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Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the
Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by EDWARD C. HEGELER

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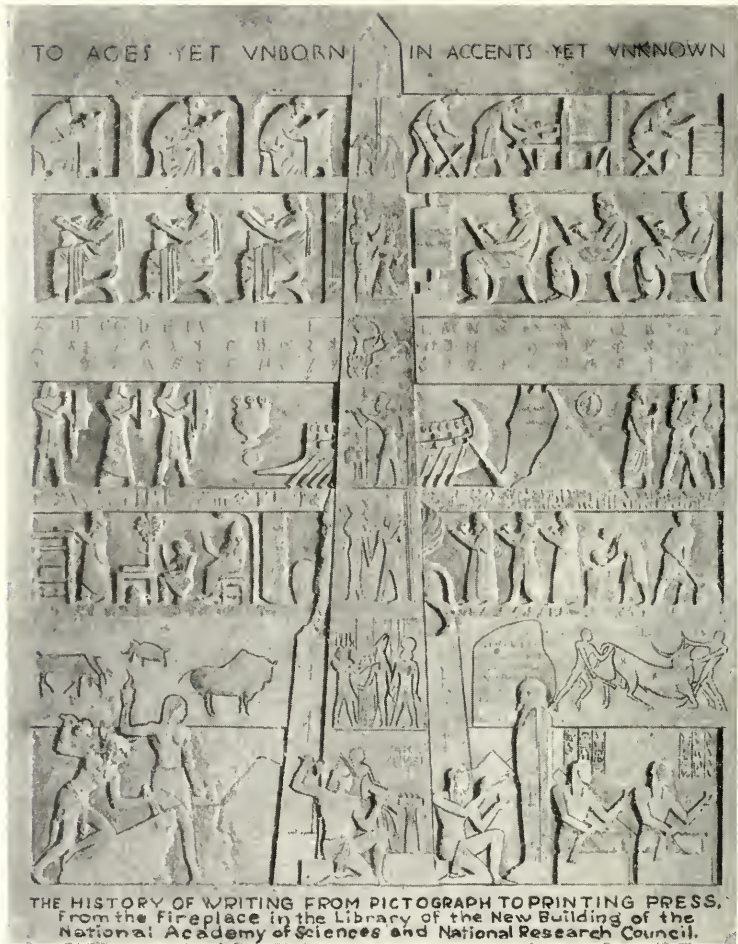
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GENERATION AND REGENERATION¹

AN ESSAY ON SEXUAL PROBLEMS

BY WILLIAM LOFTUS HARE

I. GENERATION IN BIOLOGY

MICROSCOPIC observation of unicellular life has revealed the fact that in the lowest forms reproduction takes place by fission. Growth follows on nourishment until the maximum size for the species is reached and then the organism divides its nucleus into two, and soon afterwards its body. Given the normal conditions—water and nourishment—this appears to exhaust its functions: but in the case of a denial of these conditions there is sometimes observed a reconjunction of two cells, from which rejuvenation but not reproduction may result.

In multicellular life there is nourishment and growth, as in the life below it, but a new phenomenon is observed. The group of cells constituting the body are mostly differentiated to separate functions: some for obtaining nourishment, some for its distribution, some for locomotion and some for protection, as, for instance, the skin. The primitive function of fission is abandoned by those to whom new duties are assigned, but is preserved by those cells which occupy a more interior position in the organism. These are guarded and served by the others which have undergone varied differentiation, while they themselves remain as they were. They divide as before, but *within* the multicellular body; and at length some are extruded from it. They have, however, gained a new power: instead of dividing in two as their ancestors did, they undergo segmentation or multiplication of nuclei without separation. This process continues until the organism has reached the normal size and structure of its multicellular species. But in the

¹ This essay was awarded honorable mention by the Walker Trust.

