Sexual Freedom: Why it is Feared

Robert Anton Wilson

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Those who believe in, and seriously advocate and practice, sexual freedom are, and always have been, a minority. If there is one generalization that truly applies to the *majority* of men and women in all civilizations, everywhere, it is that they fear sexual freedom more than anything else, more then death itself, even. This is the crucial mystery of human nature and, quite properly, it has been the area of most intense investigation by depth psychologists from Freud and Reich to Marcuse and Brown.

A. S. Neill, the founder of the Summerhill school, was once asked where in the civilized world a man could practice homosexuality without fear of legal persecution. Neill replied that he knew of no such place, adding that he didn't even know of a place where a man could practice heterosexuality without being persecuted for it. Homosexuals, Dr. Albert Ellis wrote, think that they suffer because they live in an anti-homosexual culture, but the truth is, he added, we *all* suffer because we live in an *anti-sexual* culture.

Eschewing depth psychology for the moment and taking a deliberately superficial view, why does the "man in the street" fear sexual freedom? That is, what reason would he himself give for the irrational taboos to which he submits and tries to inflict upon others? The answer is a truism. "Sexual freedom," the man in the street will tell you, "leads to anarchy and the collapse of Order."

Instead of automatically denying this (as most advocates of sexual freedom do), let us consider it for a moment. The architect of modern anarchism, Michael Bakunin, wrote in his *God and the State* that without "God," the State is impossible. He instances as proof the Republics of France and the United States, both of which were founded by free-thinkers and atheists, but which both embraced the "God" idea very rapidly when the practical details of governing had to be faced. Wilhelm Reich's *Sexual Revolution* and *Mass Psychology of Fascism* document that pro-State attitudes and authoritarianism are usually joined with dogmatic religion and anti-sex fears, whereas anti-State and libertarian attitudes are generally coupled with free thought and pro-sex affirmation. Adorno's classic *Authoritarian Personality* gives reams of statistical proof of the Reichian thesis. A governor, we can safely say, has less problems in enforcing obedience if his subjects are mystical, religious and frightened of sex.

The reason for this is easy to understand. *Sex denial is very close to being absolutely impossible,* and — as the subtle Jesuits knew long before Freud — even when the would-be ascetic thinks he has "triumphed" over the flesh, it sneaks up on him from a new direction and takes him by surprise. Thus, *the inevitable consequence of sex denial is guilt:* that special guilt which comes

of continual failure to accomplish that which you consider "good." (This continual failure is the "dark night of the soul" lamented by medieval monks). Now, a guilt-ridden man is an easy man to manipulate and force to your own will, because self-respect is the prerequisite of independence and rebellion, and the guilt-ridden person can have no self-respect. Modern advertising revolves around this central fact as a great safe lock pivots on a single jewel: from "B.O." and "97 pound weakling" to the soap that makes you feel" *clean all over,"* advertising has inculcated self-doubts and guilts in order to persuade that the sponsor's panacea will cure these very doubts which the sponsor himself through his ad agency has created!

What does "government" mean, after all? Control of Mr. A by Mr. B — or, in other words, the subordination of one man's will to another's. We have been taught that society cannot exist without government and that this sub-ordination of wills is existentially necessary and unchangeable; hence, we accept it. But anthropology presents a different picture. As the anthropologist Kathleen Gough has written, "The State as a social form has existed for about one-two-hundredth part of man's history… it may be one of the shortest-lived forms of human society."[1] What we call anarchy — i.e., voluntary association — has been man's dominant pattern for 199/200ths of his history. It should be no surprise that, as Rattray Taylor shows in *Sex in History,* these pre-State societies were not sexually repressed and did not fear sexual freedom to the utmost extent.

Enforced conformity of human beings — the subjugation of society to the will of the State — leads to generalized stress upon the total organism of each. Modern psychosomatic medicine makes abundantly clear that all life (protoplasm) consists of electro-colloidal equilibrium between gel (total dispersion) and sol (total contraction), and every stress produces contraction, as is seen in exaggerated form in the typical withdrawal of the snail and turtle, a human infant visibly cringing with fear, etc. It is this (usually microscopic) contraction of the physical body that we experience psychically as "anxiety." When it becomes chronic, this contraction effects the large muscles and creates that "hunched, bowed" look which actors employ when portraying a timid and beaten man. The tendency toward this "posture of defeat" is visible in all State-dominated societies, as it was conspicuously absent in the bold carriage of the State-less Polynesians and American Indians when first contacted.

