

The Dangers of the Universal: A Critique of Fonagy and Target's Theory of Sexual Enjoyment

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Despite the cultural specificity of aspects of attachment theory (Layton, 2006) it remains influential. Disorganized attachment and the alien self are linked to borderline phenomena and attacks upon the body (Fonagy et al., 2002), including sexual attacks (Straker, 2002). Recently (Fonagy, 2006, 2008; Target, 2007) used the concept of the alien self to explain sexuality in general. This article challenges this extension as it again ignores cultural specificity, presents psychoanalysis as the arbiter of "normal" sexuality, and entrenches heteronormativity. It also lends itself to inadvertently condoning sexual harassment, as evidenced in a case study presented by Fonagy (2008).

There are few who would doubt the prominence of Peter Fonagy and Mary Target in the field of psychoanalysis and more particularly in the area of attachment theory and the treatment of borderline pathology. Their theory of the alien self, or what relational analysts might call a dissociated self state, and its projection into the body of another, provides a powerful explanatory framework for attacks upon the body (Fonagy et al., 2002), including sexual attacks (Straker, 2002). This having been said, it is important that the cultural specificity of their theory be recognized. Layton (2006) points to the specificity of attachment theory and interestingly Fonagy (2006) himself at times recognizes this but then forgets it (Fonagy, 2008). This forgetfulness is stark in the extension of attachment theory to a "genuinely developmental theory of sexual enjoyment" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 11). This extension locates sexuality in an evolutionary framework that implies universality and cuts across the idea of cultural specificity.

This article challenges Fonagy and Target's theory of sexuality not only because of its implied universality but also because it supports heteronormativity. The article explores the complications introduced by the view that sexuality is engendered in circumstances that are associated with the development of pathology. This imbrication of all sexuality with pathology could liberate sexuality from the binary of normality/pathology but it does not. Indeed the binary is reinscribed. As reinscription is frequently the case, even when theorists are mindful of the problem, it is the unreflective nature of the reinscription that troubles. Target (2007) speaks of "pathological sexuality" (p. 519) and Fonagy (2008) of "mature sexual excitement"

(p. 23) and "normal and inadequate psychosexuality" (p. 26) without any comment on how such judgments are socially inflected.

In summary, then, it is the intention of this article to challenge the theory of sexuality advanced by Fonagy and Target on the following grounds: It falsely claims universality. It is heteronormative in its support of traditional gender relations. It advances the claim of psychoanalysis to know what constitutes normal sexuality without acknowledging the social construction of the notion of normality itself. The theory is inconsistent in its arguments, especially when positing that sexuality "mimics a form of pathology" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 19) and then arguing for notions of normal sexuality and mature sexual excitement. An additional problem with the sexuality-mimicking-pathology argument is that it inadvertently lends itself to condoning sexual harassment, as is evident in a case study that Fonagy (2008) presents.

Given this critique, we note with some irony that as far as we know Straker (2002) was the first to apply Fonagy and Target's theory of the alien self to sexuality in a paper that was responded to by Target. However, Straker's application was very specific in contrast to Target's (2007) and then Fonagy's (2008) subsequent application of the alien self to a general theory of sexuality. During 10 years of clinical work with pedophile priests, Straker (2002) noted that these individuals, from their own accounts, often seemed dissociated during their sexual encounters with children. Straker put forward the idea that they seemed to be projecting an alien aspect of the self into the other. This alien self was linked to internalized sexual disgust constellated in the attachment environment that they described. Straker thus linked Fonagy et al.'s (2002) notions of attachment theory and the alien self not to sexuality in general but to a *problematic* sexuality. Problematic in this circumstance was defined by the harmful implications of such sexuality for the children and by the ego-dystonic nature of the priests' sexuality, as indicated by them in most if not all instances.

Thus Straker (2002) expanded the application of the projected alien self from the arena of homicide and self-mutilation (Fonagy et al., 2002) to the violation of the body of the child, as we believe is the case in pedophilia. We state this belief notwithstanding those discourses that do not see pedophilia as violation (Angelides, 2003) and we recognize that our position is debatable and involves a socially inflected judgment. It is with some trepidation therefore that we enter into a critique of the judgments made by Fonagy and Target. However, given their prominence we believe it is important to do so. Thus we turn now to their theory of sexuality and begin by revisiting briefly their ideas concerning the development of an alien self and borderline phenomena, as these concepts underpin their theory of sexuality.

THE ALIEN SELF, BORDERLINE PHENOMENA, AND VIOLENCE

The alien self described by Fonagy et al. (2002) develops as a consequence of the caretaker's failure to mirror back the infant's affect in a well-timed, accurate, and appropriately marked manner, combined with a negative mental image of the infant. The development of an alien self is thus a consequence not only of chronically poor mirroring but also mirroring that is shame inducing because the infant is seen as frightening and/or contemptible. These circumstances lead not only to the creation of an alien self but also to the defensive use of an alien self through identification with the aggressor. It is an alien self that has the torturing other within, a torturing other that provokes a shame toxic enough to prompt a repudiation of mentalization as the child

becomes afraid to contemplate what is in the mind of the other (Fonagy et al., 2002). This alien self is an internalization of the caretaker's negative representation of the child and requires the physical presence of the other for its externalization. This externalization is urgently and consistently required whenever the alien self is mobilized.

