

THE JOY OF TORMENT
Understanding and Managing
Sadomasochism

Edited by
Salman Akhtar and Lisa Crilley



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To

To the memory of our fathers

Jan Nisar Akhtar

SA

Thomas Phillip Crilley III

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Introduction

While the dismal view of mankind espoused by “classical” psychoanalysis needs to be and, to a certain extent, has been tempered by later developments in the field (notably the British independent tradition), the psychosocial existence of human destructiveness, rage, and cruelty directed at others or oneself can hardly be denied. It was left to Freud’s genius to unmask that the two tendencies, respectively termed “sadism” and “masochism,” constitute a pair (“sadomasochism”) and frequently, if not invariably, coexist in one and the same fantasy, thought, and action. Sometimes one is on the surface and the other hidden, at other times the pattern is opposite, and then there are instances where rapid oscillation between the contrasting postures is cardinal. This much is widely agreed upon among mental health professionals.

Nonetheless many questions remain unanswered. Are sadism and masochism “natural” phenomena or products of derailed and traumatic nurture? Which is primary, which reactive? Are they always pathological? What are their various forms and functions? How can the human mind succeed in infusing sexual excitement and religious sanctimony in the stormy rivers of violence and torture? Can sadomasochistic relations be shaped in the direction of becoming

charitable and kind? And, what are the societally engineered or even sanctioned avenues for sadomasochistic scenarios to be staged? The search for answers to such questions (and many others in the same vein) has led to this book. In its pages, distinguished psychiatrists, psychologists, and psychoanalysts tackle the riddle of sadomasochism from heuristic, ontogenetic, nosological, psychodynamic, sociocultural, and therapeutic perspectives. Working in unison, their nuanced and thoughtful voices result in a hermeneutic chorus that is as informative as it is moving.