

Friction of the Genitals and Secularization of Morality

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IN THE VOLUMINOUS and ever-growing scholarship on the history of sexuality, a fair portion deals in one way or another, explicitly or implicitly, with the complex issue of the secularization of morality. Whether one is interested in the relation of sodomy to homosexuality or of theological perversion to psychiatric perversion, for instance, the question of the transfer of a sexual practice from a theological sphere to a scientific discourse is raised—or at least should be raised. In this essay I will tackle this question by focusing on one important example from the history of sexuality: masturbation.

Historians usually agree that the pivotal event in the secularization of masturbation was the anonymous *Onania; or, The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All Its Frightful Consequences, in both Sexes, Consider'd* (1716).¹ It is this book, we are told, that is responsible for the transformation of the sinful practice into a medical and secular issue. In what is the most recent and comprehensive work on the subject, Thomas Laqueur follows the interpretation of most historians when he holds that “there is one indisputable novelty [with the publication of *Onania*]: the claim that masturbation per se makes those who do it sick unto death. Its fundamental evil was visited, first and foremost, in the body, and anything that wreaked such

An earlier version of this essay was presented at the History and Philosophy of Science Workshop at the University of Chicago in February 2002. I thank the participants for their questions and remarks as well as Roger Chartier, Jan Goldstein, and Fernando Vidal for having read and commented on later drafts. Above all, I would like to thank Arnold I. Davidson, who witnessed the birth of this essay, commented on several drafts, and always enthusiastically encouraged me to pursue my work.

¹For the date of the first edition of *Onania*, which has not survived, I follow Michael Stolberg’s convincing argument in “Self-Pollution, Moral Reform, and the Venereal Trade: Notes on the Sources and Historical Context of *Onania* (1716),” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, nos. 1–2 (2000): 38–40.

Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 12, No. 3, July 2003

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havoc in the flesh had to be very bad indeed. A new, secular morality was thus forged, articulated, amplified, and legitimated in the language of medicine."² It is precisely this conclusion that I aim at overturning.³

My essay has both a historical and a methodological purpose. I want to show that it is historically inaccurate to read *Onania* as participating in the secularization of morality: it was the spectacular if somewhat clumsy swan song of the weakened Christian discourse of the flesh rather than the starting point of a new secular tradition. And I will proceed with my argument both by digging up the methodological weaknesses implicit in the dominant scholarship on the history of masturbation and by offering what I think is a more appropriate methodology for the study of the secularization of morality.

In order to make my case I will compare *Onania* with that other essential milestone of the history of masturbation, Samuel Auguste Tissot's *L'Onanisme: Dissertation sur les maladies produites par la masturbation* (1760). The contrast of *Onania* with *L'Onanisme* constitutes a particularly interesting methodological case study. It illustrates how a great similarity at the level of words and sentences is compatible with a total discrepancy at the level of concepts and statements. As we will see, these two books have in common the condemnation of masturbation on theological grounds (it is a sin) and on medical grounds (it causes disease). *Onania* puts more weight on the religious side of the balance, while *L'Onanisme* insists above all on the pathological consequences of masturbation, but theological and medical terms are present in each text. It is because both mention the physical diseases caused by masturbation that both are said to be "part of a common trend in the Enlightenment: the secularization and medicalization of morality."⁴ However, I argue that the lumping together of these two books is the consequence of a methodology limited to a work of *lexical analysis*. Against this view, which treats concepts like words and

²Thomas Laqueur, *Solitary Sex: A Cultural History of Masturbation* (New York, 2003), 186.

³The core of this article was written before Laqueur's impressive book came out. By arguing against the chronological decoupage he follows, I also weaken his central thesis, namely, that masturbation is the sexuality of the modern self par excellence. I agree with Laqueur that *Onania* made masturbation into a significant problem, but, as I will argue throughout this essay, it did not make it into a secular and modern problem. Consequently, the chronological coincidence between the birth of the modern self as defined by Laqueur and the publication of *Onania* would undermine rather than confirm his argument. This is not to say that there is not a lot to learn from Laqueur's five-hundred-page *Solitary Sex*: although he gives a central importance to *Onania* and in my opinion misreads it quite often, his scope is much wider than this book, since he covers periods and events as varied as Genesis 38:8–10 and the fifty-first *Seinfeld* episode, among many other curiosities. For further details, see my essay review of Laqueur's *Solitary Sex*, forthcoming in the *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*.

⁴Vernon A. Rosario, *The Erotic Imagination* (New York, 1997), 19.

statements like sentences and which assumes that two lexically identical sentences are necessarily equivalent, I defend the necessity to consider the conceptual structures of texts. At the level of concepts and statements, *Onania* and *L'Onanisme* will appear to be categorically different, with only *L'Onanisme* inscribing masturbation into a secular discourse, even though both books claim that masturbation causes disease.⁵

My text is organized into four parts, evolving from the more concrete and particular to the more methodological and general. The first part is concerned with empirical accuracy and brings to the forefront a fact that is consistently—but not innocently—ignored by historians. The second part explores the conceptual ramifications of this fact. The third part lays out the respective conceptual structures of *Onania* and *L'Onanisme*, describing the way theological and medical concepts combine with one another in each book. The last part concludes with methodological considerations that follow from the three preceding parts.⁶

1. THERAPEUTIC MASTURBATION

Many historians describing the secularization of masturbation follow what I will call the *supportive model*. In short, this model presents science as supporting the religious prejudices against masturbation. For instance, Jean-Louis Flandrin describes how Tissot (1728–97) “is only lending scientific support to the myth that had spontaneously constituted itself.”⁷ Another scholar, Michael Stolberg, explains that “[t]he concept of post-masturbatory disease may in many ways have functioned as a mere physiological justification for moral prejudice.”⁸ And Jean Mainil claims that Tissot’s medical knowledge was used “to confirm an old moral taboo of religious origins.”⁹ Science supported, justified, confirmed the religious condemnation. At first sight, it seems perfectly reasonable to embrace the supportive model enthusiastically. Masturbation was, after all, a sin, and it became additionally, it is true, a cause of disease. Both *Onania* and *L'Onanisme* repeat it over and over again.¹⁰

⁵My methodological stance owes a lot to Foucault’s *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York, 1972), esp. pt. 3, chap. 2, “The Enunciative Function.” See also the very enlightening article by Arnold I. Davidson, “Foucault and the Analysis of Concepts,” in *The Emergence of Sexuality* (Cambridge, MA, 2001), 178–91.

⁶This article focuses exclusively on the conceptual aspects of the secularization of masturbation and does not make any claim about its social and cultural dimensions. I am currently working on a paper dealing with eighteenth-century letters written by masturbators in which I show how changes in the conceptual structures of discourses can affect people’s experience of masturbation and sex.