When the alien self is mobilized by encountering frightening or humiliating feelings in later life, either in the self or as reflected back by the other, there is an urgent push to get rid of this internalized image of the self, either into the body of the other or into the self, where it is often attacked. In males, there is a tendency for this externalization to be into the body of another. In women the alien self tends to be lodged in their own bodies and attacked there, as in self-harm. Thus Fonagy et al. (2002) argue that in both men and women the externalization of an internalized alien self is implicated in enactments that involve bodily harm.

Extrapolating from the idea of an alien self and the attachment environment that generates such a self, Target (2007) and Fonagy (2008) develop a theory of sexuality based on the premise that caretakers are threatened by their own and/or their infant's sexuality in the attachment environment, which in turn creates problems in mirroring. These difficulties promote the development of an alien self and/or alien aspects of the self that require externalization into the body of another. It is this requirement for externalization that drives sexual encounters.

"A GENUINELY DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY OF SEXUAL ENJOYMENT" (FONAGY, 2008)

Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) base their theory of sexuality on two pieces of research. One is a survey of mothers who were asked to comment on how they responded to the sexuality of their infants and another is an exploration of infant observation reports. They indicate that comments on the mothers' mirroring of sexuality are absent in infant observation reports. Furthermore, in the survey mothers report that they ignore their infants' sexuality or distract them from it. Fonagy and Target indicate that the failure of mirroring of the sexual is profound. It occurs 90% of the time, considerably in excess of the more usual 50% that pertains to other affects. Moreover Target notes that negative affects such as disgust at times accompany this failure and that at other times the mother adds to the mix her own unprocessed sexuality. However, it is not stated how many mothers were surveyed and there are no details about the sample.

Nevertheless, on the basis of this research, Target (2007) asserts that "possibly by evolutionary design (it makes sexual interest more continuously available in adults), sexual excitement is poorly mirrored and never achieves useful second order representation" (p. 522). Fonagy (2008) likewise states, "While we recognize that the suggestion is purely speculative, we might well imagine that having such regulation and organizing process in relation to sexuality (psychosexuality) did not provide the best evolutionary adaptation" (p. 25). In other words, he indicates that to be well mirrored in regard to sexuality would not be the best evolutionary adaptation. We would not need the body of another to house our alien sexual self. It would be integrated into the self and would not need urgent externalization into the body of another. Thus he implies agreement with Target that mirroring of sexual excitement in the attachment environment is relatively absent by evolutionary design, as this relative absence is seen by them to have an adaptive value. It contributes to a need to engage in sexual contact as a means of externalizing an alien sexual self formed in the absence of mirroring of the sexual self. Neither Fonagy nor Target

considers that a failure to mirror sexuality may be a cultural product and not a universal feature of child care.

Neither of the authors of this article has conducted surveys of mothers. However, we offer anecdotal evidence that we believe has the same limited evidentiary value as the data offered by Fonagy and Target but is contrary to their data. We are both from South Africa and consider ourselves White Africans rather than Europeans, a political appellation that is not uncontested. However, it is an appellation that was adopted in the midst of apartheid with its divide of Whites and Blacks into groups termed Europeans and non-Europeans by the Apartheid state.

Within our social circle during our childbearing years, we would have been in contact with both White and Black Africans living in South Africa. In neither group did we notice the same discomfort with sexuality in the attachment environment that Fonagy and Target believe is universal. As indicated by Target (2007), this discomfort is believed to be intense. With regard to the infant's sexuality, Target states that the mother "may emphatically distance herself from the child's state" (p. 523) and her responses may include "that's disgusting" (p. 523).

This behavior accords with neither our own experience of comments on infant sexual excitement nor the expressions of pride in the sexuality of, especially, boy babies (gender bias remained). The sexual excitement of these babies (leaving aside debates on what an infant's erection means in adult sexual terms) often led to comments that they were strong or potent little men. Of course, we cannot generalize from our own experience to a quintessentially African experience (White or Black), nor would we wish to do so. We are simply contesting that the failure to mirror the infant's sexuality, and beyond this to deride it, is not a universal feature of the attachment environment held in place by evolutionary design.

This having been said, we do not disagree with all elements of Fonagy and Target's theory. We agree with the link they make between attachment theory and the work of Laplanche (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973; Laplanche and Macey, 1989) on sexuality. In fact, this link was originally drawn by Straker (2002) in the paper responded to by Target. Nevertheless, we have some difficulties with how Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) elaborate, or rather fail to elaborate, this link sufficiently in their theory of sexuality. In order to further articulate this difficulty, we first briefly outline Laplanche's ideas on sexuality and locate them in the psychoanalytic field.

