalysis: Rereading Freud Against Lacanians

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1. Introduction

This article represents an attempt to intervene in the current debate between psychoanalysis and feminism and to provide a new perspective in this research field. Over the past few decades, social constructionist approaches have been increasingly influential in feminist and queer studies. The recent feminist theory has shifted its focus to the way in which sex, gender, and sexuality are discursively produced, the process whereby social discourses on sex and gender are organized within a culturally and historically specific context. This “performative” understanding of gender challenges the essentialist notion of the difference between masculinity and femininity as innate, biological one.

It is against this background that a number of feminists had recourse to Lacanian psychoanalysis for an anti-essentialist view of sexual difference. There has been a complex and contentious history between feminism and psychoanalysis, which has given rise to a heated theoretical debate on Lacanian psychoanalysis, following the groundbreaking work of Mitchell (1973).

Lacan’s work has recently had a powerful influence on feminist appropriations of the psychoanalytic theory and concept. Inspired by Lacanian psychoanalysis, many feminists, including Mitchell (1973), Rose (1987), Brennan (1993), Gallop (1985), Grosz (1990), Wright (2000), Ragland-Sullivan (2004), have highly rated his rejection of Freud’s essentialism, and chosen Lacan’s version of castration and Oedipus complex, thereby shifting their focus from the anatomical and biological difference to the symbolic laws of language.

One such feminists, Gallop (1985: 20) appraises his theorization of castration as

“linguistic,” claiming that “Lacan’s message that everyone, regardless of his or her organs, is ‘castrated’, represents not a loss but a gain.” In the same line of thinking, Grosz (1990: 9) writes that “Lacan can be utilized to explain such notorious concepts as women’s ‘castration’ or ‘penis envy’ in socio-historical and linguistic terms, that is, in terms more politically palatable than Freud’s biologism.”

According to these feminists, psychoanalysis offers the most radical way of conceptualizing sexual difference, as a linguistic position established through logical structure and not as biologically innate. “Sexual difference is assigned according to whether individual subjects do or do not possess the phallus, which means not that anatomical difference is sexual difference” (Mitchell & Rose [eds.] 1982: 42). Although Lacan’s view can certainly be utilized to oppose essentialist notions of gender identity, Lacanians stress the divergence of psychoanalysis from social constructionism. As Wright states, “[i]n the Freudian universe of discourse, sexual difference can neither be reduced to a biological given nor be wholly constituted by social practices” (Wright 2000 : 17).

Lacanian theorists and feminists, who have rejected the opposition between biological essentialism and social constructionism, instead prefer the term “sexual difference,” which designates neither biological sex nor social gender. From this perspective, the current debate between nature and culture is far from being adequate for the conceptualization of the relationships between sex, gender, and sexuality. Thus, they are working to demonstrate the usefulness of Lacanian psychoanalysis for endeavors in the feminist and queer theory.

Copjec (1994: 204) claims that “[w]hile sex is, for psychoanalysis, never simply a natural fact, it is also never reducible to any discursive construction, to sense, finally,” by which she means that “sex is produced by the internal limit, the failure of signification.” Lacanians have emphasized the specific nature of sexual difference as “real” (in reference to Lacan’s concept of the Real, which means what resists symbolization), which can be described as “the traumatic real of sex” (Dean 2000: 109) or “the traumatic real of the sexual difference” (Žižek 1997: 217).

Following this argument, Lacanian feminists and theorists both share a view on the primacy of sexual difference vis-à-vis any other difference, by claiming that “[s]exual difference can only be the consequence of a division.[...] no human being can become

a subject outside the division into two sexes” (Mitchell & Rose 1982: 6). Moreover, Braidotti (1994: 255) asserts that “sexual difference is not considered to be one difference among many but rather as a founding, fundamental structural difference, on which all others rest and that cannot be dissolved easily.”

This privilege given to sexual difference by Lacanians remains one of the most problematic issues in the Lacanian theory for many feminists and queer thinkers. Consequently, they have been criticized for “the exclusion of other forms of difference, notably race and class” (Moore 1994: 20).