⁷Flandrin, *Le Sexe et l’Occident* (Paris, 1981), 298.

⁸Stolberg, “Self-Pollution,” 61.

⁹Mainil, *Dans les règles du plaisir . . .* (Paris, 1996), 184.

¹⁰I myself used to think in terms of support in a previous article on Tissot (“Le Pouvoir de la science dans *L’Onanisme* de Tissot,” *Gesnerus* 57 [2000]: 27–41). Many studies explicitly

But let's have a closer look at this issue through a question that crossed several centuries: Is it lawful to masturbate if it is only for the sake of health? It was indeed a common belief since antiquity that retention of semen could cause disease.¹¹ Authorities as prestigious as Galen (129–ca. 210) and Ambroise Paré (ca. 1510–90) and books as popular as the twelfth-century *Trotula* and the seventeenth-century *Aristotle's Masterpiece* all agreed on this question.¹² Yet as regards masturbation, the official doctrine of the Church was unequivocal: any kind of masturbation was a mortal sin, even when one masturbates for health's sake. At the fourth Lateran Council of 1215 under Innocent III it was explained that "since the soul is much more precious than the body, we forbid any physician, under pain of anathema, to prescribe anything for the bodily health of a sick person that may endanger his soul."¹³ Or, in the more explicit words of a seventeenth-century theologian, masturbation "is neither allowed for health, nor for life, nor for any other end. Therefore physicians seriously sin when they advise this practice for the sake of health, and those who obey them are not immune to mortal sin."¹⁴

adopt the supportive model, and most of the other ones do not reject it. Théodore Tarczylo is the only historian that I know of who very clearly opposes the supportive model. See Tarczylo, *Sexe et liberté au siècle des Lumières* (Paris, 1983), esp. 72–73, 93–95.

¹¹Secondary sources on the subject include Günter Elsässer, "Ausfall des Coitus als Krankheitsursache in der Medizin des Mittelalters," *Abhandlungen zur Geschichte der Medizin und der Naturwissenschaften* 3 (1934): 3–40; Jean Stengers and Anne Van Neck, *Masturbation: The History of a Great Terror*, trans. Kathryn Hoffmann (New York, 2001), 30–32; Annemarie and Werner Leibbrand, *Formen des Eros* (Freiburg, 1972), 2:11–30; Aline Rousselle, *Porneia* (Paris, 1983), 85–102; Laurinda S. Dixon, *Perilous Chastity* (Ithaca, NY, 1995), esp. 20–24; Audrey Eccles, *Obstetrics and Gynaecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (Kent, OH, 1982), 77–83.

¹²Galen, *Galen on the Affected Parts*, ed. and trans. Rudolph E. Siegel (Basel, 1976), bk. 6, chaps. 5–6, 182–97; Ambroise Paré, *Dix livres de chirurgie* (Paris, 1573), 225–40; Monica H. Green, ed. and trans., *The Trotula: A Medieval Compendium of Women's Medicine* (Philadelphia, 2001), 85; *Aristotle's Master-Piece; or, The Secrets of Generation Displayed in All the Parts Thereof* (London, 1684), 6, 77–78. See also the long list of authors in Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621; reprint, New York, 2001), 234–35.

¹³*Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, *Nicaea I to Lateran V*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London, 1990), Fourth Lateran Council, chap. 22, 246.

¹⁴François Tolet, *L'Instruction de Prestres qui contient sommairement tous les cas de conscience* (Lyon, 1628), bk. 5, chap. 13, nos. 10, 11, quoted in Flandrin, 263. Stengers and Van Neck give the examples of nine theologians who all condemned "therapeutic" masturbation (26–29). Elsässer's study deals with Johann von Wesel, a theologian who argued that it was not a sin. Johann von Wesel, however, encountered many problems with the ecclesiastic authorities and certainly did not represent the official doctrine of the Church. See L. Cristiani, "Rucherat Jean [Johann von Wesel]," in *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, 1939), 14:145–49; Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexualité et savoir médical au Moyen-Âge* (Paris, 1985), 209.

Onania, written “to promote virtue and Christian purity,” gives the same answer as the Church.¹⁵ This book contains many letters from people asking the author questions or arguing with him, and several readers wondered whether one could masturbate if it were not for lusty reasons but only for getting rid of “what would otherwise, by long retention, become poisonous” (*O*, 122). The author of *Onania* always answered in the negative and gave two different kinds of reasons why one should never think about masturbation as a possible cure.

First of all, he had “reason to suspect that what is generally ascribed to that cause [retention of semen], is owing to something else” (*O*, 113–14). When a “gentleman” referred the author of *Onania* to a ten-page text written in Latin by a certain L. Salomon Sckmieder and offering four proofs against the idea of retention of semen, it was translated into English and inserted in the *Supplement to the Onania*.¹⁶ The first proof explained that the “seminal bags” are very small and that there is a “continual and daily afflux [of semen] into them.” Given that these seminal bags “are no ways capable of receiving and containing only such a quantity of seed as must be made in seven or eight weeks (I will say nothing of many years), and so long till a man lawfully cohabits with a woman,” it follows that “it is requisite that the seed goes off again to the mass of blood” (*Sup*, 69).

While the next two proofs are also based on bodily phenomena, the last proof is of a very different kind:

I believe moreover, that if the seed did not circulate in the body, it would be utterly impossible for unmarried men to abstain from fornication, by reason of the ever growing quantity of seed, and the continual prickling that it would give to abominable lust, not to speak of the various and most dangerous diseases, such an abundance of seed would produce, if the quantity of it could no way be lessened but by matrimony. But God, who abominates impurity, has in His word severely forbid fornication, which he would not have done, if men had been left destitute of the means to avoid it. If we say otherwise, we must believe God to be the author of sin, which is blasphemy. What is to be said of the chastity of the patriarchs and other holy men? (*Sup*, 70–71)

Sckmieder’s text on the circulatory motion of the seed, with its use of physiological and anatomical concepts—sometimes obviously inspired by William Harvey—and with its ultimate theological argument, is a perfect

¹⁵*Onania*, 8th ed. (London, 1723; reprint, New York, 1986), 1. Hereafter cited in the text as *O*. I have modernized the spelling.

¹⁶*Supplement*, 66–75. Hereafter cited in text as *Sup*. The *Supplement* was bound together with *Onania* and has been reprinted in the same Garland edition.

example of how medicine supported religion.¹⁷ Without a doubt, for some contemporaries Sckmieder's ranting was "ridiculous, inconsistent with reason, and the effects of dreaming or melancholy."¹⁸ Nonetheless, the intentions of the author of *Onania* were plain: by arguing against the possibility of diseases caused by retention of semen, the goal was to deter anyone from using masturbation as a cure. The lurking danger was that therapeutic masturbation would be an invitation to "uncleanness": "I am well assured, that if once it is taken for granted, that masturbation is no sin if committed for health's sake, it will be a vast inlet for wickedness, and be perpetually made a handle of by lustful people, to indulge themselves in their uncleanness, and justify an abominable practice" (*Sup*, 63).

