

**STUDIES IN  
THE PSYCHOLOGY OF  
SEX**

**VOLUME I**

**THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY THE  
PHENOMENA OF SEXUAL  
PERIODICITY AUTO-EROTISM**

**BY**

**HAVELOCK ELLIS**

**THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND ENLARGED**

**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.

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## **THE EVOLUTION OF MODESTY.**

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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 woman: a beautiful face, lively and well-formed eyes, a beautiful mouth, with good teeth, a healthy complexion, well-developed breasts, and everything in harmony. It is true that I had felt that her hands could have been smoother, but I could only attribute this to hard work; moreover, my Swiss girl was only eighteen, and yet I remained entirely cold. What was the cause of this? That was the question that I asked myself."

"It is clear," wrote Stendhal, "that three parts of modesty are taught. This is, perhaps, the only law born of civilization which produces nothing but happiness. It has been observed that birds of prey hide themselves to drink, because, being obliged to plunge their heads in the water, they are at that moment defenceless. After having considered what passes at Otaheite, I can see no other natural foundation for modesty. Love is the miracle of civilization. Among savage and very barbarous races we find nothing but physical love of a gross character. It is modesty that gives to love the aid of imagination, and in so doing imparts life to it. Modesty

is very early taught to little girls by their mothers, and with extreme jealousy, one might say, by *esprit de corps*. They are watching in advance over the happiness of the future lover. To a timid and tender woman there ought to be no greater torture than to allow herself in the presence of a man something which she thinks she ought to blush at. I am convinced that a proud woman would prefer a thousand deaths. A slight liberty taken on the tender side by the man she loves gives a woman a moment of keen pleasure, but if he has the air of blaming her for it, or only of not enjoying it with transport, an awful doubt must be left in her mind. For a woman above the vulgar level there is, then, everything to gain by very reserved manners. The play is not equal. She hazards against a slight pleasure, or against the advantage of appearing a little amiable, the danger of biting remorse, and a feeling of shame which must render even the lover less dear. An evening passed gaily and thoughtlessly, without thinking of what comes after, is dearly paid at this price. The sight of a lover with whom one fears that one has had this kind of wrong must become odious for several days. Can one be surprised at the force of a habit, the slightest infractions of which are punished with such atrocious shame? As to the utility of modesty, it is the mother of love. As to the mechanism of the feeling, nothing is simpler. The mind is absorbed in feeling shame instead of being occupied with desire. Desires are forbidden, and desires lead to actions. It is evident that every tender and proud woman—and these two things, being cause and effect, naturally go together—must contract habits of coldness which the people whom she disconcerts call prudery. The power of modesty is so great that a tender woman betrays herself with her lover rather by deeds than by words. The evil of modesty is that it constantly leads to falsehood." (Stendhal, *De l'Amour*, Chapter XXIV.)

It thus happens that, as Adler remarks (*Die Mangelhafte Geschlechtsempfindung des Weibes*, p. 133), the sexual impulse in women is fettered by an inhibition which has to be conquered. A



thin veil of reticence, shyness, and anxiety is constantly cast anew over a woman's love, and her wooer, in every act of courtship, has the enjoyment of conquering afresh an oft-won woman.

An interesting testimony to the part played by modesty in effecting the union of the sexes is furnished by the fact—to which attention has often been called—that the special modesty of women usually tends to diminish, though not to disappear, with the complete gratification of the sexual impulses. This may be noted among savage as well as among civilized women. The comparatively evanescent character of modesty has led to the argument (Venturi, *Degenerazioni Psico-sessuali*, pp. 92-93) that modesty (*pudore*) is possessed by women alone, men exhibiting, instead, a sense of decency which remains at about the same level of persistency throughout life. Viazzi ("Pudore nell 'uomo e nella donna," *Rivista Mensile di Psichiatria Forense*, 1898), on the contrary, following Sergi, argues that men are, throughout, more modest than women; but the points he brings forward, though often just, scarcely justify his conclusion. While the young virgin, however, is more modest and shy than the young man of the same age, the experienced married woman is usually less so than her husband, and in a woman who is a mother the shy reticences of virginal modesty would be rightly felt to be ridiculous. ("Les petites pudeurs n'existent pas pour les mères," remarks Goncourt, *Journal des Goncourt*, vol. iii, p. 5.) She has put off a sexual livery that has no longer any important part to play in life, and would, indeed, be inconvenient and harmful, just as a bird loses its sexual plumage when the pairing season is over.

Madame Céline Renooz, in an elaborate study of the psychological sexual differences between men and women (*Psychologie Comparée de l'Homme et de la Femme*, 1898, pp. 85-87), also believes that modesty is not really a feminine characteristic. "Modesty," she argues, "is masculine shame attributed to women for two reasons: first, because man believes that woman is subject

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