

What is truth in SEX? 3

In the place of the old, taboo sexual morality, a new, rational system of relationships between the sexes stresses maturity of personality.

Ideas about sexual relationships are today polarized into two main bodies of opinion: the emancipationists and the stay-as-you-were moralists. This ideological battle is being fought on a very narrow front: the circumstances in which a man and a woman should be allowed to go to bed with one another. Human sexual relationships are much more complex and significant than is recognized by this argument. In studying sexual relationships we are not concerned only with how man shall dispose of his procreative drive, but with the whole advance of human beings towards maturity and integration through the confrontation of person with person in the context of love.

The general impression left by the current debate is that our society has suddenly been hit by a moral decline in sexual values. The truth is, rather, that man-woman relationships in general, and sex values in particular, are in transition as part of a general movement of social change which is affecting for the better most of our person to person relationships within society.

GAINS AND LOSSES

If we contrast the typical attitudes to sexual morality of 50 years ago with those now established in society we notice a number of wholesome changes. For example:

■ There has been a steady decline in prudery. Although pockets of resistance persist in some of our sub-cultures, most of us are now prepared to expose ourselves to sun or sea, when opportunity offers, almost naked and quite unashamed.

■ We now regard our bodies as a fully legitimate source of pleasure, and are prepared to give them the attention and appreciation they deserve.

■ Sexual fulfilment is now regarded, not as a suspect pleasure, but as a source of mental health.

■ It is now recognized that creative vigour is not necessarily the product of suppressed or sublimated sexuality; it may well be the outcome of a happy sexual relationship.

■ Woman today has a more important place in society, and is more highly valued as a person, than she was 50 years ago. One sidelight of this emancipation is that she is now expected to experience physical passion. In 1913, the sexually alive woman was encouraged to regard herself as not quite nice. Today it is apprehension of frigidity which is more likely to cause a woman concern.

■ Birth control, formerly something quite unmentionable in decent society, is now accepted by the majority and discussed without embarrassment.

■ A cruel, intolerant attitude to divorce has been modified to sympathetic regret, except among our more condemnatory personalities.

All these changes are clearly gains. Sex in society is in a much healthier state than when doctors, priests, schoolmasters, and fathers thought it their duty to terrify ado-

lescent boys with lies about the effects of masturbation.

But all has not been gain. For one thing the pioneers of emancipation created a new set of anxieties by presenting sexual ecstasy as easily available for all who would master

LOVE is LOVELIER with...	SEX AND MARRIAGE	
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the techniques of love they propounded. This error has been perpetuated in a number of how-to-make-love books, which standardize procedures in terms of erotic zones and modes of caress, suggesting that a highly psychological relationship is primarily subject to physical skill. To point that out as an exaggeration is not to minimize the importance of skill.

These same books also assume that a perpetual high virility is normal in the male and that a woman, unless she is frigid, will frequently experience simultaneous orgasm, provided that her lover has the necessary acumen. Trying to live up to these overstated expectations, men have often come unnecessarily to doubt their manhood and women their capacity for love.

Another disadvantage of emancipation is the commercialization of sex, which has become possible through the decline in prudery. This has tended to diminish human

**She's longer, lower, wider, faster...
she simply outclasses everything
priced near her.**

Try her.

love into a kind of press button sexuality, actuated by the purchase of the right perfume, soap, and clothes. Again, the transition in attitudes towards sex has itself left many people confused in ideas, or behaviour, or both. Nonetheless, these problems of emancipation, seen against the squalor and confusion of traditional sex values, are nothing more than subsidiary growing pains in a movement within society towards healthier sexual attitudes. And the movement towards emancipation has not spent itself yet. It is no very bold prediction that, within the next decade or two, divorce for incompatibility, and homosexual relationships between consenting adults will be recognized by British law. Abortion law may also be reformed.

A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

The escape of our society, during the past half century, from extreme prudery, prejudice and intolerance in sexual values has permitted the emergence of a new qualitative evaluation of sexual relationships, which is of broader scope than earlier evaluations. The Church of England gives three reasons for marriage.

■ For the procreation of children.

■ As a remedy against fornication.
■ For companionship, help and comfort in prosperity and adversity.

Qualitatively these three reasons now seem rather incomplete because they omit the positive formative value in happy sexual relationships. To quote Professor G. M. Carr-Saunders, "A rewarding experience of sex gives more abundant life. To be without it limits your capacity as a human being." Dr. Anthony Storr writes: "The full development of personality can only take place in a setting of adult loving and being loved."