SEXUALITY IN THE PSYCHOANALYTIC FIELD

Psychoanalysis from its inception was concerned with sexuality and particularly infantile sexuality. Freud (1905) emphasized that although sexuality is biologically rooted in the instinct, it is the social that is at stake in the sex drive. Thus, the sexual as drive comes to be imbricated with the psychological and hence becomes the psychosexual, which may in turn incorporate the sexualization of nonsexual aspects of functioning. This focus on the psychological and social aspects of the sexual was carried forward by later post-Freudians in Britain (Bollas, 1993, 2000; Phillips, 1994) and particularly by French psychoanalysts (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1973) and later by American relational analysts (Dimen, 2003; Harris, 2005; Stein, 2008). One of the best known elaborations was put forward by the French analyst Laplanche (Laplanche and Macey, 1989) and was subsequently expanded most eloquently by Ruth Stein (2008).

These theorists argue that sexuality arises via arousal that is originally connected with nonsexual needs such as feeding. This arousal engendered by the sensual act of feeding is then

amplified when, in the face of the loss of the breast, the child creates a fantasy breast to replace it. The sensual breast becomes an object of impossible appeal but also an object that is irretrievably lost.

Furthermore, what is implicated in the engendering of the impossible appeal of the lost object is not only the child's own arousal but also the caretaker's own unconsciously transmitted sexuality. It is her unconscious seduction of the child added to his or her own arousal that calls the child forth as a sexual being. However, this process contains an element of trauma because the child is not fully equipped to deal with the sexuality of the mother. He does not know how to give meaning to the excess she brings to their interchange (Laplanche and Macey, 1989; Stein, 2003).

For Laplanche and Macey (1989) and also for Stein (2008), the trauma that this excess involves is not believed to be overwhelming for the infant. Thus, these theorists are more inclined to focus on the pleasures and mysteries that flow from the mother's unconscious seduction despite the element of excess and trauma implicated in it. Following in this tradition, Benjamin (1995) uses the Laplanchean notion of turning back on oneself to explain the process of dealing with tension and arousal. Stein (2008) notes that, according to Benjamin (1995), "One returns the tension into one's body where it is converted with the aid of fantasy into a source of pleasure" (p. 59). Thus it is that Benjamin's work is also in the tradition of Laplanche and his focus on the pleasures and mysteries of sexuality. This intellectual genealogy returns us to the critique of Fonagy and Target, both in regard to their use of the work of Laplanche and also their work in relation to the field of relational psychoanalysis, some of whose adherents also draw on Laplanche.

FONAGY AND TARGET AND RELATIONAL PSYCHOANALYSIS

As already indicated, Fonagy and Target's developmental theory of sexuality/sexual excitement—which they do not always differentiate from one another—locates the development of sexuality in an attachment environment that is usually associated with the genesis of pathology that may involve attacks on the body. This attachment environment consistently fails to mirror the child's sexual excitements and is often linked to a negative mental image that the caretaker has of the child's sexuality as is elaborated by Target (2007):

The mother may unconsciously associate frustration and insistent drive pressure from another person with a sexual relationship (most likely with baby boys): the baby clamors and "bullies" the mother in a way that she may only experience from a man in a state of sexual desire [p. 523].

Given this image of the sexual baby as "bully" it is easy to follow Target's statement that the attachment environment as it pertains to sexuality leaves the child, in the words of Bion (1962), with "intense experiences that remain unlabelled and uncontained" (as cited in Target, 2007, p. 521). There is a vacuum within a part of the self "where internal reality remains nameless and sometimes dreaded, perhaps vacuous or frightening" (p. 521). However, it is hard to follow why in the same sentence Target goes on to claim that this same experience may also be experienced as "exciting and mysterious" (p. 521). No reason is given for this shift from an emphasis on the vacuous and frightening to the exciting and mysterious beyond the reasons given by Laplanche and Macey (1989) and Stein (2008), which Target in fact validates.

However, although the idea of sexuality as mysterious and exciting is consistent with the general theory of Laplanche and its elaboration by Stein, this consistency is not the case for

Target (2007) and Fonagy (2008). Laplanche and Pontalis (1973) indicate that although the experience of the enigmatic sexuality of the other may have traumatic elements, these are not overwhelming to the infant and thus the possibility of an experience of mystery and excitement exists despite these elements of trauma. For Laplanche and Pontalis the infant receives sexual messages as enigmas that require processing. For Fonagy and Target the enigmatic nature of the message is eclipsed by the mother's certainty that sexuality in the attachment environment is negative and thus must not be mirrored, and this closes down the possibility for the infant of processing the message. Thus, in the context of the attachment environment, Fonagy and Target speak of sexuality in terms usually associated with pathology in their own more general theory and not mystery and excitement. This location of their theory of sexuality within their ideas concerning the alien self and borderline phenomena is consistent with a sexuality that is experienced as a burden and requires urgent expulsion, as indicated in the case study presented by Fonagy (2008, p. 18). We discuss this case study in greater detail later, but first we briefly comment on certain misunderstandings that Fonagy has of the relational field.

