

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX, VOLUME I

The Evolution of Modesty  
The Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity  
Auto-Erotism

by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

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GENERAL PREFACE.

The origin of these Studies dates from many years back. As a youth I was faced, as others are, by the problem of sex. Living partly in an Australian city where the ways of life were plainly seen, partly in the solitude of the bush, I was free both to contemplate and to meditate many things. A resolve slowly grew up within me: one main part of my life-work should be to make clear the problems of sex.

That was more than twenty years ago. Since then I can honestly say that in all that I have done that resolve has never been very far from my thoughts. I have always been slowly working up to this central problem; and in a book published some three years ago--Man and Woman: a Study of Human Secondary Sexual Characters--I put forward what was, in my own eyes, an introduction to the study of the primary questions of sexual psychology.

Now that I have at length reached the time for beginning to publish my results, these results scarcely seem to me large. As a youth, I had hoped to settle problems for those who came after; now I am quietly content if I do little more than state them. For even that, I now think, is much; it is at least the half of knowledge. In this particular field the evil of ignorance is magnified by our efforts to suppress that which never can be suppressed, though in the effort of suppression it may become perverted. I have at least tried to find out what are the facts, among normal people as well as among abnormal people; for, while it seems to me that the physician's training is necessary in order to ascertain the facts, the physician for the most part only obtains the abnormal facts, which alone bring little light. I have tried to get at the facts, and, having got at the facts, to look them simply and squarely in the face. If I cannot perhaps turn the lock myself, I bring the key which can alone in the end rightly open the door: the key of sincerity. That is my one panacea: sincerity.

I know that many of my friends, people on whose side I, too, am to be found, retort with another word: reticence. It is a mistake, they say, to try to uncover these things; leave the sexual instincts alone, to grow up and develop in the shy solitude they love, and they will be sure to grow up and develop wholesomely. But, as a matter of fact, that is precisely what we can not and will not ever allow them to do. There are very few middle-aged men and women who can clearly recall the

facts of their lives  
and tell you in all honesty that their sexual instincts  
have developed  
easily and wholesomely throughout. And it should not be  
difficult to see  
why this is so. Let my friends try to transfer their  
feelings and theories  
from the reproductive region to, let us say, the  
nutritive region, the  
only other which can be compared to it for importance.  
Suppose that eating  
and drinking was never spoken of openly, save in veiled  
or poetic  
language, and that no one ever ate food publicly,  
because it was  
considered immoral and immodest to reveal the mysteries  
of this natural  
function. We know what would occur. A considerable  
proportion of the  
community, more especially the more youthful members,  
possessed by an  
instinctive and legitimate curiosity, would concentrate  
their thoughts on  
the subject. They would have so many problems to puzzle  
over: How often  
ought I to eat? What ought I to eat? Is it wrong to eat  
fruit, which I  
like? Ought I to eat grass, which I don't like? Instinct  
notwithstanding,  
we may be quite sure that only a small minority would  
succeed in eating  
reasonably and wholesomely. The sexual secrecy of life  
is even more  
disastrous than such a nutritive secrecy would be;  
partly because we  
expend such a wealth of moral energy in directing or  
misdirecting it,  
partly because the sexual impulse normally develops at  
the same time as  
the intellectual impulse, not in the early years of  
life, when wholesome  
instinctive habits might be formed. And there is always  
some ignorant and  
foolish friend who is prepared still further to muddle  
things: Eat a meal

every other day! Eat twelve meals a day! Never eat fruit! Always eat grass! The advice emphatically given in sexual matters is usually not less absurd than this. When, however, the matter is fully open, the problems of food are not indeed wholly solved, but everyone is enabled by the experience of his fellows to reach some sort of situation suited to his own case. And when the rigid secrecy is once swept away a sane and natural reticence becomes for the first time possible.