body we may observe a new feature; the original deposit of germ-cells are not only or chiefly extruded for external reproduction; they themselves supply a continuous stream of fresh units from their group for interior differentiation, wheresoever they are needed. These undifferentiated germ-cells are thus performing two functions simultaneously, namely: internal reproduction for the building up of the body and external reproduction for the continuation of the species. Here we may clearly distinguish two processes, which we shall call *regeneration* and *generation*. One point more is important here: The regenerative process—internal reproduction—is fundamental for the individual and therefore necessary and primary: the generative process is due to a superfluity of cells, and is therefore secondary. Probably both are closely dependent on nourishment: for if this be low there will be a deficiency of internal reproduction and no necessity for, or possibility of, external reproduction. The law of life, then, at this level is to *feed the germ cells*, firstly for regeneration, secondly for generation. In case of deficiency, regeneration must take the first place and generation be suspended. Thus we may learn the origin of the suspension of reproduction, and follow it to its later phases of human continence and asceticism generally. Inner reproduction can never be suspended except at the cost of death, the normal origin of which is thus also discerned.

II. REGENERATION IN BIOLOGY

Before passing to the animal and human species, in which sexual differentiation has reached its highest phase, and become the norm, we must glance at the intermediate form of reproduction, namely, that which preceded the bi-sexual and followed the non-sexual forms. It has received the mythological name “hermaphrodite,” because it possessed both male and female functions. There still remain a few organisms which exhibit this condition, in which the internal multiplication of germ-cells goes on as above described, but instead of their entire extrusion for external growth they are only temporarily extruded and passed by intrusion to another part of the body, where they are nurtured until able to begin a life of their own.

The law of growth seems to be that individuals, whether unicellular, multicellular or hermaphrodite, have the potentiality of developing to the stage reached by the parent creature at the time of their extrusion. Thus it is the individual that progresses; each time it gives birth to offspring it is or may be in itself in a higher state of organization than it was before; consequently its offspring will be able to reach the normal point of development attained by its parent. The length of the reproduction-period for each species and each individual will differ; but ideally it extends from maturity to approaching decline. Premature or decadent reproduction will secure an inferior offspring according to its dominant conditions. Here, then, we perceive a law for sexual ethic derived from physical conditions: the period when generation is most favorable to the reproduction of the species and to regeneration is full maturity only.

I pass by the history of the differentiation in sex which follows the hermaphrodite, because it is a fact which may be taken for granted. It is necessary to observe, however, a new condition that has made its appearance with the bi-sexual forms. Not only have the "two halves" of the hermaphrodite become physically separate, but each continues to produce germ-cells independently of the other. The male continues the ancient, fundamental process of internal reproduction by the multiplication of germ-cells (which for external reproduction by extrusion and intrusion are known as *spermatozoa*); the female does likewise, reserving rather than extruding the *ova* for impregnation by the male germ-cells. In both cases regeneration is primary and absolutely necessary for the individual. Every moment of growth from conception onwards exhibits the increasing process of regeneration. At maturity in the human species generation may take place, but not necessarily for the good of the individual, only for the race. Here, as in the lower forms, if regeneration ceases or is imperfectly performed, disease or death will supervene. Here, too, there is rivalry of interest between the individual and the future race. If there be not superfluity the use of the germ-cells for generative reproduction will deprive the process of regeneration (internal reproduction) of some of its material. As a matter of fact, among civilized human beings sexual intercourse is practised vastly more than is necessary for the production of the next generation, and is carried on at the expense of internal reproduction, bringing disease, death and more in its train.

Another, and perhaps closer glance may be taken of the human body, using that of the male as an example, though *mutatis mutandis*, the female exhibits similar processes.