Fonagy (2008) incorrectly states that relational psychoanalysis does not focus on the body. More specifically, he writes that "a fundamental tenet of classical Freudian theory, implicitly rejected by object relations and modern relational approaches, is the embodiedness of mental life, and the idea that the mind is rooted in physical experience" (p. 17). He also erroneously claims that, "in the relational perspective, sexuality has been replaced . . . by explanations that focus on the long term consequences of the vulnerability and dependence of the infant" (p. 17). Fonagy makes these statements despite key texts such as *Relational Perspectives on the Body* (Aron and Anderson, 1998) and *Sexuality, Intimacy, Power* (Dimen, 2003), among many others, where sexuality is a focus and the embodiedness of experience is explored but without assuming that the body is given to oneself outside of social construction. The notion that the body itself is socially constructed does not automatically imply that psychic experience is not embodied. It complicates the relationship between mind and body but does not do away with the idea that experience, including sexual experience, is embodied. Furthermore, many relational analysts such as Stein (2008) draw on the French analysts Laplanche and Pontalis's (1973) work on sexuality and the body in much the same way as do Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007), despite differences in their conclusions.

This having been said, we return to our critique of their theory of sexuality but with our focus now less on their developmental theory and more on their views concerning the adult experience of sexuality. Our critique once again concerns their claims concerning universality and, beyond this, what we see as a gender bias that reinscribes heteronormativity, the difficulties of avoiding reinscription notwithstanding.

"NORMAL PSYCHOSEXUALITY" AND "MATURE SEXUAL EXPERIENCE"

Fonagy (2008) introduces his theory of the experience of "normal psychosexuality" and "mature sexual excitement" (p. 23) through a case example involving the treatment of an adolescent called Dan. It is of note that in this discussion Fonagy sees the idea of normal psychosexuality as interchangeable with the idea of mature sexual excitement. In doing so he declares his allegiance to the controversial Freudian (1905) notions that sexuality matures through developmental stages from oral to genital and that the only normal sex is genital heterosexual

intercourse aimed at reproduction. These Freudian notions have been subject to intense debate both within psychoanalysis and beyond it. This debate has centered on the idea that sexuality follows a particular developmental trajectory and on the question of what constitutes normal sex and the relationship between development and sexuality (Weeks, Holland, and Waites, 2003). Indeed, even within Freud's (1905) "Three Essays on Sexuality," the relationship between sexual maturity and normality is presented ambiguously (Weeks et al., 2003).

However, Fonagy (2008) does not problematize the relationship between a developmental trajectory for sexuality and normality; he simply assumes it to be a fact. This will become clearer in our discussion of his and Target's (2007) case studies. Suffice it to say at this point that both Fonagy and Target, in their unproblematic assumption of knowledge of what constitutes normal sexuality and mature sexual excitement, bypass an enormous body of literature that does problematize such an assumption (Foucault, 1988; Corbett, 1998; Stein, 2003; Straker, 2007). It is beyond the scope of this article to do justice to this literature but a few further comments are in order.

Central to the criticisms of psychoanalysis in regard to sexuality is the idea that both sexuality and gender are political. Rubin (1984) argues that they are organized into systems of power, which reward and encourage some individuals and activities while punishing and suppressing others. Like the capitalist organization of labor and its distribution of rewards and powers, the modern sexual system has been the object of political struggle since it emerged and as it has evolved (p. 171).

Certainly psychoanalysis has been part of this political struggle and has often acted to "discipline and punish" (Foucault, 1977). Lately, however, psychoanalysis has attempted to reflect more upon itself in this regard. Indeed, Fonagy himself in certain moments indicates this awareness. Thus in an earlier paper he states, "In the immediate aftermath of the Freudian years there was an absence of cultural relativity in discussion of sex and an authoritarian imposition of oedipal genital sexuality as a gold standard for psychological health" (Fonagy, 2006, p. 3). In this same paper, he also comments on the cultural relativity of attitudes to sex, saying that there has always been "considerable prudishness about in psychoanalytic public debate and in (certainly British) clinical discussions of individual cases" (p. 3). Yet his later theory of sexuality (Fonagy, 2008) is based on observations of what we assume to be a British sample of mothers who in his own terms may be prudish. From this sample, he extrapolates to all mothers and to notions of normal/mature sexuality.

