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Max Levin

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# The Physician and the Sexual Revolution

MAX LEVIN, M.D.

The sexual revolution has affected the practice of the physician. It has brought a feeling of freedom to our people, especially our younger generation, but at the same time it has led to emotional conflicts and confusion. It has created problems which drive people to seek clarification and help, and often it is the physician to whom they go for guidance.

I propose to give reasons why we should regard premarital chastity as the ideal course for the young unmarried woman in our society. From this it may seem that I am defending the double standard, but this is not the case at all. I hold no brief for the double standard. But it *does* exist in our society and whether we like it or not, it is a factor in our determination of human values. Let us put it this way: *the girl has more to lose*. I am not thinking of the risk of pregnancy but of the girl's emotional investment in love and marriage. *Her* investment is greater than the boy's. A boy may take a casual view of a love affair but the girl is apt to take it more seriously. When a love affair breaks up and the two parties suffer a broken heart, the fracture is likely to be more severe for the girl. The boy may have only a simple fracture while the girl has a compound comminuted fracture. In her case there is more callus formation and the residual deformity will be more crippling.

The young unmarried woman in our society today is the victim of a swindle. She is being sold a false bill of goods. She is beguiled by the rosy promises of the "new era." She is told that moral standards belong to the past and that the watchword today is freedom. The girl goes off to college today with a new sense of excitement. She will now live it up. There will be gay football weekends, with wild parties at the fraternity house followed by parties just for two at the motel. But she is not shown the small print in the contract. She is told nothing of the cost of sexual freedom, of its threat to her emotional health and well-being.

Freedom is a wonderful thing, but we must have a mature understanding of what it means. The child has an *immature* understanding; to him it means simply that you can do as you please. But to the mature mind freedom has a higher meaning; it means the capacity to develop and to realize your creative potentialities and to live up to your responsibilities without hindrance from within.

The confusion that prevails today is due in part to a misunderstanding of Freud. When Freud came upon the scene at the turn of the century, he became a hero to the Greenwich Village bohemians, for he spoke of the evils of "repression" and they thought he had provided them with a scientific basis for their philosophy of free love. By the same token, he was denounced by re-

ligious groups as an exponent of immorality. Both groups did him an injustice. Freud was not referring to overt behavior. He did *not* mean that we must gratify every sex desire and act out every impulse. He was referring to *internal* behavior, the behavior that takes place in our minds. People have all kinds of thoughts and fantasies, and when these are associated with shame or guilt people try to "repress" them. Freud said we must not be afraid of our fantasies. They have meaning, and we must face them and try to understand them. In this connection it is noteworthy that his own personal behavior was beyond reproach. Freud had many enemies, in the medical profession and the academic world, and they would have been glad to come forth with evidence that he was an immoral man, with mistresses all over Vienna. But never did they find any deviation from the highest standards in his personal life.

Freud helped to set us free from the superstitions of our grandfathers. In those early days sex was regarded as something dirty, useful only for the purpose of procreation. To the woman it was no more than a "wifely duty," designed to satisfy the animal passions of her husband. She was not supposed to enjoy it, and if she did, she was inclined to feel ashamed of herself. The topic of sex was taboo. You could look through all the magazines of the day and you would not find a single article on the topic, "Sex and the College Girl." Today our eyes have been opened, and we know that a woman can and should enjoy sex as much as a man.

We will gain insight into human sexuality from the contrast between man and lower animals. In lower animals copulation is possible only when the female is in heat, whereas in man it can take place at any stage of the monthly cycle. Clearly, in man sex serves a purpose beyond procreation. The additional purpose it serves is psychological: sex enables a man and wife to grow emotionally and to reach emotional maturity. The hallmark of maturity is the capacity to give of oneself. The infant cannot give, he can only receive. Only as he grows and matures does he acquire the capacity to give. Emotional maturity finds its great test in the sexual relationship of a man and wife. The mature husband and wife live by the precept: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The act of love is the supreme example of an interpersonal relationship. The partners must be as eager to *give* sexual satisfaction as to receive it.

Let us consider some concrete evidence. In the sex act, the wife can easily be derailed in the build-up of erotic tension that leads up to the orgasm. Nothing disturbs a wife as much as the feeling that her husband is selfish, that he is concerned with his own satisfaction more than with hers. Every psychiatrist has heard complaints about the "inconsiderate" husband.

A devoted husband and wife reach the summit of their potentiality as human beings in the sex act, when, in their quest of the orgasm, each one's uppermost thought is not the satisfaction he hopes to get for himself, but that

which he hopes to be able to give to his partner.