The central reservoir of germ-cells is the most ancient and fundamental location of biological life. From the first the embryo, daily and hourly, grows by the multiplication of cells nourished by the mother's secretions; here again *feed the germ-cells* is the law of life. As they multiply and differentiate, they assume new forms and functions, transitory or permanent as the case may be. The moment of physical birth makes little difference to the process: now through the lips instead of through the *nexus* the infant takes nourishment to feed the germ-cells; these in their turn rapidly multiply and pass all over the body to places where they are needed, as they always are, to make good disused tissues. The circulatory system absorbs these cells from their primal seat and disperses them to every part of the body. In great groups they take on special duties and form and repair the different organs of the body. They undergo death a thousand times so that life may be preserved in the society of cells to which they belong, all these "corpses" going to the periphery, and especially to the bones, teeth, skin, and hair, hardening in such a way as to give strength and protection to the body. Their death is the price of the higher life of the body and all that is dependent upon it. If they did not take nourishment, reproduce, disperse, differentiate and eventually die, the body could not live.

From the germ or sexual cells as already said come two kinds of life: (1) internal, or regenerative; (2) external, or generative. Regeneration, then, as we have called it, is the basis of the life of the body, and it draws its life from the same source as does generation. Hence it may be perceived how, in given circumstances, the two processes may be formally opposed to one another: and more than formally; they may be actually at enmity.

III. REGENERATION AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

The process of regeneration is not and cannot be mechanistic in character, but like the primitive fission, is vitalistic. That is to say, it exhibits intelligence and will. To suppose that life separates, differentiates and segregates by a process that is purely mechanistic is inconceivable. True, these fundamental processes are so far re-

moved from our present consciousness as to seem to be uncontrolled by the human or animal will. But a moment's reflection will show that just as the will of the fully developed human being directs his external movements and actions in accordance with the guidance of the intellect—this, indeed, being its function—so the earlier processes of the gradual organization of the body must, within the limits provided by environment be allowed to be directed by a kind of will guided by a kind of intelligence. This is now known to psychologists as "the unconscious." It is a part of our self, disconnected from our normal daily thinking, but intensely awake and alert in regard to its own functions—so much so that it never for a moment subsides into sleep as the consciousness does.

The unconscious, then, is the vital force which superintends the complex processes of regeneration. Its first task is the segmentation of the impregnated ovum and thereafter, until death, it continues to preserve its appropriate organism by absorbing and despatching the fundamental germ cells to their respective stations. Though I here may seem to contradict many notable psychologists, I would say that the Unconscious is only concerned with the individual and not with the species: therefore, first with regeneration. Only in one sense can the Unconscious be said to concern itself with the future generation: to whatsoever state of organization its energy has brought the individual that the Unconscious seeks to conserve. But it cannot do the impossible: it cannot, even with the help of the conscious will, prolong life indefinitely. Therefore it reproduces itself by the impulse of sexual intercourse, in which it may be said the Unconscious and the conscious wills unite. The gratification, normally, of sexual intercourse may be taken as a sign of there being some purpose to be served beyond that of the individual, who eventually pays a price more heavy than he knows. This truth is expressed intuitively in the words of the Hebrew writer who puts a solemn warning into the divine lips: "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception: in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children" (Gen. iii., 16).

IV. GENERATION AND DEATH

It is undesirable to load this article with extracts from the writings of scientific specialists, but as the matter here dealt with is so important, and popular ignorance so widespread, I am compelled to make some authoritative quotations. Ray Lankester says:

"It results from the constitution of the protozoon body as a single cell, and its method of multiplication by fission, that death has no place as a natural recurrent phenomenon among these organisms."

Weismann writes: "Natural death occurs only among multicellular organisms, the single-celled forms escape it. There is no end to their development which can be likened to death, nor is the rise of new individuals associated with the death of the old. In the division the two portions are equal; neither is the older nor the younger. Thus there arises an unending series of individuals, each as old as the species itself, each with the power of living on indefinitely, ever dividing, but never dying."

Patrick Geddes writes (in *The Evolution of Sex*, from which the above extracts are taken): "Death we may thus say is the price paid for a body, the penalty its attainment and possession sooner or later incurs. Now by a body is meant a complex colony of cells in which there is more or less division of labour" (p. 20).