In addition to Sckmieder's arguments, the author of *Onania* in another place in the text rhetorically supposed that he was wrong and gave a second reason why masturbation should be avoided:

But let us suppose a man really laboring under such a retention, and actually suffering the ill consequences of it. . . . I cannot see why he should not look upon this, in the same manner as he would upon any other affliction sent him by the hand of God, either for trial or chastisement. Let him apply himself to a skilful physician, and I can assure him, that there never was a distemper, produced in a body otherwise healthy, *a semine diutius retento* [*by a too long retention of semen*], that was not, or might not have been easily cured by diet and exercise, and perhaps a little bleeding. (*O*, 113)

In *Onania* masturbation could not be offered as a cure not only because it would be blasphemous to believe that chastity could cause disease but also because even in the hypothetical case of a man suffering from retention of semen, other more appropriate curative methods should be applied.

¹⁷Sckmieder, however, conceded that diseases caused by retention of semen could occur, but only because "a man may spoil and disturb this motion of the seed, by excesses in diet, and various meats and liquors" (*Sup*, 71–72). In other words, only sinners could suffer from retention of semen.

¹⁸Math. Rothos, *A Whip for the Quack; or, Some Remarks on M - - N's Supplement to His Onania* (London, 1727), 44. The content of the book proves beyond doubt that "M - - N" refers to the surgeon John Marten (ca. 1670–1737). Despite this indication and despite the fact that three specialists in the history of masturbation have recently suggested that it was Marten who wrote *Onania*, there are, in my opinion, too many fundamental differences between the content of Marten's books and *Onania* for them to have been written by the same person. Since it would be irrelevant to my argument to list these differences, I will content myself with continuing to treat *Onania* as an anonymous book. On Marten as the author of *Onania*, see Stolberg, "Self-Pollution," 53–55 (Stolberg offers Marten as a hypothesis and remains very cautious); James G. Donat, "Les Extraits de Tissot choisis par Wesley: Un *Imprimatur* méthodiste," in Vincent Barras and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier, eds., *La Médecine des Lumières: Tout autour de Tissot* (Geneva, 2001), 264–65; Laqueur, 31–32.

If we turn now to *L'Onanisme*, we can see, by remaining at the most obvious level of factual evidence, that the surface of the supportive model begins to crack in some places. Let's look at a most revealing passage in *L'Onanisme*, a three-page "short digression."¹⁹ Here is an excerpt: "A very robust widow, forty years old, who had enjoyed very often, for a long time, the physical act of love, and who had been deprived of it for a few years, fell from time to time into such violent hysterical fits, that she could not use her senses anymore; no remedy could dissipate the fits; one could stop them only with strong friction of the genitals, that sent her into a convulsive trembling followed by a copious ejaculation, and at the same time she regained her senses" (*L'O*, 175/156). Tissot, who had been condemning masturbation for almost two hundred pages, is suddenly explaining, without even any form of apology, that an ejaculation provoked by friction of the genitals can be a good cure in some cases. In the English edition that I have used for this essay, the three-page digression is written in Latin. It constitutes not only the longest passage in Latin in Tissot's text but also the only passage in Latin that is not a quotation from an author who had originally written in this language. Obviously, these three pages were problematic, and Latin had the function of censorship.²⁰

Tissot's critical passage did not escape the attention of some of his contemporaries. Mostly summarizing Tissot's views on masturbation, Menuret de Chambaud (1733–1815), in his article on masturbation in Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, explained that under certain conditions—which will be the concern of the next section of this essay—masturbation "is followed by no health problem and is not a bad thing [*n'est point un mal*] (in medicine)."²¹ Menuret was not here introducing a slight reservation about Tissot's *L'Onanisme*, as some scholars have thought.²² He was, on the contrary, perfectly faithful to Tissot's medical system.

Tissot himself was following a long medical tradition. In *De locis affectis* (book 6, chapter 5), Galen dealt, among other things, with diseases caused

¹⁹Tissot, *L'Onanisme* (1760; reprint, Paris, 1991), 175. Hereafter cited in the text as *L'O*. I have quoted here from the following contemporary translation: Tissot, *Onanism; or, A Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation*, trans. A. Hume (London, 1767), 156. I will use Hume's translation except when a passage is in Latin or is not included in this English edition, in which cases I will translate from the modern French edition. Page numbers for both editions will be given parenthetically in the text in the following manner: *L'O*, 175/156.

²⁰Tarczylo made this point in *Sexe et liberté*, 120. He indicates that the Latin censorship is present in some French editions but not in all (261 n43). In *Le Latin ou l'empire d'un signe* (Paris, 1998), 291, Françoise Waquet mentions the censorship role of Latin in *L'Onanisme* while focusing on a passage other than Tissot's "short digression."

²¹Menuret de Chambaud, "Manstupration ou Manustupration," in *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* (Paris, 1765), 10:51.

²²Stengers and Van Neck, 78; Roselyne Rey, *Naissance et développement du vitalisme en France de la deuxième moitié du 18e siècle à la fin du Premier Empire* (Oxford, 2000), 263–65.

by retention of semen. He explained that some men, “if they do not have regular sexual relations, feel heavy in the head, become nauseated and feverish, have a poor appetite and bad digestion. Plato compared these people to trees overloaded with fruit.”²³ Consequently, people who suffered from retention of semen had to ejaculate, including by masturbating. Galen gave the example of Diogenes the Cynic, who “had discharged the sperm by manual friction of his genitalia.”²⁴ Likewise, in a book explicitly written against *Onania*, “Philo-Castitatis” gave an example of a chaste young man suffering from the distempers brought about by his retention of the seed: “[B]leeding and purging were ordered, but with no success. . . . [A]fter a long time spent, and the man nothing better, at last masturbation was allowed, whereby, upon two or three copious discharges, the vessels became flaccid, the patient quickly restored, and quickly after married.” The point was of course to demonstrate that under “the present circumstances and the imminent danger,” masturbation was not a sin.²⁵

Between Galen and Tissot lay several centuries of medical tradition advocating sex for getting rid of superfluous and harmful semen. If marriage was the most acceptable cure in a Christian society, some authors, like Avicenna (980–1037), Albertus Magnus (ca. 1193–1280), and Anthonius Guainerius (d. ca. 1445), also recommended friction of the genitals.²⁶ Tissot’s suggestion for therapeutic masturbation appears logically in a passage concerned with diseases caused by retention of semen and actually starts with an example from Galen’s chapter on retention of the seed.²⁷

Before going any further, it is necessary to reply to an objection that could be made to my argument. Given that in the whole three pages of his

²³Galen, 184. The reference to Plato is in *Timaecus* 86C–86D.