The early years of a marriage are a time of learning, of emotional growth. The husband and wife learn to "know" each other. They explore each other's sex needs and learn how to satisfy them, and in the process they learn, as never before, the deep satisfaction that comes from giving, from putting the partner's welfare above one's own. The sexual fulfillment they attain strengthens the bond that brought them to the altar, and thereby it fortifies the home they have established for their children.

And so we see that sex in man goes beyond the purpose of procreation. It is an instrument for the growth of character. It takes a boy and girl and helps them to grow up and become a mature husband and wife, a good father and mother. It enables them to realize their highest human potentialities.

But the exponents of the new era see none of this. They are blind to the role of sex as an instrument in the growth of character. They degrade sex, for they reduce it to a mere self-indulgence. In promoting sexual freedom, they say nothing of the cost. The young unmarried woman sells herself short when she gives herself to a man whose primary goal is to exploit her. She diminishes herself in her own eyes as well as in his.

One of the slogans of the day is "permissiveness with affection." The meaning is that a girl would be wise not to have relations promiscuously with every boy she knows,

but it's different when she and her boy friend have genuine affection for each other. Well, here is how a high school teacher got the message. She had attended a lecture on premarital behavior and permissiveness with affection and she was grateful for the help it gave her. She expressed it in these words: "Now I have an answer; I just tell the boys and girls that they have to consider both sides of the question: Will sexual intercourse strengthen or weaken their relationship?" This was not a college teacher, it was a *high school* teacher. I ask you to imagine the turmoil in the mind of a high school girl: in the afternoon she heard from her teacher that the question has two sides, and now in the evening she is being propositioned by her boy friend who assures her that intercourse will strengthen rather than weaken their relationship.

The dangers of premarital intercourse go beyond venereal disease and pregnancy. Even if venereal disease were abolished and contraceptive methods were developed to the point of perfect reliability, premarital chastity would still be in the best interest of the young woman. It would be to her advantage from the standpoint of emotional health.

A young couple are engaged but marriage has to be delayed. The young man is burning with love and desire and he wonders why they can't start now. Aren't we always being told that the smart course of action nowadays is to *buy now, pay later*? But this principle is risky. The girl might wonder if her fiancé is on the level. Is he

possibly playing a game? Is he thinking that maybe after he has enjoyed her favors for a few months, he might get tired of her and start looking around for another girl? And even if she has faith in his integrity, she might still be afraid. She might think, "I have faith in my sweetheart, but after all he's only human. Now if a man has any sense he will *know* that these anxieties might arise to disturb his girl. A man deeply in love would give his right arm to protect his girl from pain. Nothing is as important to him as her welfare and peace of mind. And if, in that spirit, he restrains himself, *she* will understand why. She will be grateful for this demonstration of his concern for her welfare, and this will strengthen her love for him. To put the matter in terms of economics, what better investment can a man make than a policy of self-restraint that will strengthen his girl's love for him and make her a more devoted wife in years to come? He will be paying a price, in terms of postponement of sexual gratification, but the cost, the investment, will one day return him dividends beyond measure.

There is a legitimate question that faces an engaged couple: "How do we know we will be sexually compatible? Shouldn't we test the matter now, before it's too late?" Forty years ago Judge Lindsey faced the same question. He was appalled by the growing divorce rate and he knew that many marriages fail because of sexual incompatibility. He proposed a plan which he called companionate or trial marriage. The young couple would live together as

man and wife for a few months, and only if they proved compatible would the marriage become legal. The plan seemed sensible but it never got off the ground. Quite aside from legal and religious objections the plan is unsound psychologically, for it would give rise to too many "false negatives." The proposal of a trial marriage might well fill a girl with dismay. A woman wants a man who is so sure of his love for her that he knows he can't live without her, and he will assume any risk if only she will give him her hand. If the girl accepted the proposal and they put themselves to the test, her doubts and anxieties might block her response in the sex act and she might fail to reach orgasm. And so they might come to the sad conclusion that they are not compatible, where they *would* have been had they waited till their wedding night when she would have been free of anxiety. The test would have produced a false negative. The test of sexual compatibility is too important to be undertaken except under the most favorable conditions. The optimum condition is marriage, a union of two people whose devotion to each other is such that they are willing to pledge their future together, gamble though it be.