This secrecy has not always been maintained. When the Catholic Church was at the summit of its power and influence it fully realized the magnitude of sexual problems and took an active and inquiring interest in all the details of normal and abnormal sexuality. Even to the present time there are certain phenomena of the sexual life which have scarcely been accurately described except in ancient theological treatises. As the type of such treatises I will mention the great tome of Sanchez, De Matrimonio. Here you will find the whole sexual life of men and women analyzed in its relationships to sin. Everything is set forth, as clearly and as concisely as it can be--without morbid prudery on the one hand, or morbid sentimentality on the other--in the coldest scientific language; the right course of action is pointed out for all the cases that may occur, and we are told what is lawful, what a venial sin, what a mortal sin. Now I do not consider that sexual matters concern the theologian alone, and I deny altogether that he is competent to deal with them. In his hands, also, undoubtedly, they sometimes become

prurient, as they can scarcely fail to become on the non-natural and unwholesome basis of asceticism, and as they with difficulty become in the open-air light of science. But we are bound to recognize the thoroughness with which the Catholic theologians dealt with these matters, and, from their own point of view, indeed, the entire reasonableness; we are bound to recognize the admirable spirit in which, successfully or not, they sought to approach them. We need to-day the same spirit and temper applied from a different standpoint. These things concern everyone; the study of these things concerns the physiologist, the psychologist, the moralist. We want to get into possession of the actual facts, and from the investigation of the facts we want to ascertain what is normal and what is abnormal, from the point of view of physiology and of psychology. We want to know what is naturally lawful under the various sexual chances that may befall man, not as the born child of sin, but as a naturally social animal. What is a venial sin against nature, what a mortal sin against nature? The answers are less easy to reach than the theologians' answers generally were, but we can at least put ourselves in the right attitude; we may succeed in asking that question which is sometimes even more than the half of knowledge.

It is perhaps a mistake to show so plainly at the outset that I approach what may seem only a psychological question not without moral fervour. But I do not wish any mistake to be made. I regard sex as the central problem

of life. And now that the problem of religion has practically been settled, and that the problem of labor has at least been placed on a practical foundation, the question of sex--with the racial questions that rest on it--stands before the coming generations as the chief problem for solution. Sex lies at the root of life, and we can never learn to reverence life until we know how to understand sex.--So, at least, it seems to me.

Having said so much, I will try to present such results as I have to record in that cold and dry light through which alone the goal of knowledge may truly be seen.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

July, 1897.

#### PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

The first edition of this volume was published in 1899, following "Sexual Inversion," which now forms Volume II. The second edition, issued by the present publishers and substantially identical with the first edition, appeared in the following year. Ten years have elapsed since then and this new edition will be found to reflect the course of that long interval. Not only is the volume greatly enlarged, but nearly every page has been partly rewritten. This is mainly due to three causes: Much new literature required to be taken into account; my own knowledge of

the historical and ethnographic aspects of the sexual impulse has increased; many fresh illustrative cases of a valuable and instructive character have accumulated in my hands. It is to these three sources of improvement that the book owes its greatly revised and enlarged condition, and not to the need for modifying any of its essential conclusions. These, far from undergoing any change, have by the new material been greatly strengthened.

It may be added that the General Preface to the whole work, which was originally published in 1898 at the beginning of "Sexual Inversion," now finds its proper place at the outset of the present volume.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

Carbis Bay,

Cornwall, Eng.

#### PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION.

The present volume contains three studies which seem to me to be necessary prolegomena to that analysis of the sexual instinct which must form the chief part of an investigation into the psychology of sex. The first sketches the main outlines of a complex emotional state which is of fundamental importance in sexual psychology; the second, by bringing together evidence from widely different regions, suggests a tentative

explanation of facts that are still imperfectly known; the third attempts to show that even in fields where we assume our knowledge to be adequate a broader view of the phenomena teaches us to suspend judgment and to adopt a more cautious attitude. So far as they go, these studies are complete in themselves; their special use, as an introduction to a more comprehensive analysis of sexual phenomena, is that they bring before us, under varying aspects, a characteristic which, though often ignored, is of the first importance in obtaining a clear understanding of the facts: the tendency of the sexual impulse to appear in a spontaneous and to some extent periodic manner, affecting women differently from men. This is a tendency which, later, I hope to make still more apparent, for it has practical and social, as well as psychological, implications. Here-- and more especially in the study of those spontaneous solitary manifestations which I call auto-erotic--I have attempted to clear the ground, and to indicate the main lines along which the progress of our knowledge in these fields may best be attained.