²⁴Galen, 185.

²⁵Philo-Castitatis, *Onania Examined, and Detected; or, The Ignorance, Error, Impertinence, and Contradiction of a Book Call’d Onania, Discovered, and Exposed*, 2nd ed. (London, 1724), 99–100.

²⁶See Helen R. Lemay, “William of Saliceto on Human Sexuality,” *Viator* 12 (1981): 177–78; Jacquart and Thomasset, 202–13, 236–42; Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1993), 259–77; Elsässer.

²⁷From my point of view, Michael Stolberg made a fundamental mistake when he claimed that Tissot, like the author of *Onania* and Salomon Sckmieder, “refuted traditional views that, at least in some cases, masturbation might rid the body of superfluous, corruptible semen. . . . Tissot and his followers affirmed instead that superfluous semen, after its refinement in the seminal vessels, did not putrefy, but returned into the body where it was responsible for the specifically masculine traits of the male body” (“An Unmanly Vice: Self-Pollution, Anxiety, and the Body in the Eighteenth Century,” *Social History of Medicine* 13, no. 1 [2000]: 5). It is true that, like Sckmieder, Tissot argued that semen returns “into the mass of humours” (*L’O*, 76/54) and that it has the effect of making the beard grow, and so on (*L’O*, 78–79/56–57). But Tissot’s point in the pages that Stolberg refers to was only to prove that semen is important for the whole body, while Sckmieder wanted to prove that in chaste people there is no retention of semen and therefore no disease caused by it. In his chapter containing the “short digression,” Tissot very explicitly argued that semen, “by its superfluity,” may “produce disorders” (*L’O*, 175/156).

short digression, Tissot (unlike “Philo-Castitatis” and Menuret) actually never used the word “masturbation,” was he really referring to this practice? In fact, some of the ways that he suggested for getting rid of semen remain vague. Literally translated, they are “renunciation to abstinence,” “friction of the genitals,” “application of an acrid pessary,” “excitation of the spermatic evacuation,” and “marriage” (which Tissot said is “often an inappropriate remedy”). Masturbation would fit perfectly in this list, but Tissot (or his editor) was perhaps afraid to give an invitation to excess had he been more explicit (hence the use of the Latin language in some editions) or there was perhaps a personal resistance on his part to qualify masturbation positively. A century before Tissot, the French physician Lazare Riverius (1589–1655), talking about “madness from the womb,” declared that “some advise that the genital parts should be by a cunning midwife so handled and rubbed, as to cause an evacuation of the over-abounding sperm.” But he immediately added that, “being a thing not so allowable, it may suffice whilst the patient is in the bath, to rub gently her belly on the region of the womb, not coming near the privy parts.”²⁸ If, on the contrary, Tissot went so far as to accept and promote, in some specific cases, friction of the genitals, we can easily imagine how he might have been uncomfortable to go one step further and to explicitly call this practice “masturbation.” Even the playful Diderot (1713–84) did not dare to use the word “masturbation” in his *Suite de l’entretien*, a dialogue involving the fictional Dr. Bordeu and Mademoiselle de L’Espinasse. In this text Bordeu unmistakably alludes to therapeutic masturbation and defends it in a very Tissotian way, yet at the same time he takes care to reassure Mademoiselle de L’Espinasse: “I would not take my hat off in the street to a man suspected of practicing my doctrine; it would be enough to call him a despicable person.”²⁹ The fact that Tissot never used the word “masturbation” probably has its roots in the *mentalité* of the time, either because he could not free himself from it or because he did not have the courage to confront it.³⁰

²⁸Nicholas Culpeper, Abdiah Cole, and William Rowland, *The Practice of Physick, in Seventeen Several Books. . . . Being Chiefly a Translation of the Works of That Learned and Renowned Doctor, Lazarus Riverius* (London, 1655), 419–20.

²⁹Diderot, *La Suite de l’entretien* (1769; reprint, Paris, 1951), 938. Tarczylo analyzes this text in “Moral Values in ‘La Suite de l’Entretien,’” trans. James Coke and Michael Murray, *Eighteenth Century Life* 9, no. 3 (1985): 43–60. I could not agree more with the strong connection that he establishes between Tissot and Diderot.

³⁰In “How to Do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud’s *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*,” Arnold I. Davidson deals with a similar problem and shows how Freud’s new way of conceptualizing perversion was not in perfect agreement with his mentality. As Davidson explains, “Mentality and concept are two different aspects of systems of thought, and we should not expect them to be coherently connected all at once” (*Critical Inquiry* 13, no. 2 [1987]: 276–77; also in Davidson, *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 92). The consequence of this discrepancy between mentality and concept is, however, not exactly the same for Freud and Tissot: it led Freud to utter statements contradicting his own conceptual innovations, while it led Tissot not to explicitly use the word “masturbation.”

What is certain—and this is what really matters here—is that in *L'Onanisme*, as we will see, there is no conceptual reason for rejecting the idea of therapeutic masturbation and good conceptual reasons to advocate it. Tissot might not have used the expression itself or not in its most explicit form, but at the very least he certainly left room for it in his theory—a theory that owed a lot to Galen and a medical tradition that advocated therapeutic masturbation and that had been in conflict with the Church's doctrine. To put it in another way: the difference between Menuret de Chambaud and Tissot is only a difference in the degree of explicitness or audacity, for nothing in their texts enables us to argue for a conceptual incompatibility.³¹

2. CRITERIA FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF CONCEPTS

When it comes to giving one's opinion on the possibility of using voluntary extramarital ejaculation as a cure, *Onania's* views were religiously correct, while Tissot's followed the Galenic medical tradition. To record this fact would only contribute to a minor improvement in empirical accuracy if we do not attempt to scrape the surface of the supportive model and shift our attention from the mere presence of words toward the organization of concepts. To accomplish this, we need to locate in each book the fundamental underlying criterion that organizes statements about extramarital ejaculations.

