

The Semiotics of Coitus by Max Cafard

Contributed by Max Cafard

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^ ^ Se.mi.ot.ics - the study of signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior; the analysis of systems of communication, as language, gestures, or clothing. ^ Random House Dictionary ^ ^ I have a question. Raised eyebrows reply. What is it? When a man makes love with a woman, what feelings does he have for her in the different, various coital positions? I'm not sure I follow your question, Dave said, sitting up on one elbow. He had come only a few moments before, his last thrusts mimicking a death shudder, as if he would die right there in that bed. Suzanne had waited a polite amount of time before bothering him with language. She had waited for his face to return to its usual color and for his breathing to soften and rejoin hers. They lay naked in bed. The covers were pulled back by the corners, thrown diagonally across the bed. The pillows were askew. Suzanne was curled on her stomach, sprung to one side, with her hair across her face, twisted onto her shoulder. Well, could you say you have deeper feelings of affection or love for a woman in one position than you do in another? Dave's face betrayed that her question was not something he had thought deeply about. I don't know if you can call it love...he began cautiously. She waited. Depending on the view, if I like what I see, his hazel eyes twinkled, yes, I feel differently... I'm not asking you about lust, sweetie. I know you can get more excited in one position than in another. That's obvious. I can too. She pulled her hair out of her eyes, turned her face to meet his. I'm not asking about that. I'm asking if you experience different feelings for your partner, for me, when we make love in one position, than in, say, another position. Do the different positions have different meanings for you? Dave didn't say anything. He couldn't always trust that there was not a right or wrong answer to a woman's question. Suzanne knew this about him. ^ Arrow fleches of sunlight slanted through the window onto the corner of the bed. She answered her own question. I do. I can feel differently toward a lover in one sexual position than I do in another. In one position I might feel humiliation, and in another, attachment. I have all these meanings that come into my head during sex. Sometimes I have to fight to turn them off. I was wondering if men, that is, if you, even have these meanings to begin with. I'm not sure I do. His smile pulled gently across his face. That was another thing she liked about him. She rolled onto her side, facing him, tucking one of her legs in between his. Can you give me an example? He wrapped his arms around her and pulled her to him. An example...well, missionary position makes me feel the most connected of all the various positions for sex. It's warm and mutual and I can see into your eyes. Your eyes are green this afternoon, by the way. They are? Uh huh, but I feel less connected to you when you're behind me. I can't see you, although I know you can see me. I'm disconnected from you. Oh, I know you can watch me while we fuck, that you do watch me, that you can see the nape of my neck... Your beautiful behind. Uh huh, and I know that you like that position, I like that position too, but sometimes I feel like a beautiful object. I don't feel a heart connection with you. Okay, I can understand that. He paused. I feel a connection to you when we make love that way, Dave said in a voice that was smaller. I'm not saying I don't like that position, because I do. Another position might bring up yet another feeling ...there aren't right and wrong answers here. I just want to know what you feel. I'm curious. What did you mean about humiliation? Is that a good feeling, or a bad feeling? She rubbed her face into the warm salt and pepper hair on his chest, inhaling softly, then she exhaled. Humiliation, hmm. I guess that would depend on a few things. When I go down on a man - especially in the position we were in this afternoon, you know, when you were standing and I was on my knees - when I look up at you, that position can give me a feeling of humiliation. She faltered as self consciousness flooded in. You know, the Monica Lewinski position. I know men really love that. Men love it when a woman looks up into their eyes while she gives him head. He chuckled. Yep. But was that humiliating for you? No, it wasn't, because I really wanted to give you a blow job. She licked her lips. You did? Yeah, I did. Today that position meant, I'm sexy, I'm really turned on, I want you. She nuzzled him. It only feels humiliating when I'm not turned on, if I'm not ready. But you were ready today? Uh huh. It doesn't work for me when a man asks me to give him a blow job, when it's obvious I'm not ready, when I'm not wet, before I'm turned on. I might do it anyway, because I want to be nice to him, because I care about him, because I want him to feel good, but sometimes I can end up feeling humiliated. That can be servicing a guy, you know, married sex. That can feel humiliating in a bad way, in a very not sexy way. So you like giving blow jobs when it's your idea? Uh huh. Blow jobs are sexy when you want to do them, and humiliating when you don't? Exactly, you got it. Do you think that is universal for most women, or particular to you? I couldn't say. I'd be curious about that. Maybe I should check it out with other women, I could ask my girlfriends for you. She laughed. Maybe it's not just you. Maybe not, but I can't say. I haven't taken a scientific survey yet, but I will. I'll do it. So what does getting on top mean to you? Female dominant is, well, female dominant - active. When a man likes it, it doesn't mean much, but when he doesn't like it, it means a lot. What does it mean when he doesn't like it? It means he isn't comfortable giving up control for a while, losing himself to my rhythm. It could mean he lacks confidence in himself. On the other hand, if he wants me to get on top all the time, it probably means he has a heart condition. Raised eyebrows again. He laughed. I have a heart condition. Yeah, I know, but you don't get exhausted and need for me to get on top all the time. You just like it when I do. She laughed and rolled on top of him. If I wanted to be on top all the time, that would mean something, wouldn't it? I guess so. She kissed him, then rolled back to his side. Sixty nine is mutual, perfectly symmetrical. It's obvious why it's my favorite position. There's no possibility of any kind of power imbalance there... but when you go down on me, that's something entirely different. Dave smiled. When you go down, I have to relax. Uh huh. ...and trust that you want to do what you're doing, that you're enjoying it. I do. I know you do. She kissed his neck. His skin was warm and moist. But not all men do. She kissed his neck again. That's why I trust you. You don't go down on me just so I'll go down on you, or just so I'll have intercourse with you. You go down on me because you want me to feel good. She kissed his lips. I do. I know, Suzanne whispered. They held each other as silence settled over them like a summer comforter. I guess I have found plenty of men who didn't care about that. So when you pleasure me, I feel you love me. If a man doesn't, or refuses to go down, I feel he