There is another psychological objection to trial marriage. Consider a woman shopping for a dress. She goes to two different shops. In one of them she has the privilege of taking the dress home on approval; she can return it if she doesn't like it. In the other shop she doesn't have this privilege; all sales are

final. Her behavior will be different in the two shops. In one shop she will buy impulsively. She figures she has nothing to lose: she can take the dress back. In the other shop she will be more careful in her selection. The same is true of marriage. Impulsive judgment is no basis for marriage.

A disturbing sign of the times is the Report on "Sex and the College Student" issued recently by the Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry. The Report was prepared by the Committee on the College Student, hereinafter referred to as the Committee. The Group is made up of highly competent and influential psychiatrists whose opinions are treated with respect, as they deserve to be.

The Report is disturbing because it will encourage the college coed to reject the ideal of premarital chastity. The Committee quote at length the case of a coed named Sally. Sally entered college intending to remain a virgin but in her junior year she changed her mind when she met a boy to whom she grew deeply attached. Here is how she explained it:

"It got to the point where it really got frustrating not doing it. We had been going out together seven or eight months and it seemed — if you feel strongly about a person and if you really love him — I don't see anything really wrong about it, because it is a complete relationship, as complete as for some people who get married. This is one action where you give everything you have to the other person . . . It would

have been almost wrong to keep holding back something that I really wanted to give him.

The Committee chose the case of Sally to illustrate what they regard as a constructive point of view. They write:

"In her attempts to make decisions, she recognized clearly the special nature of her relationship with this particular boy and she made the judgment that it warranted intimacy . . . Growth is shown by Sally's ability to develop flexible attitudes toward the possibility of intercourse. Her values appear to be consistent. She demonstrates a responsiveness to life experience and a capacity to learn from them and to make choices. Rigidity, the necessity to cling unyieldingly to a set of fixed attitudes without the exercise of judgment, is usually indicative of anxiety and a lack of freedom to learn."

The Committee go on to say: "Issues of sexual morality are complex. . . . The oversimplification of the moral position in which abstinence equals right and indulgence equals wrong is not at all consistent with conduct at most colleges or in society at large."

The Committee reject this "oversimplification" and they prefer the "flexibility" shown by Sally. They write: "Abstinence may simply reflect inability to embrace sexual pleasure during adolescence." They use the word "may" but some readers will overlook this word and will conclude that in the eyes of competent psychiatrists abstinence is a sign of neurotic inhibition.

The statement that abstinence "may" be due to neurotic inhibition is an example of the proposition that the truth can lead one astray. The statement is eminently correct, for there *are* cases of sexual disorder arising from neurotic mechanisms. But the statement, impeccable though it be, can have a mischievous effect on the reader. It can stir up in her the impulse to prove to herself that she is not one of those miserable neurotic creatures who cannot "embrace sexual pleasure." This reminds one of the favorite pitch of the young man bent on seduction: the girl hesitates, and he pressures her with the argument that her hesitation is a sign of "frigidity."

This goes to show that when we make a statement, it is not enough to consider if the statement is correct. We must also consider how the reader might react to it.

To be fair to the Committee, let me say that they do not openly advise the coed to reject the policy of chastity. But neither do they recommend it. In essence they go along with the high school teacher who told her students that they must consider "both sides of the question." They tell the coed she must make a choice and they praise Sally for the "flexibility" which in their opinion is revealed in the choice that *she* made.

Now when you tell people that they have a choice, you may be certain that some of them will make the wrong choice. The pressures that confront the adolescent girl are confusing to her, and she needs our

help. "You have a choice" is not the message that will help her. Our message to her should be this: "The choice that people say you have is a snare. Premarital chastity is in your own best interest. And anything that is in *your* interest is bound to be in the interest of your future husband and children. Really, therefore, *you have no choice.*"

Speaking as physicians and not as religious teachers, we must help her to see that premarital intercourse is risky, not merely on moral grounds, and not merely because of the chance of pregnancy, but because it can have an adverse effect on her emotional well-being.

There is a common misconception of the value of premarital experience. When you practice the piano you become a better pianist, and people are inclined to think the same is true of sex. No doubt it sometimes works out that way, but the conclusion is wrong. Previous experience is *not* necessary for a happy marriage. Even if the bride — and the groom too — are virgins on their wedding night, this will be no bar to their future success, and, on the other hand, even if they have each had a dozen affairs, this will be no guarantee of their compatibility with each other. A man and wife, both virgins, can learn and teach each other everything they need to know to achieve marital fulfillment. The requirement is not previous experience. The requirement is intelligence and an unselfish love. If they talk freely of their needs and of the physical details of the sex act, they will learn the necessary know-how — provided,

of course, there are no psychological blocks standing in the way.