In *Onania*, this criterion is the *will*, which separates sinful from innocent ejaculations. The fundamental role of the will appears very clearly in the many passages concerned with nocturnal pollution. The author of *Onania* assured a man who was worried about the nature of his wet dreams that “[i]nvoluntary actions we are not to account for. When a man keeps as great a guard over his thoughts as he is able whilst he is awake, his conscience needs not to be troubled at any thing that happens in his sleep, and therefore let no pollution disturb the tranquility of your mind, where the will is not accessory, or concerned” (*O*, 137). The words “When a man keeps as great a guard over his thoughts as he is able whilst he is awake” are of crucial importance in *Onania*. They are “the most essential part, that guards the whole paragraph against all censure” (*Sup*, 27). They

³¹If Menuret used the word “masturbation,” it is significant that he stressed twice in the same sentence that he was only talking from a medical point of view. His sentence explaining that masturbation is not always a bad thing starts with “It is in this [medical] sense that we say . . .” and ends up with “. . . is not a bad thing (in medicine).” Moreover, Menuret was even more careful in another article in which he also explained that evacuation of semen can sometimes be required. In this article, marriage “is the only means authorized by religion, laws and customs, to make excretion of semen lawful, but it is not the only one to make it healthful [*avantageuse*]; a physician is however obliged to keep to it and often to sacrifice the health of his patients because of it” (Menuret, “Satyriasis,” in *Encyclopédie*, 14:703–4).

determine the conditions under which a nocturnal pollution is not sinful, and they place *Onania* in line with a theological tradition that asked for each nocturnal pollution what had been the exact role of the will in its occurrence. To paraphrase an example given by Thomas Aquinas, one can have a nocturnal pollution because one was thinking about sex while awake, but one might have been thinking about such a topic either with abhorrence (for instance, if it happened in a speculative discussion) or with concupiscence. In the former case, the nocturnal pollution is not sinful; in the latter case, it is sinful.³² Following the same logic, it was also possible to render sinful a pollution that occurred involuntarily if one remembered it with pleasure and delight, for in this case one “chooses that which was in itself involuntary: and that which being natural was innocent, becoming voluntary is made sinful.”³³ In Christian theology, nocturnal pollution came to serve as “a yardstick [*analyseur*] of concupiscence, in that it helped to decide—in the light of what formed its background, initiated it, and finally unleashed it—the part played by the will in forming these images, feelings, and memories in the mind [*âme*].”³⁴

Onania warned not only that one must keep a guard over one’s thoughts but also that “it is not only lawful, but likewise necessary by diet and exercise to subdue the rage of lust where it is required . . . and single men, who would preserve this virtue, and complain of too great a secretion, act very imprudently if they indulge themselves in the use of generous wines, nutritive meats, high sauces, and other things which are known to be provocatives to Lust” (*O*, 132). If one were truly careful about both one’s thoughts and one’s regimen, then one would not be responsible in the event of a nocturnal pollution.

While it is true that involuntary nocturnal pollution “could never be counted a fault of ours,” the author of *Onania* made it very clear that “this excuse cannot be made for willful self-pollution” (*O*, 120). Because self-pollution was by definition voluntary, it was necessarily sinful, no matter the circumstances: it was forbidden “at all times without exception” (*Sup*, 62). A reader of *Onania*, however, dared to ask whether it would be criminal “for a man to ease himself voluntarily of that trouble and stimulus, which is the necessary result of a copious secretion and a long retention, provided the action be entirely free from mental impurity, and the person

³²Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York, 1947), pt. II-II, q. 154, art. 5, 2:1819–20.

³³Jeremy Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London, 1650), 89. Taylor is approvingly mentioned in *O*, 2.

³⁴Michel Foucault, “The Battle for Chastity” [1982], in Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, trans. Anthony Forster (New York, 1997), 192–93. See also James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago, 1987), 109. On the general history of the theological debates about pollution, see Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies* (Philadelphia, 1999), 14–34; and Debora Shuger, “‘Gums of Glutinous Heat’ and the Stream of Consciousness: The Theology of Milton’s *Maske*,” *Representations* 60 (1997): 1–21.

himself a single man? Or is it better to acquiesce in an involuntary emission, although that may and often will be attended with such marks of uncleanness, as cannot but be taken notice of, as well by those whose business extends to either bed or linen, as by our own selves?" (*O*, 127–28). To which the author of *Onania* replied, emphasizing once again the importance of the will: "[W]hatever is voluntarily done that way, is self-pollution, and consequently criminal. . . . Therefore pray acquiesce in the involuntary emissions, without making the least scruple of what you say about the linen" (*O*, 131).

Onania does not offer anything like the rigor, complexity, and beauty of Aquinas's *Summa theologica*, of course, but it is not "bad theology"³⁵ either, if we mean by this self-contradictory or blasphemous. It is a theologically coherent book in which sinful and innocent behaviors are separated and organized by the criterion of the will, exactly in the same way as it had been done for centuries by Christian theologians.

Tissot's *L'Onanisme* is governed by an entirely different principle than the will. The fundamental criterion structuring *L'Onanisme* is *bodily need*, which separates harmful from healthful ejaculations.³⁶ Most of the time, masturbators "drain nature . . . of that which is necessary" (*L'O*, 94/74); they get rid of "a most important liquor, which may be called the essential oil of the animal liquors" (*L'O*, 74–75/52). But "will" and "need" are not interchangeable concepts. If in some cases Tissot defended the possibility, as we saw, to apply friction to the genitals of sufferers, it was because in these cases the body needed to get rid of semen that had become harmful.³⁷

Unlike what the historian Karl Heinz Bloch claims, Tissot's "short digression" is therefore not in contradiction with the rest of *L'Onanisme*.³⁸ Far from being a conceptual incoherence within his system, Tissot's three pages

³⁵Freddy Mortier, Willem Colen, and Frank Simon, "Inner-scientific Reconstructions in the Discourse on Masturbation (1760–1950)," *Paedagogica Historica* 30, no. 3 (1994): 819.

³⁶Or *excess*, but this is only another formulation of the same criterion, since for Tissot what is excessively done is what is done beyond need.

³⁷In this respect, there is no marked difference between semen and other excretions. In *L'Onanisme* the focus is of course on semen, but Hieronymus Gaubius (1705–80)—to take an example from one of the medical authors quoted approvingly by Tissot in his short digression—talked about the dangers of immoderate and insufficient effusion of semen in the context of the general problem of "excretion and retention" (which was one of the traditional "six non-naturals"). Semen was then treated just like saliva, feces, urine, perspiration, sweat, milk, and blood—all causing different symptoms but all for the same two possible reasons, namely, excessive retention or excessive excretion (Gaubius, *Institutiones pathologicae medicinalis* [Edinburgh, 1762], sec. "excretio ac retention inordinata," 192–98). See also Achille-Guillaume Le Bègue de Presle, *Le Conservateur de la santé* (Paris, 1763). In the tenth chapter of his book, revealingly entitled "De la transpiration, de la sueur, de la salive, des urines et autres excréments qui sont trop abondantes, ou qui ne le sont pas assez" (292–335), Le Bègue (ca. 1735–1806) discussed semen and quoted Tissot but without mentioning his name.