It may surprise many medical readers that in the third and longest study I have said little, save incidentally, either of treatment or prevention. The omission of such considerations at this stage is intentional. It may safely be said that in no other field of human activity is so vast an amount of strenuous didactic morality founded on so slender a basis of facts. In most other departments of life we at least make a pretence of learning before we presume to teach; in the field of sex

we content  
ourselves with the smallest and vaguest minimum of  
information, often  
ostentatiously second-hand, usually unreliable. I wish  
to emphasize the  
fact that before we can safely talk either of curing or  
preventing these  
manifestations we must know a great deal more than we  
know at present  
regarding their distribution, etiology, and  
symptomatology; and we must  
exercise the same coolness and caution as--if our work  
is to be  
fruitful--we require in any other field of serious  
study. We must approach  
these facts as physicians, it is true, but also as  
psychologists,  
primarily concerned to find out the workings of such  
manifestations in  
fairly healthy and normal people. If we found a divorce-  
court judge  
writing a treatise on marriage we should smile. But it  
is equally absurd  
for the physician, so long as his knowledge is confined  
to disease, to  
write regarding sex at large; valuable as the facts he  
brings forward may  
be, he can never be in a position to generalize  
concerning them. And to  
me, at all events, it seems that we have had more than  
enough pictures of  
gross sexual perversity, whether furnished by the asylum  
or the brothel.  
They are only really instructive when they are seen in  
their proper  
perspective as the rare and ultimate extremes of a chain  
of phenomena  
which we may more profitably study nearer home.

Yet, although we are, on every hand, surrounded by the  
normal  
manifestations of sex, conscious or unconscious, these  
manifestations are  
extremely difficult to observe, and, in those cases in  
which we are best

able to observe them, it frequently happens that we are unable to make any use of our knowledge. Moreover, even when we have obtained our data, the difficulties--at all events, for an English investigator--are by no means overcome. He may take for granted that any serious and precise study of the sexual instinct will not meet with general approval; his work will be misunderstood; his motives will be called in question; among those for whom he is chiefly working he will find indifference. Indeed, the pioneer in this field may well count himself happy if he meets with nothing worse than indifference. Hence it is that the present volume will not be published in England, but that, availing myself of the generous sympathy with which my work has been received in America, I have sought the wider medical and scientific audience of the United States. In matters of faith, "liberty of prophesying" was centuries since eloquently vindicated for Englishmen; the liberty of investigating facts is still called in question, under one pretence or another, and to seek out the most vital facts of life is still in England a perilous task.

I desire most heartily to thank the numerous friends and correspondents, some living in remote parts of the world, who have freely assisted me in my work with valuable information and personal histories. To Mr. F.H. Perry-Coste I owe an appendix which is by far the most elaborate attempt yet made to find evidence of periodicity in the spontaneous sexual manifestations of sleep; my debts to various medical and other correspondents are duly stated in the text. To many

women friends and correspondents I may here express my gratitude for the manner in which they have furnished me with intimate personal records, and for the cross-examination to which they have allowed me to subject them. I may already say here, what I shall have occasion to say more emphatically in subsequent volumes, that without the assistance I have received from women of fine intelligence and high character my work would be impossible. I regret that I cannot make my thanks more specific.

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

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Modesty Among Different  
Peoples and in Different Ages.

Modesty, which may be provisionally defined as an almost instinctive fear prompting to concealment and usually centering around the sexual processes, while common to both sexes is more peculiarly feminine, so that it may almost be regarded as the chief secondary sexual character of women on the psychical side. The woman who is lacking in this kind of fear is lacking, also, in sexual attractiveness to the normal and average man. The apparent exceptions seem to prove the rule, for it will generally be found that the women who are, not immodest (for immodesty is

more closely  
related to modesty than mere negative absence of the  
sense of modesty),  
but without that fear which implies the presence of a  
complex emotional  
feminine organization to defend, only make a strong  
sexual appeal to men  
who are themselves lacking in the complementary  
masculine qualities. As a  
psychical secondary sexual character of the first rank,  
it is necessary,  
before any psychology of sex can be arranged in order,  
to obtain a clear  
view of modesty.

The immense importance of feminine modesty in  
creating masculine  
passion must be fairly obvious. I may, however,  
quote the  
observations of two writers who have shown evidence  
of insight  
and knowledge regarding this matter.

Casanova describes how, when at Berne, he went to  
the baths, and  
was, according to custom, attended by a young girl,  
whom he  
selected from a group of bath attendants. She  
undressed him,  
proceeded to undress herself, and then entered the  
bath with him,  
and rubbed him thoroughly all over, the operation  
being performed  
in the most serious manner and without a word being  
spoken. When  
all was over, however, he perceived that the girl  
had expected  
him to make advances, and he proceeds to describe  
and discuss his  
own feelings of indifference under such  
circumstances. "Though  
without gazing on the girl's figure, I had seen  
enough to  
recognize that she had all that a man can desire to  
find in a

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