Again to quote Weismann's striking words: "The body or *Soma* thus appears to a certain extent as a subsidiary appendage of the true bearers of life—the reproductive cells."

And Ray Lankester has the same idea: "Among multicellular animals certain cells are separated from the rest of the constituent units of the body. . . . The bodies of the higher animals which die, may from this point of view be regarded as something temporary and non-essential, destined merely to carry for a time, to nurse and to nourish, the more important and deathless fission-products."

But the most striking, and probably most surprising fact among the data before us is the close connection, in higher organisms, between reproduction and death, a subject upon which many scientists write with clarity and certainty. *The nemesis of reproduction is death.* This is patent in many species, where the organism, sometimes the male and sometimes the female, not infrequently dies in

continuing the life of the species. Survival of the individual after reproduction is a triumph of life that is not always attained—in some cases never. In his essay on death Goette has well shown how closely and necessarily bound together are the facts of reproduction and death, which may both be described as katabolic crises. Patrick Geddes writes on this subject (p. 255 *op. cit.*): “The association of death and reproduction is indeed patent enough, but the connection is in popular language usually misstated. Organisms, one hears, have to die; they must therefore reproduce, else the species would come to an end. But such emphasis on posterior utilities is almost always only an afterthought of our invention. The true statement, as far as history furnishes an answer, is not that animals reproduce because they have to die, but that they die because they have to reproduce.”

And Goette says briefly: “It is not death that makes reproduction necessary but reproduction has death as its inevitable consequence.”

After giving a large number of instances, Geddes concludes with these remarkable words: “In the higher animals, the fatality of the reproductive sacrifice has been greatly lessened, yet death may tragically persist, even in human life, as the direct nemesis of love. The temporarily exhausting effect of even moderate sexual indulgence is well known, as well as the increased liability to all forms of disease while the physical energies are thus lowered.”

This discussion may be summed up briefly and, I hope, conclusively, by saying that in human life the sexual act is essentially katabolic (or a movement towards death) in the male and in parturition of the offspring it is katabolic for the female.

A whole chapter could be written on the effect of undue indulgence on the health of the body. Virility, old age, vitality and immunity from disease are the normal lot of nearly or quite continent persons. A proof of this, if a rather unpleasant one, is derived from the fact that a very large number of diseases in men have been and are cured by the artificial injection of *semen* into debilitated persons.

There may well be a resistance in the mind of the reader to accepting the conclusions offered in the present section of this essay. People will hastily point to the many old and apparently healthy persons who have been parents of large families; they will quote statistics which show that the married live longer than the celibate, and so forth. Neither of these arguments have force in face of the fact

that death, scientifically conceived, is not an event which occurs at the end of life but a process which begins—as shown by the authorities I have quoted—with life itself, and continues, moment by moment, to run along side with life. Anabolic repair and katabolic waste are the parallel forces of life and death. The first leads in the race during youth and early manhood; in middle life they run neck and neck, but in decline the death process gains the lead, and with the last breath, conquers. Everything which leads to this conquest, which hastens it by a day, a year or a decade, is part of the death process. And such, indeed, is sexual intercourse, especially when practiced to excess.

It is sufficient to say here to those who doubt the authority of my words above that they may do well to consult a most interesting and informative work entitled *The Problem of Age, Growth and Death*, by Charles S. Minot (1908, John Murray), in which the author expounds the physiology of decay and death. Not being a medical book, but a group of popular lectures, specific diseases and sexuality are but lightly discussed. The one fact upon which I rely is that natural death is a *process*, not an isolated event. But the book that I value above all others on the subject of sexuality is *Regeneration, The Gate of Heaven* by Dr. Kenneth Sylvan Guthrie (Boston; The Barta Press), whose title indicates a predominantly spiritual aim, although the physical and ethical aspects are fully discussed, supported by hosts of scientific and patristic authorities. Strangely enough, however, the author does not emphasize the relation of sex to death, which is the subject of this section of my essay.