However, in the debate between Lacanian theorists/feminists and anti-Lacanian feminists, both sides have missed a crucial point. In the act of reducing Freud’s theory on sexuality to Lacan’s theory of sexual difference, both sides fail to grasp the distinctive way in which Freud defines the concept of “sexuality,” the term on which the whole controversy depends, thereby eliminating the possibility of productive dialogue. The debate between feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis does not include an assessment of the extent to which the Lacanian formulation of the primacy of “sexed” subject (or “sexual difference”) does justice to Freud’s original insights. Therefore, the present paper seeks to overcome the deadlocked between psychoanalysis and feminism, by shedding light on hitherto unexplored aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis, as its radical implications have yet to be unearthed.

2. Lacanian formulation of sexual difference

Lacanian psychoanalysts have emphasized a major problem with the Anglo-American reception of Lacan, caused by confusion of the basic distinctions between the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. Lacan’s well-known paper on his model of the mirror stage shows that the term “the Imaginary” refers to a symmetrical and reciprocal relationship between ego and the other, ineluctably marked by aggressiveness and rivalry. In contrast to this inter-subjective realm of the Imaginary, “the Symbolic” is characterized by an asymmetrical position of the subject to the linguistic law of “the Other.” It designates “the law of the signifier, the peculiar logic by which the human animal is detached from nature and subjected to symbolic regulation” (Shepherdson 2000: 91).

The subject who speaks, “whose very life is reconfigured when it passes through the network of the symbolic order”(Shepherdson 2003: 130), must assume a fundamental cut or loss, as a result of its alienation in language. The entry into the Symbolic necessarily leaves a “remainder,” and the Real signifies this residue left behind by failed symbolization. Within a Lacanian framework, the theoretical specificity of psychoanalysis consists in this concept of the Real as “a logical limit internal to symbolization” (Dean 2000: 51), which by its definition cannot be assimilated to the symbolic order.

The distinction between the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real is important in regard to the question of sexual difference, because it is “a real and not a symbolic difference”(Copjec 1996). Žižek also asserts that “sexual difference is not a discursive, symbolic construction; instead, it emerges at the very point where symbolization fails” (Žižek 1994: 160).

Lacanian theorists have criticized the persistent confusion of the Symbolic with historically contingent institutions. They have argued that the social constructionist account of sexual difference, whose focus is solely on discursive practices, tends to treat the Symbolic as a kind of extension of the Imaginary (Shepherdson 2000; Dean 2000). They have further claimed that the constructionist view remains oblivious to “the traumatic aspect of sexual difference, its existence in the real” (Dean 2000:86). Citing these reasons, Lacanian theorists/feminists are fundamentally dissatisfied with the view of sexual difference as historically and culturally constructed.

For Lacanians, “[t]he ‘law’ of sexual difference, then, is not a human law; like death (that other imperative), it is not a human invention and should not be situated at the same level as the ‘social roles’ that concern contemporary discussions of ‘gender,’” (Shepherdson 2000: 89). They have further stated that sexual difference cannot and should not be treated as “the invention of a particular culture, or the product of a specific historical moment”(Shepherdson 2000: 3). In the same vein, Copjec (2004: 221) has postulated that “[t]he law of sexual difference [...] is a law that founds culture and is not a cultural law,” and “the law that founds culture is not a constituent part of the culture it founds and maintains an antinomic relation to the latter.”

Lacanian theorists/feminists argue for the concept of sexual difference as “real,” which offers a radical reformulation of the contemporary debates on sex, gender,

and sexuality. Just as “male” and “female” designate only “two (failed) attempts to symbolize this Whole”(Žižek1994: 160), as Lacan conceived, man and woman can never constitute the complementary and symmetrical relation, on which the very basis of heterosexism lies (Copjec 1994: 234). Lacan’s axiom that “there is no sexual relation” could be taken to delineate the “non-imaginary, non-naturalized theory of sexual difference” (Žižek1994: 154).

From this perspective, Copjec suggests a primacy of the “sexed” subject in psychoanalysis, when comparing sexual difference with racial, class, and ethnic differences. She says, “[w]hereas these differences [race, class, ethnicity] are inscribed in the symbolic, sexual difference is not: only the failure of its inscription is marked in the symbolic”(Copjec 1994: 207). Copjec summarized this, saying that “[i]t is always a sexed subject who assumes each racial, class, or ethnic identity” (Copjec 1994: 98).

3. Sexuation and sexuality

As briefly mentioned above, feminists, including Lauretis (1984), Fuss (1990), Flax (1990), Fraser (1992), Butler (1993), Moore (1994), have objected to this account of sexual difference. Fuss (1990: 10) cites Lacanian’s claim, which is based on “the assumption that the subject is raceless and classless,” and concludes that “the Lacanian subject is a sexed subject first and last.” She states that, in such a theorization of the subject, “few allowances are made for the way in which other modes of difference might complicate or even facilitate the account of identity formation Lacan outlines along the axis of sex alone.”