³⁸Karl Heinz Bloch, *Masturbation und Sexualerziehung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 172–73.

are actually a sign of its great coherence—a coherence robust enough to produce statements that were in opposition to what was morally permissible in eighteenth-century Christian culture. And once again, Menuret de Chambaud could not be more faithful to Tissot's system when he explained that the fundamental condition under which masturbation "is not a bad thing" is when it is "only determined by need."³⁹

Tissot's discussion of nocturnal pollution also emphasized the role of bodily need in the determination of what was harmful and what was healthful. He first argued that when nocturnal pollution was "occasioned by a superabundance of semen," then "the evacuation is not a disorder, it is rather a favorable crisis" (*L'O*, 174/155–56). On the contrary, pollutions were harmful when they were "independent of necessity [*besoin*]. . . . They are then very disagreeable, being liable to cause all the dangerous effects of excessive evacuation produced by other means" (*L'O*, 179/161). He gave the example of a young woman "born with a lot of temperament" who "resisted all her solicitations" and who suffered from "involuntary pollutions," which occurred thirty to forty times a day and which, in combination with her native bad constitution and her "fervent devotion," "destroyed her little by little" (*L'O*, 177—this passage is omitted from the English edition). In fact, both in *L'Onanisme* and in his book on nervous diseases, Tissot stressed the dangers of excessive chastity, therefore defending the position that Sckmieder claimed to be blasphemous.⁴⁰

As for the question of voluntary nocturnal pollution, it is simply never mentioned in *L'Onanisme*. For Tissot, nocturnal pollutions were either diseases or favorable crises; they did not seem to be voluntary—or at least this aspect was not relevant, for pollutions were never discussed in these terms. Tissot was therefore approaching masturbation from a quantitative point of view, and it is precisely this stance that the author of *Onania* could not tolerate. The latter used to blow up at some of his "adversaries" who "make the act itself innocent, and the frequency or abuse of it only criminal; or . . . call it necessary, an easement of Nature, and pretend to prove, that in many cases, a total forbearance and abstinence from it, may be very prejudicial to health" (*Sup*, iv). On this point, if there was a difference between these adversaries of *Onania* and Tissot's *L'Onanisme*, it was mostly a difference in degree, for they all maintained, against the author of *Onania*, that what was first and foremost at stake in masturbation was the upset of a physiological equilibrium rather than the transgression of a divine law.

More precisely, the divine law was for Tissot embedded in the physiological laws, which is why he never found himself in an uncomfortable position, torn between medicine and theology. He never argued that friction of the

³⁹Menuret de Chambaud, "Manstupration," 10:51. Tarczylo correctly explains that for Tissot, Menuret, and Diderot, "[t]he point in question boils down to this: is ejaculation necessary or not?" ("Moral Values," 45).

⁴⁰Tissot, *Traité des nerfs et de leurs maladies* (Lausanne, 1784), vol. 2, pt. 1, 83–85.

genitals would be a way to cure some diseases but that for reasons of religious correctness we should not use it. Tissot was not the Swiss version of the Spanish seventeenth-century Cistercian Juan Caramuel (1606–82), who explained that “[w]ithout God’s interdiction” one would “be required to masturbate, under pain of mortal sin” if it were for health’s sake.⁴¹ In *L’Onanisme*, there was no interdiction from God, and Tissot even explicitly rejected any explanation in terms of “the special will of God.” He gave his reasons:

Being persuaded that bodies have, ever since their creation, been subjected to laws which necessarily regulate all their operations, and the economy of which has never been changed by divine influence, but in a very small number of select cases: I would not have recourse to miraculous interpositions [*causes miraculeuses*], except where we find a direct opposition to physical causes. This is not the case here: every thing may be clearly explained by the mechanical laws of the body, and by those which unite it to the soul. This disposition was attacked by Hippocrates, who, speaking of a disorder which the Scythians attributed to a particular punishment from God, makes this beautiful reflection: “It is true, that this disorder comes from God; but it comes in the same manner as all others do: no one comes more particularly from the Omnipotent than others, because they are all a necessary sequel to the laws of nature, which rule all things.” (*L’O*, 93/72)

If God has any role to play in *L’Onanisme*, it is only in the sense that He created the laws of nature. But He never intervenes directly. This is why postmasturbatory diseases have to be understood as *sequels* to the laws of the body and above all as the mechanical consequences of the excessive loss of what is needed by the body rather than as transcendental punishments from God. There is no “*particular* punishment from God” because there is no intervention of the “*special* will of God.” When Tissot warned that masturbators “find themselves guilty of a crime, the punishment of which with instant death divine justice did not think proper to defer” (*L’O*, 103/84), it was only in the sense of an immanent justice, a justice embodied in the very mechanism of the physical laws of the body.

In *Onania*, the situation is more ambiguous. Like Tissot, though in a much less elaborate way, the author of *Onania* described the masturbators’ symptoms as natural consequences of self-pollution. He explained, for instance, that “[w]hen the seminal vessels are first strained, and afterwards relaxed, the ferment in the testes is destroyed and the seed grown thin and waterish, comes away unelaborated, without any provocation;

⁴¹Caramuel, *Theologia moralis fundamentalis*, 3rd ed. (Lyon, 1657–64), pt. 2, vol. 3, 420–21, quoted in Stengers and Van Neck, 29.

this distemper often proves fatal” (O, 18).⁴² Unlike *L’Onanisme*, however, *Onania* also contains passages warning against God’s punishment in the hereafter. The anonymous author conceded in several places that “[w]e daily see multitudes of great sinners thriving in this world; but this is no argument that they shall never be punished for their offences hereafter” (O, 124)—God’s justice was not necessarily immanent. Moreover, there was also the possibility of God deciding to punish someone in this life by using means other than inflicting disease: “Sometimes one may perceive the Judgments of God hanging over the heads of the unchaste, and threatening to fall upon them; sometimes actually and visibly pursuing them in their own persons, or in their relations, or their affairs in the world, making them groan under the miseries, sorrows, and divers evils they have brought upon themselves” (O, 29, my emphasis). God’s justice did not necessarily express itself in the laws of the body. Whereas in *L’Onanisme* these laws were sufficient by themselves for explaining *everything* caused by masturbation, in *Onania* they were dethroned, if not replaced, by God’s Judgment. Although God was present in both books, *L’Onanisme* offered purely naturalistic explanations in which God’s special will did not play any role, while *Onania* brought together, in a disorderly fashion, rare and terse naturalistic explanations with supernatural interventions.⁴³

3. CONCEPTUAL STRUCTURES OF *Onania* AND *L’Onanisme*

Each of the two books that I have considered has a specific internal coherence. Each is organized according to a different criterion that makes certain statements possible and others impossible or irrelevant. I would like now to lay out a more complete picture of the respective conceptual structures of *Onania* and *L’Onanisme* by focusing on the way theological and medical concepts combine with one another to organize statements about extramarital ejaculations.