doesn't love me. I don't ask for that. I tried to, but I don't like to ask a man to go down. I want him to do it because he wants to, not because I asked him to. Dave let that sink in, holding her. They heard the small creak of a tree branch rubbing on the bedroom window. I think blow jobs are much more complex than cunnilingus even though they are analogous. How? he asked. We covered the sexy versus not sexy/bad humiliation thing just now, but there's also good humiliation. What is good humiliation? Believe it or not, I'm running out of words. He laughed. She paused to pull in language. Good humiliation is when I feel I'm a bad girl. I'm bad because I like sex. I'm bad because I like to give blow jobs. I give blow jobs because I'm a bad girl. But I'm also a good girl, I want to please my Daddy. I give blow jobs because I'm a good girl. Good humiliation is complex. Blow jobs are complex. Maybe you're over thinking it. She sighed. I don't think these things, I feel them. I'm only talking about all of this, finding language for it, so I can share it... you know, I really like your chest hair. His hair curled around her fingers. What is that about? Is that about Daddy? No, that's not about Daddy. That's about sexy Jewish boyfriends in college with lots of chest hair. Oh, good. He chuckled. What do you feel when a woman gives you a blow job? He laughed. Well, let's see... Not the physical sensations in your dick, the more complex feeling states I'm describing. Dave became quiet, thinking. When a woman goes down on you, do you feel virile? Powerful? Dominant? Yes, his voice inflected up, I feel powerful. I can get a woman to do this to me, to do this for me. She is submitting to this sex act. In that sense, I am dominant. But I also have to trust her. Trust her to do what? Not to bite my dick off. Bite your dick off? Who would do that? Why would I bite you? You could get too excited and forget. So you feel vulnerable? Yes. Now we're getting somewhere! Dave laughed. Suzanne pulled herself up on her elbow. Some men feel very vulnerable when they get a blow job. I always forget this! So during fellatio, I'm feeling that you are in control, and you're feeling that I am in control. Yes. We are each thinking the other is experiencing the opposite of what they are actually experiencing. I guess you're right. That's interesting, she searched his face. Yes, it is. But simultaneously, we are experiencing what the other person thinks we are experiencing. You do feel dominate. I am submitting to the act. It's very complex. She settled back into his arms. So to sum up: missionary is connected, doggie style is objectified, sixty nine is balanced, cowgirl is just for fun, although not liking cowgirl is suspect, eating pussy is loving, blow jobs are complex. Yeah...so what about anal? He laughed. What about anal? Anal is about trust more than anything. I have to trust you not to lose control and hurt me. And I have to trust you to listen to me. When I say slow down, you have to slow down. When I say stop, you have to stop. Otherwise, you could hurt me. You have to trust me to pay close attention to you. Yes. So why does anal sex carry the cultural meaning that someone is getting 'screwed over badly,' you know, when it really means 'I trust you,' in fact, 'I trust you a lot'? He laughed again. That's not a rhetorical question. I don't know. I like anal sex, she said. I know you do. But I don't like the meaning of it in our larger culture. The semiotics of anal suck. Why doesn't 'bend over' mean 'I really love you, baby'? And there's another thing that sucks about all this, about the semiotics of coitus, she said. Which is what? Which is this: I've found that a man, well, a person really, who has had many lovers is usually more open-minded, more tolerant, more joyous in love-making than a person who has had a limited number of sexual experiences. I don't know if this is universal, but at least it's what I've found. Yes, I've found that to be true also. Yet, having a large number of sexual partners is generally considered sleezy, skanky, skuzzy, dirty, nasty, bad no good ho yuck. You're right again, Suzanne. So again, the larger cultural meaning doesn't fit my own experience, and this is even more true for women than it is for men. When a man has had many partners, he can be considered roguish, but if a woman does, she's a slut. Oh! There's a double standard? Okay, you're mocking me. Okay, he kissed her forehead, there's a double standard. Yes, there is. That sucks. Thank you. He took her hand and put it on her bush. The slanted light on the bed had moved onto her thigh. Do you want me to touch myself, Dave? Yes. Right now? Yes. Okay, we can talk about the meaning of that later. She fondled herself, at first delicately, slowly, and then with her body rolling and gasping and lurching. Dave watched her and sucked first one nipple, and then another, until she came. So what did that mean? he asked. It didn't mean anything, she smiled. Her heart pounded in her throat. Did it feel good? Yes, it did. I think that means something too. Okay, what does it mean? she asked, rolling toward him again, gathering herself up in his arms again, a new sensuous skin pulled over her body. It means you trust me enough to allow me to see that. Well, yes, it does mean that. It also means .. What? I don't know. It means I'm better at making myself come than a lover is at making me come. It means the existentialist's dilemma is essentially correct. Which is? We're born alone; we die alone. He laughed. But fucking makes us forget that for a while- good fucking, that is, she added. This is good fucking. Yes, it is. He kissed her as he cupped her ass. I hate to say this, said Dave, but I've got to go now. Do you? Yep, I have to get back to work. Well, thanks. That was good today. It's always good, Suzanne. She smiled. I love you, too. Å --end--