Similarly, Butler (1993: 181) also states that “[i]t is this assertion of the priority of sexual difference over racial difference that has marked so much psychoanalytic feminism as white, for the assumption here is not only that sexual difference is more fundamental, but that there is a relationship called ‘sexual difference’ that is itself unmarked by race.”

Fraser (1992: 183) problematize the way in which “Lacan uses the expression ‘the symbolic order’ far more broadly to refer to an amalgam that includes not only linguistic structures, but also cultural traditions and kinship structures, the latter mistakenly equated with social structure in general.” Despite his stated intentions,

Lacan himself conflates “the ahistorical structural abstraction *langue* with variable historical phenomena like family forms and childrearing practices”(italics in original).

Feminist criticism of the distinction penis/phallus distinction and of phallogentrism (Cixous; 1979; Moi 1985; Irigaray 1985) can be situated in this line of thought. Flax (1990: 104) notes that, “[t]he notion of a phallus as universal signifier calls upon and depends for its rhetorical effect upon the ineluctable equivalence of phallus and penis in ordinary language,” which means that the very terms in which Lacanian theorists and feminists formulate their theoretical position, is inextricably bound up with their popular use, which is historically and culturally contingent.

Throughout the arguments mentioned above, the question arises whether we would be able to accept the Lacanian view that “the sexual difference is the basis for all subsequent differential judgments” (Ragland-Sullivan 2004: 148) from a Freudian perspective. It is seemingly obvious that the assertion of the primacy of sexual difference can be traced back to Freud, as he is generally thought to have privileged the factor of “sex” (“sexual difference”) over other components of one's identity. In discussing the “traumatic real of sexual difference,” Lacanian theorists explicitly or implicitly allude to Freud's discovery, which maintains that sexual trauma is the specific cause of neurosis. Nevertheless, despite their highly sophisticated philosophical effort, they consistently fail to grasp the most original insight of Freudian psychoanalysis, the distinction of “sexuation” and “sexuality.”

4. *Geschlechtlichkeit* and *Sexualität*

Freud's theory of neurosis consists of the following propositions, which are all related to sexuality: “hysteria is the expression of a particular behaviour of the individual's sexual function” (Freud 1906: SE273, GW157) ⁽¹⁾, “the neurosis is concerned only with the patient's repressed sexuality” (Freud 1906: SE278, GW158), “the aetiology of hysteria lies in sexual life” (Freud 1896b: SE199, G435). However, when it comes

⁽¹⁾ The following abbreviations will be used in this paper.

SE, followed by page number = *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Hogarth Press.

GW, followed by page number = *Gesammelte Werke*, S. Fischer.

to the interpretation of these propositions, despite their apparent simplicity, we are confronted with a certain difficulty, stemming from the fact that Germans have two terms corresponding to English *sexual* ; one term being, *Geschlecht*-, and the other being, *Sexual*-.

For instance, *Geschlechtsleben* and *Sexualleben* are the German equivalents of the English expression “sexual life,” and *Geschlechtsfunktion* and *Sexualfunktion* are terms for “sexual function.” Although Freud employs all of these terms in his writings, these two German terms are by no means synonymous for him. Jean Laplanche, one of the most prominent French psychoanalysts, provides an indispensable reference for us, indicating the particular way in which Freud distinguished the German terms: “*Geschlecht*” (which means “sexed sex”) and “*Sexual*” (which means “the sexual”) (Laplanche [2006] 2011: 161). Furthermore, “*Sexual*- (of Latin origin) and *Geschlecht*- (of German origin) are used by Freud in a clearly distinguished manner, and it is regrettable that this difference has so far not been marked by translation”(Laplanche 1989: 139).

For example, the German words *Geschlechtlichkeit* and *Sexualität* can be both translated by the English term “sexuality,” but these terms should not be considered to be interchangeable in Freud’s texts. Laplanche notes that “Freud employs the term *Geschlechtlichkeit* in a quite specific sense, different from that of “sexuality,” citing a passage from “*The Interpretation of Dreams*”: “it was just as though we had become aware of our sex [*Geschlechtlichkeit*], it was as though I were to say: I’m a man and you’re a woman” (Freud 1900: SE333, GW338).