Figure 1 represents the conceptual structure of *Onania*. The two bold arrows on top represent the necessary relations of the concepts of sin and

⁴²This sentence is a paraphrase from Marten, *A Treatise of the Venereal Disease*, 7th ed. (London, 1711), 107. In *Onania*, the explanations for the physical harmfulness of masturbation are limited to a few lines, and most of them are either quotations from physicians Michael Ettmüller (1644–83) and Edward Baynard (b. 1641) or paraphrases from Marten’s book, though Marten is not named, and one could believe that the author of *Onania* was speaking in his own name.

⁴³The distinction between natural and supernatural explanations, of course, does not lie in the presence or absence of God but in the presence or absence of His special will. See Lester S. King, “Some Basic Explanations of Disease: An Historian’s Viewpoint,” in H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr. and Stuart F. Spicker, eds., *Evaluation and Explanation in the Bio-medical Sciences* (Dordrecht, 1975), 11–27.

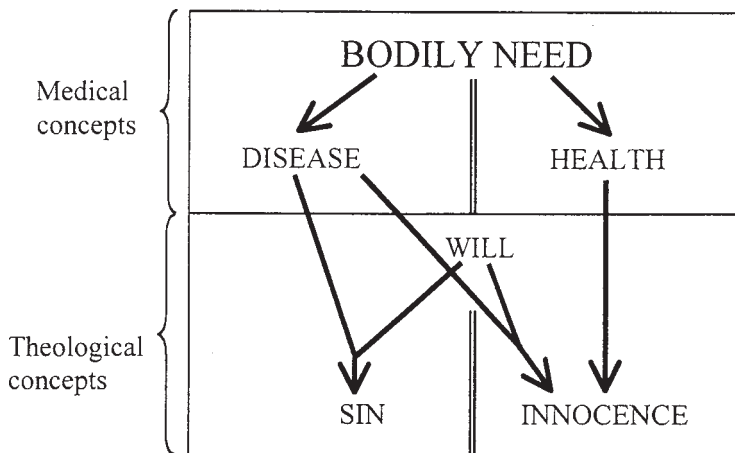


Figure 1. Conceptual structure of *Onania*.

innocence with the criterion of the will. These two relations can be expressed by the following rules:

If an extramarital ejaculation occurs involuntarily, then it is innocent.

If an extramarital ejaculation occurs voluntarily, then it is sinful.

These two rules constitute the core of the conceptual structure of *Onania*. They are necessary because involuntary extramarital ejaculations are *by definition* innocent and voluntary extramarital ejaculations are *by definition* sinful. Any exception to one of these two rules would have been a self-contradiction on the author's part.

There is another necessary rule in *Onania* between the concepts of self-pollution and health. It obeys the following *negative* rule:

If an extramarital ejaculation is caused by self-pollution, then it cannot cause health.

This relation appears to be most important and problematic for the author of *Onania*. It is also the point that very clearly reveals how the theological structure of the book overdetermines the way medical arguments are used. With the help of Sckmieder's piece, which was inserted in the *Supplement to the Onania* with the explicit intention "[t]o prevent this plausible plea of the seed's retention, from doing any further mischief to chastity" (*Sup*, 64), the anonymous author took great pains to show that the idea of therapeutic masturbation does not make any sense, since there is no retention of semen. Yet probably because the belief in the possibility of diseases caused by retention of semen was held by most physicians, he went even further and claimed that in the very rare cases where retention of semen would cause disease, another curative practice should be used, like diet, exercise, and bleeding. The negative necessary relation between self-pollution and health rests therefore on medical arguments but was clearly motivated by religious reasons.

There is a fourth relation between concepts in *Onania*, represented by the dotted line between self-pollution and disease. This relation does not take the form of a necessary rule, although it depends on the third necessary rule. Between self-pollution and disease there is what could be called an “associative relation”:⁴⁴

Self-pollution tends to be described as causing disease.

We can diminish the vagueness carried by the idea of “tendency” by stating that in order for a relation to qualify as an associative relation, it must have the following properties: there is such a relation between concepts A and B if A causes B, but not in a necessary way, and if A cannot cause the opposite of B. This is the case with the sin of self-pollution (A) and disease (B) in *Onania*: self-pollution is often presented as a cause of disease, but not always (since “[w]e daily see multitudes of great sinners thriving in this world”); and it is impossible in *Onania* that self-pollution causes health (as we saw with the third necessary relation).⁴⁵ By contrast, according to this definition of an associative relation, there is no such relation between the sin of voluntary nocturnal pollution and disease, since although such pollution causes disease sometimes, it is never said that it cannot cause health.

The conceptual structure of *L’Onanisme* looks nothing like *Onania*’s (see figure 2). There are five necessary relations in *L’Onanisme* that can be expressed by the following rules:

If an extramarital ejaculation occurs when there is a bodily need for it, then it is healthful.

If an extramarital ejaculation occurs when there is no bodily need for it, then it causes disease.

If an extramarital ejaculation is healthful, then it is innocent.

If an extramarital ejaculation causes disease and if it happened voluntarily, then it is sinful.

If an extramarital ejaculation causes disease but happened involuntarily, then it is innocent.

The first and the second of these rules come directly from what has been described in the preceding section, but the last three rules need to be explained, especially since none of them is ever explicitly stated in *L’Onanisme*. It is true that they enable us to make sense of all the moral statements in Tissot’s book, and it is also true that there is no statement that contradicts them. Yet they could also logically be only very strong associative relations—so strong that there is no exception—rather than necessary relations.

If I believe, however, that they constitute necessary relations, it is because of Tissot’s ideas about morality, which are more developed in other

⁴⁴This expression was suggested to me by Arnold I. Davidson.

⁴⁵Within the limits set by this definition of associative relation, the tendency to associate two concepts can vary greatly, from the most insignificant (for instance, if it is said only in passing that self-pollution can cause disease) to the strongest (for instance, if it is said only in passing that self-pollution does not necessarily cause disease, which is the case in *Onania*).