It should be noted, however, that despite their views on "normal sexuality" neither Fonagy nor Target decries homosexuality. Nor do they define perversion by a reference to any particular sexual practice. Furthermore, their fourth requirement for sexual enjoyment and normal sexuality is based on the "unconscious fantasy of being/possessing the gender of the other" (Target, 2007, p. 526), which implies that "full heterosexuality must incorporate bisexuality" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 27).

Similarly, with regard to perversions, Fonagy (2006) states that it is not fantasy or activity that defines what is perverse but rather its anxiety-driven, compulsive, and restrictive character. He argues that normality and perversion are thus inappropriate dimensions that should be replaced by our understanding of the degree to which sexual activity is in the service of functions other than erotic pleasure. However, some of these cautions seem to be forgotten in their own theory of sexuality, which once again assumes knowledge of normality and reinscribes heteronormativity, as we hope to make clear. It is to this theory of sexuality that we now return in our further discussion of Fonagy's (2008) case study of Dan.

DAN AND OTHER CASE STUDIES

Dan was at a party and determined to French-kiss a girl. Dan chose one who had a reputation as a "goer" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 12). He planned his moves meticulously, all the while feigning disinterest. "Ultimately their eyes met and he moved over there and then and kissed her. She not surprisingly pushed him away and told him in no uncertain terms where to take his burgeoning sexual interest" (p. 13). He reported both tremendous excitement and said that although he had felt troubled beforehand, once he had kissed her, it was as if all his troubles disappeared. He recalled the joy of "sticking his tongue in the girl's mouth and struggling with hers because she would not let him in" (p. 13). He recalled the excitement of being with someone "he could feel himself to be inside" (p. 13).

In commenting on this case study, Fonagy (2008) notes that Dan's excitement had to do "with the sense of physically being allowed in someone else's body" (p. 13). His "more or less innocent sexual interaction" afforded him the opportunity to "feel inside someone" (p. 13). But beyond this, Fonagy indicates that Dan's sexual excitement was fuelled by the fact that he "rejoiced at her sense of being invaded because it, he, his burdens were now in her critically not simply in her body but also in her mind and were no longer disrupting his sense of self" (p. 13).

While reading this case study, we were struck by the fact that, although in Fonagy's (2008) terms it may have been crucial to Dan's pleasure that he had impinged the mind of the other, he had also impinged her body. He had invaded her body not only in fantasy but literally. The problem for us is that such an impingement is not unexpected in a theory of sexuality based on the development of an alien sexual self. It must be remembered that the original theory of the alien self was deployed by Fonagy et al. (2002) to explain violent attacks upon the body of the other. Thus the externalization of a sexual alien self could well be expected to involve the literal invasion of the body of another and it would seem to us that it is a short step from expecting the body of the other to be invaded to endorsing such an invasion, as indeed Fonagy (2008) seems to do.

Fonagy (2008) not only seems to endorse Dan's imposition of himself on the girl by naming this imposition as "more or less innocent" (p. 13) but also there is an interesting slippage in how he comments upon it. Having told us clearly that the girl did not welcome or want Dan's sexual interest thrust upon her, Fonagy then speaks of Dan having been "allowed into someone else's body" (p. 13). In fact, it is clear from Fonagy's case material that Dan was not allowed in. He forced himself in. Why then does Fonagy tell us in one breath that the girl did not welcome Dan's attention and yet in the next breath talk about Dan being allowed in as if his advances were accepted by the girl? Could it be that both this elision of the difference between foisting oneself on another and being allowed in, and Fonagy's seeming endorsement of Dan foisting himself upon a girl who tellingly is not given a name, reflects Fonagy's unproblematic acceptance of heteronormativity and the unequal power relations between the genders that this implies? Could it reflect his acceptance of this inequality even when it translates into physical coercion? In this regard it behooves us to note the comments of Goldner et al. (1990), who argue that "abusive relationships exemplify in extremis the stereotypical gender arrangements that structure intimacy between men and women generally" (p. 343). Not only does Fonagy show little awareness that his comments about Dan reflect a heteronormative position that endorses male dominance but also he seems unaware of what is at stake in his unproblematic acceptance of heteronormativity in this context, namely, an unwitting endorsement of sexual coercion.

We believe Fonagy's (2008) judgment of Dan's coercive behavior as "more or less innocent" (p. 13) reflects Fonagy's own unconscious if not conscious support of heteronormative gender arrangements involving the dominance of men over women. Not only does Fonagy endorse Dan's physical domination of the nameless girl but he also seems to endorse what he sees as Dan's manipulative mode of engaging with Laura, a girl who postdated the nameless girl. He does this despite the parallels that he draws between Dan's explicit wish to control and manipulate Laura and the characteristics of those with borderline personality disorder, and he bases this endorsement on his argument that "normal" sexuality "while not pathological mimics pathology" (p. 19).