V. THE ORGAN OF THE MIND

The extent of the static opposition between generation and regeneration may be realized when we consider the higher functions of the body, and particularly the physical organ of the mind. The nervous system—cerebro-spinal and sympathetic—are, like all other organs, built up of cells that have once been germ-cells, drawn from the deepest seat of life: in continuous streams they are distributed and differentiated to the ganglia of the systems, and, of course, in immense quantities, to the brain. Withdrawal of germ-cells from their upward, regenerative course for generative or merely indulgent purposes, deprives the organs of their full replenishing stock of life, to their cost, slowly and ultimately. It is these physical facts

which constitute the basis of a personal sexual ethic, counselling moderation if not restraint—at any rate, explaining the origin of restraint, as said above.

I do not hesitate to add to this section one illustration, out of several which might be adduced, to show how closely, in some philosophical systems, continence is believed to minister to mental and spiritual vigour. I allude to the Indian system of Yoga. The reader may refer to any of the standard translations of *Patanjali's Yoga Sūtras* (that by James H. Woods in the Harvard Oriental Series is the best known to me) in order to test the brief statement I now make.

It is probably known to those who are familiar with Indian religious and social life that asceticism was and is still practiced by the Hindus. Originally called *tapas*; it had two aims, one to maintain and increase the powers of the body and the other to transcend the normal powers of the mind. Traditionally, one is known as *hatha-yoga*, and is carried to extraordinary degrees of attainment, making bodily perfection an end in itself. The other, known as *raja-yoga*, is directed rather towards intellectual and mystical development. Yet the two systems have in common an essential physical ethic, to which I now call attention. This is set forth in the classical *sūtras* of Patanjali, and in many later works derived from this master psychologist of ancient India.

Among the "hindrances" to the desired attainment "passion" is said to be the third: (II.7) Passion is that greed or thirst or desire for either pleasure or the means of attaining it, says the philosopher. Pleasure is to be rejected by the yogin because it is intermingled with pain (II.15). That disposes of the psychological attraction of sexuality, and in later *sūtras* we are led to physical considerations.

There are eight aids to yoga's end; the first and second are called "Abstentions and Observances" and constitute the preliminary ethic which the yogin must observe. It is astonishing that the many babblers on the yoga systems either do not know or refrain from saying that the fourth abstention is "Abstinence from incontinence" (II.30), and that "Continence is the control of the hidden organ of generation."

But the consequences of the abstention from incontinence are remarkably rich according to this philosopher, who says (II.38): "As soon as he is grounded in abstinence he acquires energy—that is power. By the acquisition of which he accumulates qualities such

as minuteness . . . and when perfected he is endowed with the eight perfections, of which the first is called 'Reasoning.' He is able to transfer his thinking to his hearers."

Happy man! Rare attainment! A modern Indian scholar, M. N. Dvivedi has a very significant comment on this sutra, with which I will conclude. He says: "It is a well-known physiological law that the *semen* has great connection with the intellect, and we might add the spirituality of man. The abstaining from waste of this important element of being, gives power, the real occult power such as is desired. No *yoga* is ever reported successful without the observance of this rule as an essential preliminary."

It only remains to be said that in the many commentaries on *yoga* the purpose and process are veiled in quasi-scientific mythology. The "power" is said to creep silently like a serpent from the lowest *chakram* to the highest: that is, from the testes to the brain.