Our awakening to the significance of the sexual relationship in human development has directed attention to another qualitative aspect of human sexuality—its development in time. A fully satisfying sexual reciprocity is not to be obtained overnight. It is the outcome of a progressive refinement of feeling and sensitivity as one plateau of fulfilment succeeds another. The advance may be sustained only through genuinely other-regarding love, in which passion, tenderness and mutual respect are all present. In essence, the growth from the first pre-pubertal shy exchanges of glances to mature, reciprocal, passionate sexuality is a continuum of experience, of which the various stages have to be encountered and lived through in order that the mature experience may ultimately flower.

Once we begin to evaluate human sexual relationships qualitatively and developmentally, it becomes plain that the primitive taboo system of sexual morality, with which it was sought to control sex in the past, is now inappropriate. For a modern society, taboo morality is too rigid, insensitive, black or white, condemnatory and cruel. The alternative to the declining taboo system of sexual morality is emerging as a rational morality founded in human nature, human development and the needs of society. The supreme individual need is personal wholeness; the supreme social need is happy marriage. These desired outcomes require that social evaluations about sexual behaviour should be based on qualitative assessment throughout the whole period of sexual maturation.

ABANDON TABOO MORALITY

This developmental approach collides with the persisting remnants of the taboo system. Taboo morality evaluates sexual love within marriage as pure, noble, even divine, whereas it condemns all sexual love outside marriage as dirty, ignoble and evil. This is not realistic. Quality in sexual relationships is not conferred by marriage. It is possible

FATHER'S CRIME.

LIGHT SENTENCE FOR A TERRIBLE OFFENCE.

A painful case was heard at Glamorgan Assizes. Walter Reynolds, 37, labourer, of Aberfan, near Merthyr, was indicted for having assaulted in December last his little daughter, Norah, 15 years and a half. It

to have shamefully degraded sexuality within marriage and mature, creative physical love outside it. Taking the first for granted, here are two outline case histories which indicate the second:

■ A young Canadian was left with several slight physical handicaps as the result of a riding accident in childhood. He was intelligent, and qualified for a profession. Emotionally he was troubled by a lack of confidence in himself which impeded his relationships with girls, although he had one or

two deep attachments. In his late 20s he hit a rather bad patch. He began to drink and smoke rather heavily, to put on weight, and to lose his professional drive. At this time he got to know a woman some years his senior, with whom he found he had many interests in common. They became friends and he confided some of his problems to her. While both were in a holiday group, they made an overnight stop at an hotel. In the middle of the night, the young man came to the woman's room in a state of great emotional stress, partly because he felt he might prejudice a future marriage relationship if he remained a virgin much longer. She took him into bed with her and, in the weeks that followed, she led him to gain assurance in himself as a man. He gave up drinking and smoking heavily, regained his fitness, and began to advance again professionally. His parents, friends and colleagues all noted a new confidence in him. ■ A young man and woman at university fell in love and, during their second year, started to live together. She was reading a social science; he was studying a technology with no great enthusiasm but with an incentive in the big money towards which his degree would lead. The effect of their relationship was to bring out the idealism of both and to convince the young man of the futility of pursuing his original goal. He decided to change from his technological degree to a field in which he could study people and, later, continue his new work as a profession. A difficulty arose because no vacancy for the course he wanted was available in his first university. The young man and young woman talked the problem over and came to the conclusion that the young man should transfer to another university where there was an opening. This he did and they now see each other only in vacations.

The significant point here is that the young man was helped to find himself through his relationship with the girl; he ceased drifting through a course that had become meaningless for him and gained sufficient sense of purpose to make the switch to a new field. Each had to sacrifice the love and companionship of term time in order that he might do so. Whatever we say about behaviour of this kind, we certainly cannot describe it as evil either in intent or consequences.

Case histories such as these serve to show that the absolute denials of taboo morality are not applicable to all pre-marital relationships. Taboo morality cannot take into account the quality of the relationships, the underlying motives and the developmental effects. It is merely nonplussed by such case histories, just as it is by an inquiry, like that of Logan and Goldberg, in which premarital relationships are judged to correlate, in some cases, with a high level of maturity and socialization. Because of an excessive absorption with the sex act itself, taboo morality is forced to ignore the most important aspects of human sexuality and to condemn responsible premarital relationships as all of a piece with irresponsible casual promiscuity.

The crux of the matter is this: we have in our society two systems governing sexual relationships, an anciently established taboo system and an emerging developmental morality. Only confusion can result from trying to found sexual behaviour both on a rigid taboo system and on a qualitative standard. A choice must be made, and we shall ultimately have to settle for the qualitative standard because taboo morality excludes

value judgments. Clinging to the old also tends to produce a breakdown of the sense of common purpose which permits the older generation to offer effective guidance to the young. The young themselves are increasingly rejecting sexual taboos and are searching for qualitative standards by which to steer their heterosexual relationships. It is the lack of positive, qualitative content in traditional sexual morality that has produced the *impasse* in sexual morality today.