But the chronic anxiety which is the subjective aspect of this physical "shrinking biopathy" leads to a *defensive* attitude and a philosophy of *control.* Government *per se* consists of this compulsion to control in its most highly developed form, and war represents the most coercive and ultimate form of control. No government lasts more than a generation without plunging its subjects into war; even the government founded by the pacifist Gandhi has plunged its subjects into war *eight times* in the generation since his death. Four wars per century is the average ratio for a long-lasting government.

Geldings, any farmer will tell you, are easier to control than stallions. The first governments, which were frankly slave-states, inculcated sexual repression for precisely this reason. Besides creating loads of guilt and self-doubt in the slaves, thus making them easier to intimidate for the reasons previously explained, sexual repression is itself a contraction of the large muscles. You cannot banish a wish from consciousness, as Groddeck demonstrates in *The Book of the It,* without contracting your abdominal muscles. Sexual repression in particular means what Neill calls "the stiff stomach disease," because the only way the genitals can be stopped from lively activity is by deadening them through abdominal armoring. It is Wilhelm Reich who deserves credit for

[1] *The Decline of the State,* by Kathleen Gough. Correspondence Publishing Company. 1962.

seeing the ultimate implications of this. Reich pointed out that loosening of the chronic muscle contractions which characterize submissive "civilized" man must be a process of *physical* pain and *psychic* anxiety. We are now able to understand the two great mysteries of social behavior: why sexual repression is accepted and why government is accepted, when the first diminishes joy and the second is leading obviously to the destruction of the species. *Submissiveness is anchored in the body.* The anti-sexual training of infants, children and adolescents creates muscular tensions which cause pain whenever rebellion is attempted. This is why homosexuals and sexually free heterosexuals are so conspicuously "neurotic": besides the condemnation of society, they suffer also the "condemnation" of their own muscles pushing them toward conformity and submission.

Freud's famous pessimism is rooted in understanding of the psychic side of this process which I have described physically. "Man is his own prisoner," was Freud's final, gloomy conclusion. But recent thinkers have been less sure of this. Reich's *Sexual Revolution,* Brown's *Life Against Death* and Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* all look forward toward a "civilization without repression," and all three tend to recognize that this would have to be a State-less civilization.

Before the murder of Mangus Colorado and the betrayal of Cochise, Apache society represented an approximation of such a free culture. Until marriage, all were sexually free to enjoy themselves as they wished (the same freedom returned when a marriage was dissolved) and if the chief's wishes were not acceptable to anyone he was at liberty to enter another Apache tribe or start one of his own if he had enough followers. (Geronimo did just this when Cochise made his treaty with the U.S. government.) The tribe, thus, was held together by what anarchists call *voluntary association* and did not contain an authoritarian State apparatus.

In a technologically more advanced society the same principle can be carried out. Proudhon's famous formula for anarchism, "the dissolution of the State into the economic organism," means, basically, the substitution of voluntary contractual organizations for the involuntary coercive authority of the State. In such a system, whatever voluntary associations a man joined would be truly an expression of his will (otherwise, he would not join them). Such a State-less civilization could be as sexually free as the State-less bands, tribes and chiefdoms of pre-history; *repression would have no social function,* as there would be no need of creating guilt and submissiveness in the population.

Such a picture is not as "utopian" as it may seem — and "utopianism" is not something to despise nowadays, when the very survival of mankind is, as Norman Brown has noted, a "utopian dream." Cybernation has created, — as Norbert Weiner predicted it would, and as writers like Kathleen Gough and Henry Marcuse are beginning to note with mixed joy and fear — the possibility of a society of abundance in which there will be very little need for work. Traditional humanity is at the end of its tether, due to the two great achievements of modern science, nuclear energy and cybernation. If we as individuals manage to survive the first, our culture certainly cannot survive the second. When it is no longer necessary for the masses of men to toil "by the sweat of their brows" for bread, one of the chief props for social repression will fall. Large-scale unemployment up to the level of massive starvation has, it is true, occurred in the past, and the ruling class has managed to remain in their saddles; but the large-scale unemployment to which we are now heading will make all previous "depressions" seem minor by comparison, and there will be no hope of relief ever coming — there will be no way to create new jobs. Undoubtedly, the ruling classes will allow the starvation to reach epic proportions; and, undoubtedly, the muscularly repressed masses, conditioned to submission and self-denial, will accept it — except for a few rebels, as always; but, eventually, perhaps when cannibalism sets in, the whole edifice of

culture based on repression will come tumbling down and, like Humpty Dumpty, nobody will be able to put it together again. Those now alive may live to see this.

The unrepressed man of the future — if there is a future — will look back at our age and wonder how we survived without all landing in the madhouse. That so many of us do land in madhouses will be accepted as the natural consequence of repressed civilization.

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