VI. PERSONAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Ethic in general is derived from facts given in the experience of life, whether of individuals or societies or the race. Historically, it has often been formulated by some outstanding personality, and sometimes invested with a divine or semi-divine authority. Moses, The Buddha, Confucius, Socrates, Aristotle, Christ, and the great moralists and philosophers who in all countries followed them, all proposed, each in their separate day and country, some criterion by which human conduct might be tried. A general ethical system is dependent, then, upon metaphysics, psychology, physiology and sociology, which together supply the facts or supposed facts, which speak for themselves. A personal sexual ethic, therefore, for any age or civilization will be drawn from the data which most impress men in their own experience. This personal sexual ethic, like the social sexual ethic, varies from age to age, but it has some elements of stability in it, which are more or less permanent.

In attempting to formulate a personal sexual ethic for these times, one would draw from all known facts and probabilities, especially when these are confirmed by the experience of reliable observers. I am not assuming too much when I say that the facts adduced in my sections I to V suggest immediately to the mind of a candid and intelligent reader a number of logical and inevitable conclusions. From the point of view of bodily, mental and spiritual

welfare, sexual continence would appear to be the irrefutable law deduced from the facts. But immediately another law springs up to challenge it—"the law in our members" as the Christian apostle calls it. We are in the presence of an antinomy—law contradicting law. The older law is that of Nature, whence we have the sexual impulse; the newer law is that of intuition, of science, of experience, of conviction, of ideal. Obedience to the older law tends to decay and premature death (speaking relatively): the path of the newer law is beset with difficulties so great that one hardly listens seriously to its voice. People cannot get themselves to believe this statement of the case. They begin at once to say: But, but, but? It is worthy of remark here that the formulation of the strictest ethic by *yogin*, *bhikkhu* and monk does not, as is so often believed, rest on mythologic fables or superstitions, but on an intuition of the physiological facts described in this essay.

I know of no modern writer who has stated the case for the sexual ethic for the Christian more forcibly or clearly than Leo Tolstoy, the now discredited idealist of what once was Russia. I print it here as an illustration of the old philosopher's views:²

102. The instinct of the continuation of the race—the sexual instinct—is innate in man. In the animal condition he fulfils his destiny by satisfying this instinct, and in so fulfilling it finds welfare.

103. But with the awakening of consciousness, it appears to man that the gratification of this instinct may increase the welfare of his separate being, and he enters into sexual intercourse, not with the object of continuing the race, but to increase his personal welfare. This constitutes the sexual sin. . . .

107. In the first case, when man desires to keep chaste³ and to consecrate all his powers to the service of God, sexual sin will consist in any sexual intercourse whatever, even though it have for its object the birth and rearing of children. The purest marriage state will be such an innate sin for the man who has chosen the alternative of chastity.

113. The sexual sin, i. e., mistake, for the man who has chosen the service of chastity, consists in this: he might have chosen the highest vocation and used all his powers in the service of God, and, consequently, for the spread of love and towards the attainment of

² The reader should remember that Tolstoy's definition of *sin* has no theological connotation; sin is defined by him as that which constitutes an obstacle to the manifestation of *love*, which in its turn, is defined as universal good-will.

³ The words chaste and chastity are used by the author in their Russian signification which includes complete abstinence from sexual intercourse.

the highest welfare, instead of which he descends to a lower plane of life and deprives himself of this welfare.

114. The sexual sin or mistake for the man who has chosen to continue the race, will consist in the fact that by depriving himself of having children, or, at all events, of family relationships, he deprives himself of the highest welfare of sexual life.

115. In addition to this—as with the gratification of all needs—those who try to increase the pleasure of sexual intercourse diminish the natural pleasure in proportion as they addict themselves to lust.

It will be observed that Tolstoy's doctrine is an ethical relativity; the effective absolute is not fixed for man by God or some authoritative teacher, but is chosen by the individual himself. All that is necessary is that he should conform to the law he has accepted.