One wonders, however, how Fonagy would relate to a female patient with the same desires to manipulate and control. Would he be equally nonjudgmental in relation to her as he is in relation to Dan? His theory would dictate that all sexual beings regardless of gender would share manipulative behaviors similar to borderline personality disorders in the realm of the sexual. However, as we see later both Fonagy and Target are not neutral in regard to gender when speaking of sexuality and they endorse stereotypes in this regard.

Prior to discussing more generally the gender stereotypes put forward by both Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007), we return to their theory of sexuality and once again highlight the manner in which the theory lends itself to an endorsement of physical coercion in the sexual arena, a coercion that is more possible for men to exert in regard to women. We continue this exploration, begun in the context of Dan and the nameless girl, in the context of Dan and Laura.

Fonagy's (2008) notion of the normality of Dan's manipulative impulse in his sexual approach to Laura is consistent with a theory that states that by evolutionary design we have attachment environments that fail to mirror sexuality and thus tend to encourage the development of sexual alien selves. These alien selves then urgently need to be expelled and require the literal body of the other to facilitate this expulsion, and the achievement of this expulsion by the manipulation of the other would be predicted in such an economy.

Fonagy (2008) does not directly indicate an endorsement of the translation of this manipulative wish into action with Laura. Indeed he seems to indicate a belief that Dan should confine these wishes to the arena of fantasy. However, when Dan does act on his wishes as with the nameless girl, Fonagy indulgently labels Dan's action "innocent" (p. 13), thereby indicating that although he may see it as preferable to keep one's wishes to manipulate at the level of fantasy, if one fails to do so this is to be expected and accepted.

Target (2007) too seems to believe that the attachment environment pertaining to sexuality lends itself to a man engaging in a "coercive sexual style" (p. 529) and seems to endorse this. She qualifies her statement by indicating that it is "a (perhaps playfully) coercive sexual style" (p. 529). However, she gives no justification for her qualification. Nor would the theory of the alien self and its need for urgent externalization predict playfulness. Playfulness may be possible if the other cooperates but the urgency of the need for externalization would make coercion of the other a likely option within Target's theory. Furthermore, the question of what constitutes acceptable playful coercion is a question that puts one onto a slippery slope.

Neither do we believe that speaking of alien aspects of the self in sexuality, as opposed to a fully blown alien self, takes Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) out of the dilemmas posed by their imbrication of all sexuality in their particular discourse of pathology. The attachment environment that they describe, which leads to the development of an alien sexual self that Target wishes to describe as playful, has the same characteristics as the attachment environment

described in relation to the borderline alien self. This alien self is pernicious and destructive and not playful and fun. This attachment environment in regard to sexuality involves not only sustained failures in mirroring (90% failure as opposed to the normative 50% in regard to other affects). It also involves an image of the sexually aroused self of the child as "disgusting" or as "bullying" (Target, 2007). These are the very conditions for the development of a pernicious alien self as described by Fonagy and Target.

THE PATERNAL FUNCTION, LAWFULNESS, AND RECIPROCITY

Moving away for the moment from our concern that a theory of sexuality that believes that all sexual engagement involves a need to urgently expel parts of the self into the other lends itself to the endorsement of the impingement of the other, we comment on a further problem in Fonagy (2008) and Target's (2007) theory of sexuality. This pertains to the fact that their theory of sexuality does not take into account the paternal function. As such, it is a theory of sexuality that is engendered within the mother-child duo and erases the oedipal triangle with its ideas concerning the establishment of lawfulness and morality. In erasing the function of the third in structuring sexuality we would argue that Fonagy and Target's theory at yet another level lends itself to expressions of sexuality that are based on the needs of one person at the potential expense of the other, without regard for notions of a moral third (Benjamin, 2004). Furthermore, the erasure of the third allows Fonagy and Target to fail to focus at all on issues of hierarchy and power, issues that underpin the heteronormativity that they endorse, a heteronormativity that is backed up by both by physical coercion and the threat thereof.

Despite Fonagy (2008) and Target's (2007) erasure of the third and its tie to lawfulness and morality, it is important to note that although the idea that all sexuality involves the need to externalize a pernicious alien self into the other and that this lends itself to endorsing coercion in the sexual field, their theory would see women as equally prone to being coercive even if their physical capacity to enact this is less. In this sense their theory is in itself gender neutral.

Indeed it could be argued that Fonagy (2008) and Target's (2007) theory cuts across heteronormativity. As indicated, the need to have a body (and not only a mind) to house one's alien sexual self is gender neutral. However, both Fonagy and Target reinscribe traditional gender relations in other aspects of their theory. Thus Fonagy (2008) describes what he imagines to be the differences between men's and women's experiences of sexuality in the following terms:

I believe that while male sexual enjoyment culminates in the full externalization of the self into the object and its unconsciously fantasized control therein, female sexual arousal begins with an intersubjective identification with the partner that becomes increasingly private and inwardly turning as excitement mounts [p. 33].

Fonagy hereby entrenches the idea that male desire is direct and is directed at placing the self in the other whereas female desire depends on identification with the active male in search of a receptive female.

