

The “Too Muchness” of Excitement and the Death of Desire

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Leo, a highly intellectual man in his late 20s, presents his initial problems in terms of sexual behaviors that hurt him as well as his surroundings. He does not know why he cannot stop ruminating obsessively over his sexuality or why he thinks he is not masculine and does not derive satisfaction from sexual activity. During the first session Leo tells me that I might be able to understand him but will never really be by his side, because I am a woman. He also warns me that I will never be able to love him, that I will reject him and will be repulsed by him.

This presentation brings together contemporary thinking about early attachment and affect regulation with a clinical and theoretical understanding of the problems of adult sexuality. Linked to recent psychoanalytic theoretical developments, the clinical material will help to grasp the relationship between sexual excitement and early affect and include a focus on classic themes of overstimulation, seduction and betrayal in the early relationship to the parent.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify links between attachment and sexuality.
2. Describe the implications of early attachment for adult sexuality.
3. Identify classic themes of seduction and betrayal as they appear in the adult life.

REFERENCES

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Benjamin, J., & Atlas, G. (2015). The “too muchness” of excitement: Sexuality in light of excess, attachment and affect regulation. *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 96, 39-63.

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BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Galit Atlas is on the faculty at NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, and faculty at the Four Year Adult and National Training Programs at NIP. She is the author of *The Enigma of Desire: Sex, Longing and Belonging in Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2015), and of *Dramatic Dialogue: Contemporary Clinical Practice* (co-authored with Lewis Aron. Routledge, 2017). Atlas serves on the editorial board of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* and is the author of articles and book chapters that focus primarily on gender and sexuality. Her NYT article "A tale of Two Twins" was the winner of a 2016 Gradiva award. Atlas is a psychoanalyst and clinical supervisor in private practice in New York City.

DISCUSSANT

Daniel N. Watter, EdD

Dr. Daniel N. Watter received his doctoral degree from New York University in 1985, and has also earned a post-graduate certificate in Medical Humanities from Drew University. He is licensed as both a psychologist and a marital and family therapist. In addition, he is Board Certified in Sex Therapy by the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT), and the American Board of Sexology (ACS), of which is also holds Fellowship status. Dr. Watter is an AASECT certified sex therapy supervisor, and has been elected to Fellowship Status in the International Society for the Study of Women's Sexual Health (ISSWSH).

In addition to his clinical practice, Dr. Watter has held several faculty appointments. He has served as an adjunct professor of Psychology at Fairleigh Dickinson, Drew, and Seton Hall Universities, a clinical instructor of OB/GYN and Women's Health at University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-New Jersey Medical School, and a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry and behavioral medicine at the New York College of Osteopathic Medicine. Dr. Watter is also a former member of the medical staff of the Saint Barnabas Medical Center in Livingston, New Jersey, and served on the Medical Center's Ethics Committee.

Dr. Watter is a member of several professional organizations, and has been elected to leadership positions in many. He has completed two terms on the New Jersey Psychological Association's Ethics Committee where he spent two years as the Committee's chairperson. He has also served two terms as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Society for Sex Therapy and Research (SSTAR), where he previously served as Membership Officer. Dr. Watter is also the former chair of the Diplomate Certification Committee for the American Association for Sexuality Educators, Counselors, and Therapists (AASECT). Currently, he is serving as the Immediate Past-President of SSTAR. In 2009, Dr. Watter was appointed by New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine to the State Board of Psychological Examiners. He was reappointed by New Jersey Governor Chris Christie in 2017.

A frequent lecturer at professional meetings throughout North America, Dr. Watter is also the author of several professional articles and book chapters on topics such as sexual function and dysfunction, and ethics in healthcare practice. He is currently writing a textbook on Humanistic/Existential Approaches to Sex Therapy Practice.