What are the qualitative standards? These select themselves as we know what our goal is—the enduring reciprocal relationship of a happy marriage—and we know something about the personal prerequisites for the attainment of this goal: self-respect, respect for other people, sensitivity about the feelings of others, responsibility towards others, tenderness, sufficient maturity to permit a deep relationship with another person, freedom from guilt about sex, a capacity for uninhibited, tender, passionate sexual exchange. To these personal qualities we must add a contemporary evaluation of the purpose of marriage. For example:

■ To provide a relationship in which the partners may build together a deepening and ever more satisfying love.

■ To provide confidence and reassurance for both partners in facing the problems and stresses of contemporary life.

■ To provide a trusting mutual confrontation of a man and a woman through which both may more fully realize their own potentialities.

■ To provide a loving, stimulating family life in which the children of the marriage may have a good chance to find and develop their own personalities.

These developmental, qualitative standards give us a dependable pragmatic basis for sex education, for legislation concerned with sexual behaviour, and for evaluating sex in personal life. The ideal cannot always be attained, but we can seek to move towards it. The new system of evaluation sets high store on self-realization within the framework of a creative partnership. It values the vital marriage highly and deprecates the dull, unstimulating kind. It regards self-centred sexuality in all its forms, in marriage or outside, as an immaturity which leads nowhere—something as sub-human as driving when drunk. It regards marriage as the goal of human sexual relationships because a satisfying marriage provides potentially the most formative as well as the most testing of human interaction. It also provides the best milieu in which children may grow up.

WE MUST PROGRESS

The movement in society towards a higher quality of behaviour and experience in sexual relationships faces us, as all such movements must, with the problem of the social irresponsibles. Will they not use a less

man-size satisfaction...
Man-size flavor...

promise her
anything...

3 months' jail
aged 21, of no fixed
address, was jailed for three
months at Brighton today for
behaving indecently.

rigid system for their selfish ends? Will they not, even, justify their selfish actions through the new values, deserting a woman dependent on them because "she's too inhibited", or the like.

Some will, of course, but one cannot hold up a qualitative advance simply on the

grounds that some people may fail to respond to it. We shall continue to build better roads even though these give irresponsible drivers more chance to be dangerous. In the last analysis, our kind of society can flourish and grow only if we manage to raise the level of responsibility all round. This is not contingent upon intellectual calibre but on personal development, which is an incentive to raise our level of education rather than to seek to reverse change and development in sexual relationships.

It is not tenable to suppose that the best marriages are necessarily the consequence of a single sexual confrontation. Some men and women probably need a wider experience than that before they are able wisely

Don't walk
in school courting
grounds, couple told

WHERE
SHALL WE
GO...?

to select a partner with whom they can create a happy marriage. Nor can we suppose that to bottle up the sexual impulse in fantasy, or masturbation, or both, from puberty to marriage—if it is a long period—is a reliable way to lay a foundation for sensitive, passionate reciprocity after marriage. Again, to regard the whole span from puberty to marriage as a single phase with a single solution for all young people—chastity—is to neglect the physical and emotional development taking place throughout these years, and to ignore individual differences of make-up.

During the early post-pubertal years, society needs to use its influence to help young people resist the pressures upon them towards premature experiment. But, from about 19 onwards, young adults are likely to have attained a degree of emotional maturity and physical virility which demands definite expression. The social logic of this is, on the one hand, to assist early marriage, and, on the other, to be more tolerant of heterosexual relations, provided they are sincere and responsible, between young adults who are not yet married. Education about contraception is implied.

Some people fear that a more permissive attitude would expose young adults to emotional crises beyond their strength. But if we are to allow them the experience through which they may mature, we must not regret the degree of suffering that acquiring emotional maturity entails.

We have to consider whether the emerging less rigid approach to sexual relationships involves a threat to marriage. There is no evidence that marriage as an institution is in any peril. On the contrary, studies throwing light on the attitude of young people to marriage show that it is a secure part of the image of their lives. It is not the *incidence* of marriage but the *quality* of marriage that is the problem for the future. The foundation of social stability and mental health is not marriage as such, but marriages that carry within them the resources needed for their own vitality and endurance. These self-sustaining marriages do not come from nowhere with romantic suddenness but are the result of personal development, going back through the years, and founded in a qualitative approach to sexual relationships. Such a perspective gives a sure basis for raising the quality of sexual life in society and makes of marriage so much more than a licence to copulate.