Target (2007) too presents traditional ideas concerning the psyche of women. Thus in elaborating why she thinks that mothers may turn away from their baby's sexuality she states that the mother may confuse the baby's frustration with sexual excitement "because of the masochistic or passive coloring of her own psychosexuality" (p. 524).

In presenting these criticisms, we are aware that Fonagy and Target's thoughts about both female and male sexuality may be accurate with regard to some women and men. This is not the issue. The issue is that they seem to be making universal statements. There is no comment on the fact that even if the experiences that they describe are common they are also socially constructed. Their unreflected-upon assumptions of universality contribute to the continuation of such constructions.

Having presented these criticisms it is important to note that in the midst of their theory of sexuality as mimicking pathology and paralleling borderline personality disorder, Target (2007) and Fonagy (2008) put forward four requirements for "sexual enjoyment" and "normal" psychosexuality" (defined by Fonagy, 2008, p. 19, as "your and my experience of sex") that are the antithesis of borderline functioning. Thus it appears to us that, for "sexual enjoyment" or "psychosexuality" to be "normal" as opposed to "inadequate" in Fonagy and Target's terms, what is required is some alteration in the nature of the sexuality that they initially describe. The urgent need to externalize an alien self has to become regulated to allow for reciprocity and intimacy and Fonagy tracks what he sees as sexual maturation in his presentation of Dan's different sexual relationships. However, with maturation the attachment bonds are strengthened and the regulation of sexual expression implicated in this can be so great that the partners no longer find each other sexually interesting. Thus Fonagy (2008) writes as follows:

The experience of the partner is then partially re-internalized through a preconscious identification that gradually (over years) replaces enigma with familiarity. We could think of this as a continuation of the process of infantile affect mirroring [p. 25].

Fonagy goes on to say that what is at stake is a process of integration and that what feels like getting to know one's partner is in fact becoming more integrated oneself. This integration diminishes the urgency of the need for externalization and, concomitantly with this, sexual excitement, at least in relation to one's current partner. This may not be the case in relation to new partners as indicated by Target and Fonagy. Thus Fonagy (2008) comments that "there may be aspects of the alien self that are not as easy to externalize or to have accepted and these may leave a continuing need for a different partner" (p. 27).

Although we certainly agree that it may frequently be the case that some individuals in long-term relationships have difficulties in maintaining sexual intensity, we are not sure that this pertains only or even mainly to the idea that we have used the other to integrate ourselves and no longer need him or her in this way. This may be an aspect of what is at stake but it does seem to oversimplify this complex matter by a one-sided focus on sexual expression as only implicating a discovery of the self. There is little emphasis by Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) on the discovery of the other and what this might mean for sexual desire. This one-sided focus on the self is in stark contrast to writers such as Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Gayle Salamon (2010), who focus far more on the intersubjectivity of sexual desire. It is perhaps this one-sided focus on the self and what is essentially a one-person model of mind that accounts for both Fonagy and Target's failure to develop a theory of sexuality that encompasses intersubjectivity, despite the fact that both of them speak of the importance of reciprocity for sexual enjoyment. In neither of their papers is it shown how reciprocity as a requirement for sexual enjoyment flows from their theories. It is simply asserted as an article of faith without any argument as to why this should be the case when their theory of sexual interest is predicated on the expulsion of an alien self that requires expulsion into another, willing or otherwise, as in the case of Dan. The requirement of reciprocity comes

across as an add-on to their theories, perhaps as a reflection of their own discomfort with the ethical implications of a theory of sexuality that is so biased toward caring for the self and its alien aspects and away from the interests of or in the other.

This difficulty is further elaborated upon in the following section, which shows that despite the assertion of the importance of reciprocity in sexual enjoyment, Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) undermine their own claim in the case vignettes that they present. In these vignettes the one-person psychology that underpins their theory of sexuality is affirmed even as they would wish to do the opposite. We thus turn now to a fuller exploration of their four requirements for sexual enjoyment (implying all sexual enjoyment [Target, 2007]) and "normal psychosexuality" (Fonagy, 2008).

FONAGY AND TARGET'S REQUIREMENTS FOR ENJOYABLE/NORMAL SEXUAL EXPERIENCE

Target (2007) and Fonagy (2008) state that for "sexual enjoyment" and "normal psychosexuality" there are four psychological requirements. First, "The relationship must allow opening one's mind to another's projections" (Target, 2007, p. 526). Second, "Normal psychosexuality also requires a reliable sense of boundary around the physical self" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 26). Beyond this, "Reciprocity is vital" (Fonagy, 2008, p. 526), and finally, sexual enjoyment is based on the unconscious fantasy of possessing the gender of the other (Target, 2007, p. 526).

