

STUDIES IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SEX, VOLUME I

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

by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

1927

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.

CONTENTS.

THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY.

I.

The Definition of Modesty--The Significance of Modesty--Difficulties in the Way of Its Analysis--The Varying Phenomena of Modesty Among Different Peoples and in Different Ages.

II.

Modesty an Agglomeration of Fears--Children in Relation to Modesty--Modesty in Animals--The Attitude of the Medicean Venus--The Sexual Factor of Modesty Based on Sexual periodicity and on the Primitive Phenomena of Courtship--The Necessity of Seclusion in Primitive Sexual Intercourse--The Meaning of Coquetry--The Sexual Charm of Modesty--Modesty

as an Expression of Feminine Erotic Impulse--The Fear of Causing Disgust
as a Factor of Modesty--The Modesty of Savages in Regard to Eating in the Presence of Others--The Sacro-Pubic Region as a Focus of Disgust--The Idea of Ceremonial Uncleanliness--The Custom of Veiling the Face--Ornaments and Clothing--Modesty Becomes Concentrated in the Garment--The Economic Factor in Modesty--The Contribution of Civilization to Modesty--The Elaboration of Social Ritual.

III.

The Blush the Sanction of Modesty--The Phenomena of Blushing--Influences Which Modify the Aptitude to Blush--Darkness, Concealment of the Face, Etc.

IV.

Summary of the Factors of Modesty--The Future of Modesty--Modesty an Essential Element of Love.

THE PHENOMENA OF SEXUAL PERIODICITY.

I.

The Various Physiological and Psychological Rhythms--Menstruation--The Alleged Influence of the Moon--Frequent Suppression of Menstruation among Primitive Races--Mittelschmerz--Possible Tendency to a Future Intermenstrual Cycle--Menstruation among Animals--Menstruating Monkeys and Apes--What is Menstruation--Its Primary Cause Still Obscure--The Relation of Menstruation to Ovulation--The Occasional Absence of Menstruation in

Health--The Relation of Menstruation to "Heat"--The Prohibition of Intercourse during Menstruation--The Predominance of Sexual Excitement at and around the Menstrual Period--Its Absence during the Period Frequently Apparent only.

II.

The Question of a Monthly Sexual Cycle in Men--The Earliest Suggestions of a General Physiological Cycle in Men--Periodicity in Disease--Insanity, Heart Disease, etc.--The Alleged Twenty-three Days' Cycle--The Physiological Periodicity of Seminal Emissions during Sleep--Original Observations--Fortnightly and Weekly Rhythms.

III.

The Annual Sexual Rhythm--In Animals--In Man--Tendency of the Sexual Impulse to become Heightened in Spring and Autumn--The Prevalence of Seasonal Erotic Festivals--The Feast of Fools--The Easter and Midsummer Bonfires--The Seasonal Variations in Birthrate--The Causes of those Variations--The Typical Conception-rate Curve for Europe--The Seasonal Periodicity of Seminal Emissions During Sleep--Original Observations--Spring and Autumn the Chief Periods of Involuntary Sexual Excitement--The Seasonal Periodicity of Rapes--Of Outbreaks among Prisoners--The Seasonal Curves of Insanity and Suicide--The Growth of Children According to Season--The Annual Curve of Bread-consumption in Prisons--Seasonal Periodicity of Scarlet Fever--The Underlying Causes of these Seasonal Phenomena.

AUTO-EROTISM: A STUDY OF THE SPONTANEOUS MANIFESTATIONS
OF THE SEXUAL
IMPULSE.

I.

Definition of Auto-erotism--Masturbation only Covers a
Small Portion of
the Auto-erotic Field--The Importance of this Study,
especially
To-day--Auto-erotic Phenomena in Animals--Among Savage
and Barbaric
Races--The Japanese _rin-no-tama_ and other Special
Instruments for
Obtaining Auto-erotic Gratification--Abuse of the
Ordinary Implements and
Objects of Daily Life--The Frequency of Hair-pin in the
Bladder--The
Influence of Horse-exercise and Railway Traveling--The
Sewing-machine and
the Bicycle--Spontaneous Passive Sexual Excitement--
_Delectatio
Morosa_--Day-dreaming--_Pollutio_--Sexual Excitement
During Sleep--Erotic
Dreams--The Analogy of Nocturnal Enuresis--Differences
in the Erotic
Dreams of Men and Women--The Auto-erotic Phenomena of
Sleep in the
Hysterical--Their Frequently Painful Character.

II.

Hysteria and the Question of Its Relation to the Sexual
Emotions--The
Early Greek Theories of its Nature and Causation--The
Gradual Rise of
Modern Views--Charcot--The Revolt Against Charcot's Too
Absolute
Conclusions--Fallacies Involved--Charcot's Attitude the
Outcome of his
Personal Temperament--Breuer and Freud--Their Views
Supplement and
Complete Charcot's--At the Same Time they Furnish a
Justification for the

Earlier Doctrine of Hysteria--But They Must Not be Regarded as Final--The Diffused Hysteroid Condition in Normal Persons--The Physiological Basis of Hysteria--True Pathological Hysteria is Linked on to almost Normal States, especially to Sex-hunger.

III.

The Prevalence of Masturbation--Its Occurrence in Infancy and Childhood--Is it More Frequent in Males or Females?--After Adolescence Apparently more Frequent in Women--Reasons for the Sexual Distribution of Masturbation--The Alleged Evils of Masturbation--Historical Sketch of the Views Held on This Point--The Symptoms and Results of Masturbation--Its Alleged Influence in Causing Eye Disorders--Its Relation to Insanity and Nervous Disorders--The Evil Effects of Masturbation Usually Occur on the Basis of a Congenitally Morbid Nervous System--Neurasthenia Probably the Commonest Accompaniment of Excessive Masturbation--Precocious Masturbation Tends to Produce Aversion to Coitus--Psychic Results of Habitual Masturbation--Masturbation in Men of Genius--Masturbation as a Nervous Sedative--Typical Cases--The Greek Attitude toward Masturbation--Attitude of the Catholic Theologians--The Mohammedan Attitude--The Modern Scientific Attitude--In What Sense is Masturbation Normal?--The Immense Part in Life Played by Transmuted Auto-erotic Phenomena.

APPENDIX A.

The Influence of Menstruation on the Position of Women.

APPENDIX B.

Sexual Periodicity in Men.

APPENDIX C.

The Auto-erotic Factor in Religion.

INDEX.

DIAGRAMS.

THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY.

I.

The Definition of Modesty--The Significance of Modesty--
Difficulties in
the Way of Its Analysis--The Varying Phenomena of
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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