Such an ethic offers a series of descending prohibitions. To the man who has a conviction in favor of entire continence, and who intelligently controls himself for higher physical and psychic ends, any form of sexual indulgence is disallowed; to the man who has entered into the bond of marriage, sexuality outside it is forbidden. Further, promiscuous or irregular intercourse of the unmarried would nevertheless exclude such a degrading relation as prostitution, while any person engaging in the natural act should shun unnatural vices. Finally, to any class of person indulging at all, over-indulgence would be regarded as an evil, while for the immature and the youthful, indulgence should be postponed. Such is the system of sexual ethic.

I can hardly think that any one can be found incapable of understanding the nature of this general sexual ethic and there must be very few who would, on serious reflection, deny its force. There is a tendency, however, to meet such an ethic by sophistry of various kinds. People suppose that because continence is difficult, and undoubtedly rare, its advocacy is invalid. Logically they should say the same of fidelity in marriage—which is in some cases difficult—or restricted indulgence within it, or adherence to the natural practice. If they deny one ideal they may deny all and permit us to fall into the lowest vices and inordinate lust. Why not? The only reasonable and logical method is to follow the star above us, the star of the ideal that leads us out of one declension after another and enables us to conquer by the power of one law the power of its antinomy. Thus by the intelligent and volitional practice of this ethic a man may conceivably be raised from the unnatural vices of youth to natural indulgence even if promiscuous; from this he may

be drawn to the discipline of married fidelity, and, for the sake of himself and his partner, to such restraint as they are able to endure. The same ethic may lead him on to the higher victories of continence, or indeed catch him before he has sunk to the several lower phases of indulgence.

VII. EROS AND AGAPE

The New Testament has much teaching in reference to "love," and adopts two conceptions, which must be separately examined. The first is that of *eros*, the passive love of life, of the world, of man and woman, of the manifold sensations and emotions that yield us pleasure. This *eros* is not a matter of our wilful choice: we are attracted here and repelled there; we gravitate to life itself, by forces that seem to be greater than ourselves, and to which we, for the most part, respond by appropriate action. Our likes and dislikes, our loves and hates, our affection and disaffection form one system in *eros*. For what does *eros* ask? For welfare: for the welfare of that separate personality in which the claims are felt most keenly—namely, for "myself." And that welfare is pursued with egoistic motive through every life, every generation, every nation, growing in intensity and remorselessness, until it reaches, as lately, a state of world-war. It passes through innumerable phases, adopts, by the aid of the intellect, all kinds of mechanical and economic devices, and is at the present moment incarnate in the system of modern civilization.

What, then, we may legitimately ask, was the Christian teaching about this *eros*, this love of life? Was it to be despised, neglected, resisted, or stamped out? Or, was it to be given free rein to attain its ends? All the teaching as to *eros* may be summed up in the simple words: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of," and "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." *Eros* is not to be destroyed, but transcended; a higher aim is proposed by Christ which, if attempted with success, will lead to a "more abundant life" in which a purified *eros* has its share.

It is here we meet with the essential Christian Love, called in the New Testament, *agape*. We are able to understand at once its distinctive quality as compared with *eros*. *Agape*, unlike *eros*, is an act of personal will. It is "loving-kindness" that overrides attraction

and repulsion, and so can be extended to friend and enemy alike. Christian love emphatically is not, therefore, the weak and sentimental emotion it is so often supposed to be, but is, in its very nature, an effort of the will that rises above all emotion. It is not merely will, but *will qualified by goodness*, and the Christian, in exercising such love, accomplishes and facilitates for others the aims of their *eros*: like the Heavenly Father, he also "knows what things men have need of." By means of the faculties of imagination and compassion, he is prompted to meet their needs, for as he would that men should do for him, so he strives to do for them: for he knows that *eros* in them, as in him, asks for life. The Christian's conception of life therefore, does not deny the claims of *eros*, but emphasizes the duty of *agape*. Christian ethic is thus a new life-direction, a turning round from the way of the world, from the seeking of private welfare to positive goodwill and universal welfare.