Freud writes that “*Geschlechtlichkeit* is a biological fact which is hard to evaluate psychologically, although it is of extraordinary importance in mental life ”(Freud 1930: SE105, GW465), and specifies this term by referring to “the great enigma of the biological fact of the duality of the sexes [*Zweiheit der Geschlechter*]”(Freud 1940 : SE188, GW114).

In Freud’s usage, *Geschlechtlichkeit* is primarily concerned with the difference (or differentiation) of the sexes: the formation of sexed or gendered(male and female) subjects. He employs this term in relation to the fact of being sexed, or more precisely in Lacanian terms, in relation to sexuation.

In fact, French translation uses the word “sexuation” for the several occurrences

of *Geschlechtlichkeit*, and Chemama & Vandermeersch (1998) also uses the term *Geschlechtlichkeit* as the German equivalent of the English and French word “sexuation.” Accordingly, the two terms *Geschlecht* and *Sexual*, which are often indiscriminately translated into English as “sexual,” refer to totally different and distinct phenomena of “sexuation” and “sexuality,” respectively.

Freud often emphasizes on the conceptual innovation that psychoanalysis made in the understanding of “*Sexualität*.” Psychoanalysts have extend “the concept of sexuality [*Sexualität*] far enough to be able to comprise the sexual life [*Sexualleben*] of perverts and of children” (Freud 1916: SE319, GW330). This extended notion of sexuality constitutes the prerequisite for the psychoanalytic theory and therapy, because he contends that “[a]nyone not sharing this view of psychosexuality has no right to adduce psychoanalytic theses dealing with the aetiological importance of sexuality [*Sexualität*]” (Freud 1910d: SE223, GW121). In contrast to the conviction with which he holds his own view of sexuality, Freud points to a scarcity of scientific knowledge “about the origin of sexuation [*Geschlechtlichkeit*] [such] that we can liken the problem to a darkness into which not so much as a ray of a hypothesis has penetrated” (Freud 1920: SE57, GW62). He simply acknowledges that “[p]sycho-analysis has contributed nothing” (Freud 1940 : SE188, GW114) to clarify the “great riddle of sexuation [*Geschlechtlichekeit*]” (Freud 1937: SE252, GW99), which he believes “falls wholly within the province of biology” (Freud 1940 : SE188, GW114).

While English translation almost completely obliterates such a terminological distinction, the French version of Freud’s Complete Works (“*Œuvres complètes de Freud / Psychanalyse*”), published under the scientific direction of Laplanche, does justice to his original German, as it adopts the French word “*sexué*” (sexed) for the German term “*Geschlecht*” and “*sexual*” (sexual) for “*Sexual*.”

An examination of the uses of the terms *Geschlecht*- and *Sexual*-, which reflect his theoretical understanding of the question of sexuation and sexuality, enables us to determine whether Lacanian conception of sexual difference is justifiable from Freud’s point of view. In the following sections, we will take up this issue using some specific passages from Freud’s writings. Relying on Laplanche’s suggestion, we choose to translate German term *Geschlecht*- as “sexed” and *Sexual*- as “sexual” in order to mark the terminological distinction.

5. *Geschlecht* and *Sexual*

Freud certainly uses *Geschlecht* as well as *Sexual*, but the use of former word is limited, and it appears much less frequently in the text. For example, he typically prefers the term *Geschlechtsleben* in discussing the sexual enlightenment of children, questioning “whether children ought to be given any enlightenment at all about the facts of sexed life [*Geschlechtslebens*]” (Freud 1907: SE131, GW19), and how we should deal with a child’s intellectual interest in “the facts and the riddles of sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*]” (Freud 1907: SE132, GW20) or “the secret of sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*]” (Freud 1910b: SE170, GW720).

The same term is used in his affirmation that “we know less about the sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*] of little girls than of boys” and “the sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*] of adult women is a ‘dark continent’ for psychology” (Freud 1926: SE212, GW241). In regard to this matter, Freud points to “the artificial retarding and stunting of the female sexed drive [*Geschlechtstrieb*]” (Freud 1895b: SE109, GW335).