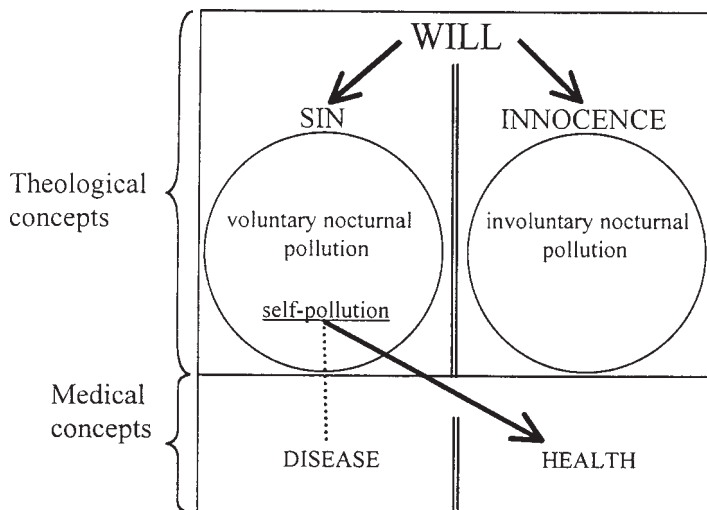


Figure 2. Conceptual structure of *L'Onanisme*.

texts than *L'Onanisme*. For instance, in his first book, defending the practice of inoculation of smallpox, Tissot explained that an act can be criminal only if it hurts oneself or someone else.⁴⁶ If we suppose that Tissot was not contradicting himself, then we can conclude that a healthful extramarital ejaculation, just like inoculation, does not hurt oneself or anyone else and therefore is not sinful. Thus innocence is implicitly but necessarily related to health, which is why no healthful extramarital ejaculation is ever described as sinful in *L'Onanisme*.

The two other relations also require looking at another text written by Tissot. In an interesting unpublished manuscript about moral philosophy, he offered a moral definition of health: it is “a disposition of the body, such that by making man happy in this regard, it enables him to discharge all his duties that his nature and the circumstances in which he can find himself impose on him.” This definition “makes the obligation to remain healthy one of the strongest obligations.”⁴⁷ People who were not responsible for their disease (for instance, in the case of harmful involuntary ejaculation) were never called “sinners” by Tissot, while he kept calling masturbators “criminals.” This is where the criterion of the will resurfaces: since the conservation of health was a moral duty, anyone who voluntarily put his health in danger was doing something morally wrong,

⁴⁶Tissot, *L'Inoculation justifiée* (1754; reprint, Lausanne, 1778), 101–2.

⁴⁷Tissot, “Principes de philosophie morale,” Tissot MSS, IS 3784/I/68, n.d., 39, Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire of Lausanne, Switzerland. See also a similar but less explicit idea in Tissot, *De la santé des gens de lettres* (Lausanne, 1768), 129–30.

except probably, we can imagine, if it were for a greater good. Since it is obvious that orgasms did not constitute for Tissot a greater good than health, we can conclude that in *L'Onanisme* there is an implicit necessary relation between what is harmful, voluntary, and sinful, and we can be confident that the only way to have a harmful ejaculation that is not sinful is when it occurs involuntarily.

4. METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

A *structural* analysis of concepts reveals fundamental differences where *lexical* analysis sees illusory continuities. Think again of the following basic sentence: "The sin of masturbation causes disease." This sentence could very well be found both in *Onania* and in *L'Onanisme*. By comparing words and sentences, one is led to the idea that the author of *Onania* and Tissot were saying basically the same thing and that both books are fundamentally equivalent. Yet if both authors were using the same words to write the same sentence, they were not making the same statement. The central concepts of the sentence, namely, sin and disease, were combined very differently with other concepts in each conceptual structure. The conditions for something to count as a sin, the conditions for something to count as a disease, and in the end the very conditions of possibility for the occurrence of such a simple sentence as "the sin of masturbation causes disease" are radically different in each book.

Such differences turn out to be crucial for deciding which texts participate in the secularization of morality and which texts do not. In the case of the history of masturbation, a structural analysis of concepts reveals that the secularization of morality supposedly present in *Onania* is only a masquerade: the structure of this book is theological. This is why self-pollution can never cause health and is insistently said to cause disease. The way self-pollution, disease, and health combine with one another is overdetermined by a theological structure. The situation is the reverse in *L'Onanisme*, where the criterion of the will is clearly subordinate to the criterion of bodily need, with the consequence that the question of sin and innocence is overdetermined by the question of health and disease: a healthful extramarital ejaculation is always innocent, and a necessary condition for an extramarital ejaculation to be sinful is that it is harmful. The morality of an extramarital ejaculation depends primarily on a division made by a secular criterion and secondarily only on a subdivision made by a theological criterion.

The method of lexical analysis should be given up. We need to look at and compare whole conceptual structures. The example of *Onania* shows that it is not because a book has recourse to medical terms that it is necessarily secularizing a moral question. *Onania* sometimes made use of a medical vocabulary, but it always followed a religious grammar. Granted,

in both *Onania* and *L'Onanisme* the relation between theology and medicine is not a relation of exclusion but of subordination. This they have in common. But if we do not go beyond the surface of words and formulas, we miss the fact that the relation of subordination in one text is inverted in the other text. The many similarities between *Onania* and *L'Onanisme* are superficial in the precise sense that they are the result of two categorically distinct systems. These two books are like two card games that can be played with the same deck but whose respective rules are altogether incompatible.

Except if by “secularization of morality” we mean a lexical farce in which old words wear new masks, we should not think that physicians secularized masturbation simply by *translating* the word “sin” into the words “cause of disease.” Rather, a moral object is truly secularized when there is a change in the “style of reasoning” manifest in new rules for the formation of statements about this object.⁴⁸ The “secularization of morality” is not merely a question of the *presence* of secular *terms* in a discourse, it is rather a question of how *concepts combine with one another*. The “secularization of morality” is not a gradual introduction of a medical terminology that served as varnish for decrepit religious ideas, it is a change in conceptual structure manifest, for instance, in a shift in the criterion used to classify behaviors, a shift not necessarily concomitant with the presence of medical jargon. The “secularization of morality” is not, finally, an additive phenomenon, where one discourse is superimposed on another one to justify, support, and reinforce it, it is a dynamic process that involves structural transformations that might affect the formal rules for deciding what is moral and what is not and therefore might alter the very content of morality. It is by being attentive to the transformations in the rules for the production of statements and not only to the presence of a new terminology, by digging into the formal organization of concepts rather than gliding over their shining surface, by discerning fundamental changes in conceptual structures instead of describing an increasing injection of secular terms into theological discourses, and by giving up the supportive model as well as the method of lexical analysis that one might, finally, penetrate the historical density of the secularization of morality and look away from its deceptive facade.

⁴⁸On the notion of “style of reasoning,” see Davidson, “Styles of Reasoning: From the History of Art to the Epistemology of Science,” in *The Emergence of Sexuality*, 125–41; Ian Hacking, “Language, Truth, and Reason” and “‘Style’ for Historians and Philosophers,” both in *Historical Ontology* (Cambridge, MA, 2002), 159–77, 178–99.