However, it is patently clear from the case example of Dan that sexual enjoyment was present despite the fact that it was not reciprocal, nor did his mind seem open to receiving the projections of the girl involved, and nor did her mind seem open to his. His enjoyment was based on his own fantasy of penetration and the enactment of this. His enjoyment clearly did not require the "girl" to be open to him and it certainly did not seem that the enjoyment was reciprocal. He was well aware of this and thus it was not as if he was under the illusion that she was enjoying the encounter, an illusion of reciprocity that Fonagy says is vital but does not seem to be the case in the instance of Dan.

Target (2007) herself does not present detailed case histories. She presents three brief vignettes to illustrate the projection of parts of the self into the other as an aspect of sexual enjoyment. One of these vignettes describes the masturbation fantasy of a young girl "seen because of her request for a third abortion" (p. 524). In fantasy this girl enjoys herself via an identification with a bored detached male watching sex. It is an identification to the point that she feels she is the man in that he embodies what she recognizes as her own detached attitude. From our point of view this vignette does what Target intended it to do: it illustrates the importance for sexual enjoyment of the projection of parts of the self onto/into the other. However, we believe that the vignette undermines the claim that reciprocity is vital for sexual enjoyment because clearly this patient is enjoying herself, by herself. We think that a similar situation pertains in regard to the second vignette that likewise undermines one aspect of Target's theory even as it upholds another.

The second vignette describes the experience of a "prostitute" who "was fascinated by male arousal" (Target, 2007, p. 524) and felt real with a man when he was aroused. Target presents this vignette as an illustration of the importance of the other holding parts of the self as well as the importance of the arousal of the other in one's own sexual enjoyment. Indeed, this patient does report feeling better after impersonal sex and it seems quite possible that one explanation

for this could be that sex allowed the patient some containment of her alien self. However, it is important to note that, although the patient reports being more "cheerful" and "buzzy" (p. 525) after impersonal sex, she also states that she does not feel aroused during such encounters. If we are to take her word for this, then, in this context, for this patient, sex is less about sex than other functions it might serve. Certainly the patient is not engaged in reciprocal sexual enjoyment. However, it is of note that Target does not accept the patient's statement about her own experience but states that "from her description she did get aroused" (p. 525). The difficulty that we have with Target's comfortable occupation of the role of analyst as authority on the patient's experience aside, even if we accept her statement that the patient was aroused we would still argue that none of the case studies offered either by Target or by Fonagy (2008) provide evidence of the psychological requirements for sexual enjoyment that they outline.

Apart from the failure of the case studies to support the psychological requirement of reciprocity for sexual enjoyment, there are other issues at stake, such as the requirement that individuals have well-established boundaries. If we are to take this requirement seriously, does this mean that individuals with self-disorders (including those with demonstrated difficulties at their physical boundaries such as self-cutters) are not able to have any enjoyable sexual experiences? Of course, it is possible that when Target (2007) outlines her psychological requirements for all sexual enjoyment she has in mind her own ideas concerning a good/normal sexual relationship, although her statements are made in the context of sexual enjoyment. Certainly, as has been already indicated, it has been the case historically that psychoanalysis has attempted to define what is normal, an attempt that has been deconstructed by many theorists but seems to be once again unreflectively attempted by Fonagy (2008) and Target in their theory of normal sexuality and all sexual enjoyment.

We move to our conclusion therefore by reiterating that although Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) have clear ideas about what constitutes the normal/mature they do not seem to reflect on the social construction of these ideas and, beyond this, they continue to reinscribe traditional notions of gender relations. Thus Fonagy (2008) states that

women may find reinternalization of male excitement more natural and acceptable than women find identification with and reinternalization of a feminized experience, which is always partly repudiated, leading to the well known gender asymmetry whereby sex triggers stronger attachment bonds in women [p. 27].

Once again some reflection on the social construction of this reality would have been appreciated and it is with this statement that we bring to a close our challenge of the theory of sexuality advanced by Fonagy and Target.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we hope that we have demonstrated that the "genuinely developmental theory of sexual enjoyment" advanced by Fonagy (2008) and Target (2007) is problematic on a number of counts. It assumes that childrearing practices with regard to sexuality are universal. It locates all sexual enjoyment in a discourse of pathology and thereby inadvertently condones, without reflection, behaviors such as the coercive impingement of the body of the other. It sees the rejection of sexuality in the attachment field as a given. It reinscribes traditional gender relations and beyond this there are inconsistencies in the theory itself.

Despite these criticisms, Fonagy and Target remain giants in the psychoanalytic and attachment fields. The idea of the alien self when applied to borderline phenomena and violent behavior offers a very powerful explanatory framework (Fonagy et al., 2002). This framework may well be extended to an understanding of sexuality but with more modest and cautious claims.

This having been said, we end by affirming how hard it is for any of us to escape our imbrication in the disciplinary practices of our society. Thus even as we try to free ourselves from the prejudices shaped by our insertion into these practices we reinscribe them and we the authors are subject to these difficulties too.

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