Pollak-Cornillot (1994: 245) objects to Laplanche’s reading, which points to a distinction between *Geschlecht* and *Sexual*, quoting a passage in which Freud makes a parallel observation between “the female sexed drive [*Geschlechtstrieb*]” and “the male sexual drive [*Sexualtrieb*]” (Freud 1895b: SE108, GW335). She contends that “[i]f those German terms *Geschlechtlichkeit* and *Sexualität* can function as double, the French reader will be tempted to search for the reason why Freud speaks of ‘sexual impulse[drive]’ for man and ‘sexed impulse[drive]’ for woman, and again, the reader will be led to the questions which the German text would not entail.” Therefore, she argues, if we translate these terms as “sexed impulse” and “sexual impulse,” respectively, it will “introduce into French a conceptual difference that does not exist in German.”

She is undoubtedly right to claim that Freud occasionally employs *Geschlecht* and *Sexual* interchangeably, but this does not have to lead to the claim that there is no distinction between the two. We would like to take up some example of his reciprocal use of *Geschlecht*- and *Sexual*-, not to undermine their distinction, but to further elaborate the conceptual specificity of Freud’s terminology.

For example, regarding the issue of “the artificial retarding and stunting of the

female sexed drive,” Freud observes, due to “the prohibition on sexual activity [*Sexualbetätigung*] in the period during which they [women] have to wait,” women acquire an “intimate connection between prohibition and sexuality [*Sexualität*]” (Freud 1912: SE187, GW87).

He also finds a specific difficulty in “the development of female sexuality [*weibliche Sexualität*]” (Freud 1931: SE225, GW517), which is complicated by the fact that “the clitoris, with its virile character, continues to function in later female sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*]” (Freud 1931: SE228, GW521).

The same point can be made about the topic of infantile sexuality, as in the assertion that “[w]e do wrong to ignore the sexual life [*Sexualleben*] of children entirely. ... Just as the whole human sexual apparatus is not comprised in the external genitals and the two reproductive glands, so human sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*] does not begin only with puberty” (Freud 1898: SE280, GW511).

While Freud mostly employs “*kindliche Sexualität*” and “*Sexualleben des Kindes*” to designate his view on “infantile sexuality,” he prefers the term *Geshclehctstrieb* for the popular and the biological conception of human sexuality. Freud describe the popular idea of a sexed drive [*Geschlechtstrieb*] as follows: “It is generally understood to be absent in childhood, to set in at the time of puberty in connection with the process of coming to maturity and to be revealed in the manifestations of an irresistible attraction exercised by one sex upon the other; while its aim is presumed to be sexed union [*geschlechtliche Vereinigung*], or at all events actions leading in that direction” (Freud 1905b: SE135, GW33).

Moreover, Freud represents the biological understanding of sexuality in such a way that “the fact of the existence of sexual needs in human beings and animals is expressed in biology by the assumption of a ‘sexual instinct’, on the analogy of the instinct of nutrition, that is of hunger”. “[T]he fact of sexed need [*geschlechtliche Bedürfnisse*] in man and animal is expressed in biology by the assumption of a ‘sexed drive’ [*»Geschlechts trieb«*]” (Freud 1905b: SE135, GW33).

Freud argues against this generally accepted notion of sexuality, by appropriating the opponent's term, that while “[i]t is commonly believed that the sexed drive [*Geschlechtstrieb*] is absent in children,” in fact, “the newborn baby brings sexuality [*Sexualität*] with it into the world” (Freud 1907: SE133, GW21), and “in contrast

to popular opinion, the sexual life [*Geschlechtsleben*] of human beings (or what corresponds to it later on) exhibits an early efflorescence” (Freud 1939 : SE74, GW179). Given this preference in his choice of words, at least in this case, we cannot conclude that *Geschlecht*- and *Sexual*- are used in a mutually convertible way.

The last example of the synonymous use of *Geschlecht*- and *Sexual*- is found in Freud’s emphasis on the importance of patient’s sexual life for psychoanalytic practice. “[N]o one can undertake the treatment of a case of hysteria until he is convinced of the impossibility of avoiding the mention of sexual subjects [*sexuelle Themata*]”(Freud 1905a: SE49, GW209).

Against possible criticism that the analyst “entices his patient on to the ground of sexuality [*sexuelles Gebiet*],” he pleads that the analyst never tells his patient that “we shall be dealing with the intimacies of your sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*]!”, and instead, “quietly waits until the patient himself touches on sexual things [*geschlechtliche Dinge*]” (Freud 1926: SE207, GW235).

However, what makes the process of psychoanalysis so difficult is patient’s prudishness and unwillingness to provide information about his or her sexual life. “They [people] do not show their sexuality [*Sexualität*] freely, but to conceal it they wear a heavy overcoat woven of a tissue of lies, as though the weather were bad in the world of sexuality [*Sexualität*]”(Freud 1910a: SE41, GW42).