The early Christians were taught, like other people, a "golden rule," but even though this were intelligible enough, they were taught also something still more lofty and metaphysical: men are to imitate God: as He is perfect in loving kindness, so also must His servants be: "because God is love": *hoti ho theos agape estin* (Matt. v., 48; John Ep. I., iv., 8).

VIII. SOCIAL SEXUAL ETHIC

Just as Society is the extension and co-ordination of the activities of individuals, so a social sexual ethic rises out of a personal one. In other words, society requires additions to and qualifications of the personal ethic, and the chief instance of these is the institution of marriage. A great deal has been written upon the history of marriage by learned scientists, and the data collected are immense. Nothing but the bare conclusions need be cited here in order to enable us to refer to modern expedients that are being offered.

Anciently, and arising out of the facts of human reproduction, the mother was naturally the more important of the two partners. She was, as she still is, the chief agent of Nature's process. Within her and around her are the centers of family growth. Consequently matriarchy, or the rule of the mother, was once widely recognized, and polyandry, the practice of associating several males with the central female, was admitted. There are vestiges of this system still in vogue among the primitive tribes of Asia. Out of it, and partly as a consequence of tribal association, the status of the husband was

evolved. One of the several men associated with the mother—the strongest and most attractive defender—was raised to a position of preference. Indeed the word “husband” contains the history of the institution down to early Scandinavian times. He was *husbuondi*, the housedweller, bound, as others were not, to the house. Eventually, the husband became the master of the house, and one of this class the chief or king of the tribe; and just as under the matriarchy the practice of polyandry appeared, so under male rule the practice of polygamy developed.

Psychologically, therefore, if not socially, man is naturally polygamous and woman naturally polyandrynous. As a male, the man radiates his desire in many directions always lighting for the time being on the most attractive of the opposite sex. And similarly with the female. But human society, both primitive and modern, could not exist unless some check were placed upon the promiscuous, natural, psychological impulses, which are, in all species and kingdoms below the human, exuberant and prolific. The check invented by Society inevitably was marriage, and eventually monogamous marriage. Its only alternative is promiscuity and the utter disruption, at least, of the present form of Society. We can, of course, see the contest going on before our eyes. Prostitution, irregular and non-legal unions, adulteries and divorces are the day-to-day evidence that monogamous marriage has not established itself in power over the older and more primitive relationships. Will it ever do so?

Meanwhile, notice must be given to an expedient that has long been secretly present with us, but has lately shown its face without shame. It is called “Birth Control,” and consists in the use of chemical and mechanical means for preventing conception. Conception, of course, apart from its burden upon the woman, places a restraint for a considerable time upon the man, especially upon the man of good feeling. Birth control or contraception removes all prudential motives for self-restraint, and makes it possible for sexual indulgence in marriage to be limited only by the diminution of desire or the advance of age. Apart from this, however, it inevitably has an influence outside the marriage relation. It opens the door for irregular, promiscuous and unfruitful unions, which from the point of view of modern industry, sociology and politics, are full of dangers. I cannot go into these here. It is sufficient to say that by contraception, inordinate sexual indulgence both in and out of marriage is facilitated and, if I am right in my foregoing physiological arguments, evil must come to both individuals and the race.

IX. CONCLUSION

Like the seed cast by the sower, this essay will fall into the hands of some who will despise it, of those who from incapacity or sheer idleness will not even understand it. In some of those who for the first time hear of its ideas, it will rouse opposition and even anger; but to a few it will appeal as truthful and useful. Yet even they will find doubts and questions rising in their minds. The simplest of them will say to me: "According to your arguments sexual intercourse ought not to take place; the world would then become unpeopled—which is absurd! Therefore you must be wrong." My reply is that I have no such dangerous nostrum to offer. "Birth control" is the most potent form of birth prevention and will depopulate the world faster than the attempted practice of continence. My purpose is a simple one: by offering certain philosophic and scientific truths as a challenge to ignorance and indulgence, I desire to help to purify the sexual life of our time.