The advocates of the new era have devised the term "fun morality." They want to discard our ancient moral codes and they say our youngsters should be taught to regard sex as "fun." It's a reflection on our society that fun is given priority over growth of character and responsibility.

To think of sex in terms of "fun" is to degrade it. To be sure, intercourse does provide sensual gratification of the highest order, but is it "fun?" Of all the experiences of life, there is none as stirring as the act of love by a devoted man and wife who cherish the opportunity to demonstrate once again the depth of their feelings for each other. There are other experiences in life that stir one to the depths. It is stirring to watch an infant take his first steps, or to witness the parade of cadets at West Point, or to attend a performance of Handel's *Messiah*, but no man in his right mind would define these experiences in terms of fun. Would a Catholic teacher tell his pupils that a good way to have fun is to attend Mass?

A symbol of the "fun morality" of our day is the magazine *Playboy*. The magazine has been criticized as pornographic, and the editor, in replying to the charge, refers with pride to a letter from a reader who hails the editor as "a champion of truth and beauty." Is he really a champion of truth and beauty? It would be more correct to say he is an *enemy* of truth and beauty. He perverts the truth, for he tells his

readers nothing of the creative aspects of sexuality, of its role in the growth of character. And as to beauty, do the foldout pages of the magazine present the real image of feminine beauty? Beauty is more than symmetry of face and figure. A woman may be a knockout, but if she does not make constructive use of her charms, if she dissipates them in a manner incompatible with the womanly ideal, she may win a prize in a beauty contest but in a higher sense of the term she falls short of the model of feminine beauty.

We must teach our youngsters the real meaning of freedom. The young unmarried woman is mistaken if she thinks that the ideal of chastity is a restriction on her freedom. When a girl behaves in a manner that violates her own best interest, she is not free. She is a *slave*. She is a slave to the compulsion to *appear* free and sophisticated. No one is free who hesitates to do the right thing out of fear that he will be regarded as a square.

Gael Greene in her book on "Sex and the College Girl" tells of a coed at Stanford. Her boy friend found out that she was spreading unkind rumors about him and he put a stop to it in a way that was most ingenious. His method was diabolically clever. He threatened to reveal a deep secret to all their friends. He threatened to tell them that she was not the *femme fatale* she pretended to be, but was in fact a virgin. Faced with this threat of scandalous exposure, the girl had no choice: she caved in. In the words of the author, "she shut up."



To the devout believer—and even to the atheist—sex, in the setting of a happy marriage, is nothing short of sacred. It is altogether fitting that the groom proclaims his intentions to his bride in the noble words, “With my body I thee worship.”

In the Middle Ages there was a great rabbi, Maimonides. Incidentally, he was also a celebrated physician. Even the wisest of men can blunder, and in one of his lesser moments Maimonides wrote: “We ought to limit sexual intercourse altogether, hold it in contempt, and desire it only rarely. The act is too base to be performed except when needed.” But a later rabbi, Nachmanides, corrected this grievous error when he wrote: “It is not true, as our rabbi and teacher asserted in his *Guide for the Perplexed*, that the sex urge is a source of shame to us. The act of sexual union is holy and pure. The Lord created all things in accordance with His wisdom, and whatever He created cannot possibly be shameful or ugly. When a man is in union with his wife in a spirit of holiness and purity, the Divine Presence is with them.”

These profoundly stirring words you will not find in *Playboy* maga-

zine. (They were quoted by Rabbi Roland B. Gittelsohn in his book, “Consecrated Unto Me: a Jewish View of Love and Marriage.”)

A divine magnetism brings a young man and woman together. Life works its magic and in selfless love and devotion they join hands as man and wife. They become as one. The heavenly dreams of their courtship materialize into living reality. Is it fair to teach our youngsters a debased conception of sex that will rob them of the richest experience of life?

In many circles today morality is a dirty word. I myself have received scornful letters telling me I speak like a rabbi. But we are physicians and we have the obligation to teach what makes for good health. We must not be deterred by the fear that some people will think we speak like priests and rabbis. Our youngsters are confused and in many cases their parents are too. We must teach them the real values of life. Let us teach them the reality of sex, in all its beauty.

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Dr. Levin is Clinical Professor of Neurology, New York Medical College, Flower & Fifth Avenue Hospitals, New York, N. Y. The above was delivered as the Annual Lecture of the Guild of St. Luke of Boston in May.