In the famous case of Dora, an 18-year-old hysterical patient, he is particularly careful not to “introduce her to any fresh facts in the region of knowledge about sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*]”(Freud 1905a: SE31, GW189). In the case of the psychoanalytic treatment, “sexual questions [*sexuelle Beziehungen*] will be discussed with all possible frankness, the organs and functions of sexed life [*Geschlechtsleben*] will be called by their proper names” (Freud 1905a: SE9, GW165).

Freud insists that the analyst can talk sexual matters even with a young female patient without doing harm to them, because “where there is no knowledge of sexual processes [*sexuelle Vorgänge*] even in the unconscious, no hysterical symptom will arise” (Freud 1905a: SE49, GW209). Despite the occasional use of the term *Geschlecht*, Freud insists on using the term *Sexual* in describing his theory on neurosis, which means psychoanalysis itself (“the theory of the neuroses is psycho-analysis itself”(Freud 1916: SE379, GW393)).

The primacy of sexuality in the psychoanalytic theory is directly derived from its major role in neurotic causation, which is what he refers to as “the aetiological importance of sexuality [*Sexualität*]” (Freud 1910d: SE223, GW121), “the pathogenic role of sexuality [*Sexualität*]” (Freud 1910c: SE217, GW100), and “the unique significance of sexual experiences [*sexuelle Erlebnisse*] in the aetiology of the psychoneuroses ” (Freud 1906: SE273, GW152).

By elaborating on the clinical fact that “[w]hatever case and whatever symptom we take as our point of departure, *in the end we infallibly come to the field of sexual experience* [*sexuelles Erleben*]” (Freud 1896b: SE199, GW434, italics in translation), he comes to acknowledge “the sexual causation [*sexuelle Verursachung*] of the neuroses and the sexual meaning [*sexuelle Bedeutung*] of symptoms” (Freud 1916: SE319, GW330)."

His adherence to this theory, which he maintained throughout his life, was received with disbelief and embarrassment even in his supporters, as he depicts, “[e]ven workers who are ready to follow my psychological studies are inclined to think that I overestimate the part played by sexual factors [*sexuelle Momente*]” (Freud 1910a: SE40, GW41).

Still, he continued to maintain that “sexuality [*Sexualität*] is the key to the problem of the psychoneuroses and of the neuroses in general” (Freud 1905a: SE115, GW278), and that “the pathological symptoms constitute a portion of the subject's sexual activity [*Sexualbetätigung*] or even the whole of his sexual life [*Sexualleben*]” (Freud 1910a: SE49, GW52).

By the therapeutic practice of uncovering patient's repressed memories, Freud reveals that hysterical symptoms are derived from the traumatic scenes of past, which are exclusively sexual in nature. He writes that “it is the sexual component [*sexuelle Komponente*] of the traumatic experience—a component that is never lacking—which has produced the pathogenic result” (Freud 1906: SE278, GW15).

In searching for the repressed traumatic scene, he arrives at the period of earliest childhood, to realize that “this unconscious memory must have a sexual content [*sexueller Inhalt*]” (Freud 1896b: SE 213, GW450). As he recognizes that the cause of hysteria is found exclusively in sexual trauma of childhood, he has to explain “why it is only ideas with a sexual content [*sexueller Inhalt*] that can be repressed” (Freud 1896a:

SE166, GW384).

A memory normally produces weaker effects than real experience; however, in the case of memory concerning sexual events and only in this case, a memory can have a stronger effect than an original experience, for it arouses “an affect which it did not arouse as an experience”(Freud 1895a: SE356, GW447).

He ascribes this inversed relation of experience and memory, which is specific to sexual events, to “the retardation of pubertal maturity”(Freud 1895a: SE166, GW384). The memory of sexual experience in childhood acquires new meaning and understanding after sexual maturity, because puberty enables “a different understanding of what was remembered”(Freud 1895a: SE356, GW447). While he here clearly rests upon an assumption of asexual childhood, in contrast to later works, this framework will be developed as the distinctive model of “deferred action” [*Nachträglichkeit*], that “originates—as it can do in no other way— in the psychical traces which have been left behind by infantile sexual experiences [*Sexualerlebnisse*]” (Freud 1898 SE281, GW511). These quotations clearly show how he insistently chooses the term *Sexual* when developing a distinctively psychoanalytic account of neurosis ⁽²⁾.

⁽²⁾ In his preface to the 1920 edition of *Three Essays on the Theory of sexuality*, Freud reminds us “how closely the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with the Eros of the divine Plato”(Freud 1905b: SE134, GW32), drawing analogy between his “deliberate extension of the popular conception of sexuality [*Sexualität*]” and the broadest sense “in which Plato uses the word ‘Eros’ in his Symposium” (Freud 1933: SE209, GW20) .

He argues that “[i]n its origin, function, and relation to sexed love [*Geschlechtsliebe*], the ‘Eros’ of the philosopher Plato coincides exactly with the loveforce, the libido of psychoanalysis”(Freud 1921: SE91, GW99). “Sexed love [*geschlechtliche Liebe*]” is characterized by its aim of forcing their ways to sexed union between sexes (Freud 1921: SE90, GW98).

Significantly enough, Freud argues that the “sexed love” can provide us with “our most intense experience of an overwhelming pleasurable sensation,” and that “the union of mental and bodily satisfaction in the enjoyment of [sexed] love is one of its culminating peaks” (Freud 1915: SE169, GW319). Freud’s terminological consistency in his sexual etiology of neurosis becomes all the more remarkable, given that he attributes such an enormous significance to “sexed love” in our mental and physical life. The enlarged concept of sexuality in psychoanalysis is understood by reference to a “sexed love” (*Geschlechtsliebe*), but nevertheless, he maintains adherence to the term *Sexual*, by saying that “[a]nyone who considers sexuality [*Sexualität*] as something mortifying and humiliating to human nature is at liberty to make use of the more genteel expressions ‘Eros’ and ‘erotic’. I cannot see any merit in being ashamed of sexuality [*Sexualität*]; the Greek word ‘Eros’, which is to soften the affront, is in the end nothing more than a translation of our German word *Liebe*” (Freud 1921: SE91, GW99-100).

6. Conclusion

As shown in the above study, Freud's terminological consistency is quite evident in his account of the sexual etiology of neurosis. Freud uses the term *Sexual* or *Sexualität* to name and describe his new field of inquiry, to which psychoanalysis adds a completely new conceptualization. Sexuality, which plays such a central role in the psychoanalytic theory of neurosis, never designates *Geschlechtlichkeit*, which is the problem of sexual difference or sexuation.

The question that this article attempted to answer is whether the Lacanian formulation of sexuation, which entails ontologizing and prioritizing sexual difference over all other forms of differences, can be properly called "psychoanalytic" in the Freudian sense of the term.

The study shows how Lacanians' claim is based on the conflation of sexuation and sexuality, which can bring about serious theoretical consequences. The Lacanian formulation of sexual difference, in as much as it reduces the problem of sexuality to that of sexuation, amounts to the erasure of the conceptual specificity of Freud's psychoanalysis.

The problem with this interpretation resides in the unquestioned presumption that sexuality signifies no more and no less than the phenomenon that takes place between sexed subjects. The term "sexual difference" itself amounts to a blurring of the conceptual distinction of sexuation and sexuality, on which lays the basis of Freudian psychoanalysis.

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Sexuation and Sexuality in Psychoanalysis: Rereading Freud Against Lacanians

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This article represents an attempt to intervene in the current debate between psychoanalysis and feminism and to provide a new perspective in this research field. There has been a complex and contentious history between feminism and psychoanalysis, which has given rise to a heated theoretical debate on Lacanian psychoanalysis, following the groundbreaking work of Mitchell (1973).

However, in the debate between Lacanian theorists/feminists and anti-Lacanian feminists, both sides have missed a crucial point. In the act of reducing Freud's theory on sexuality to Lacan's theory of sexual difference, both sides fail to grasp the distinctive way in which Freud defines the concept of "sexuality," the term on which the whole controversy depends.

The debate between feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis does not include an assessment of the extent to which Lacanian formulation of the primacy of "sexed" subject (or "sexual difference") does justice to Freud's original insights.

Drawing on the suggestion of Jean Laplanche, one of the most prominent French psychoanalyst, this paper examines the specific manner in which Freud distinguishes the terms *Geschlecht*- and *Sexual*-, and shows that the proper object of psychoanalytic inquiry belongs to the realm of *Sexualität* (sexuality), which is fundamentally independent from *Geschlechtlichkeit* (sexuation).