

upper echelons of business and government. According to some feminists, such complaints on the part of gay men are trivial, inasmuch as gay men benefit qua men from the privileges accorded to a whole gender class. However, these benefits are differently apportioned, as the category of race shows, for black men do not benefit (if at all) to the same degree as white men. These are only a few of the complexities involved, and they suggest that, as an analytical tool, "sexism" is rather blunt.

Modern industrial society is undergoing rapid technological and social change, and in the course of this transition it is impossible to foresee what the ultimate arrangements will be. While the discussion of sexism has often been heated and rhetorical, thoughtful observers of social policy must remain indebted to it for raising essential questions of human dignity and power.

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SEX NEGATIVE, SEX POSITIVE

This polarity owes its inception to Wilhelm Reich (1897–1957), who sought to synthesize Freud and Marx in a style acceptable to the leftist intelligentsia in Central Europe of the 1920s. The basic hypothesis is that some societies accept the inherent value of sexual expression and indeed insist on it as a prerequisite of mental health, while other human groups despise sexuality and are ceaselessly inventive in devising austerities and prohibitions as a means of social control.

Despite its seeming radicalism, the exaltation of "sex positivism" perpetuated the sentimental idealism of some eighteenth-century explorers and ethnographers who contrasted the supposed sexual paradise of the South Seas (for ex-

ample, the Tamoeé of the Marquis de Sade's *Aline et Valcour* [1791]) with the ascetic regimes of pre-Enlightenment Europe, in which Catholic and Protestant vied in cultivating stringent codes of sexual morality. In our own day, some homophile writers such as Wainwright Churchill characteristically see ancient Greece as a "sex positive" culture because it tolerated and even fostered pederastic relationships among males of the upper classes. The situation of Greek women these writers pass by in silence. Popular authors of books on "the sexual history of mankind" have reveled in depicting the joys of life in temporally and spatially remote but uninhibited societies where the burdens of chastity are unknown and sexual bliss is the lot of one and all. Such golden-age fantasies are part of the the discourse of utopianism.

In truth, all cultures regulate sexual behavior in one way or another. No human society allows its members, whatever their age, sex, or social status, to interact sexually with one another without restriction. Indeed, there are not a few in which heterosexual intercourse, even with the full consent of the adult participants, can be punished by ostracism, mutilation, or even death if it involves, say, a liaison between a male of a lower caste and a female of a higher one. Also, the concern with the legitimacy of one's offspring causes the sexual freedom of the nubile or married female to be severely restricted in nearly all cultures, as no society wants a horde of children with no assignable father deposited "on its doorstep."

If the myth of complete sexual freedom, however appealing it may be to critics of Western sexual mores, is unfounded, what factors promoted its acceptance? One is the greater licence accorded by many cultures to the foreigner—the tourist or anthropologist—for a variety of psychological and economic reasons, including the undeniable appeal of the exotic partner and the practical demand in

tourist resorts for prostitutes and hustlers to serve the guests, even though similar behavior would not be tolerated in a native village fifteen miles away. Also, the availability of teenaged partners to the foreigner may reflect only the circumstance that children are virtually forced into prostitution by families for whom this form of exploitation is a lucrative source of income. Such a situation has nothing in common with the "sexual freedom" on which the leaders of the sexual reform movement liked to expatiate, it is rather a survival of slavery and feudalism in the Third World. Also, even if certain practices are tolerated, the circle of persons who may engage in them without being repudiated by their families or punished by the civil authority is much narrower than Westerners—furnished with a foreign passport and a source of income from outside the country—can ever be aware. Everywhere wealth and power do impart a degree of freedom to gratify one's sexual desires, including even those tabooed by the larger society, but this is not an egalitarian right, it is a privilege of the elite in a hierarchical, class regime of the kind that the left would abolish if it could—at least in theory. The concrete practice of the states in the socialist bloc is another matter. Finally, many cultures have puberty rites that entail exceedingly painful practices such as circumcision, subincision, clitoridectomy ("female circumcision"), tattooing, mutilation, and the like—scarcely the Western ideal of an uninhibited adolescence.

What probably forms a line of demarcation is whether asceticism ranks as an ideal of behavior for everyone, or only as a norm for those with a religious vocation that does not affect the rest of the community. Medieval Christianity did profess an ascetic ideal that would forever place homosexual activity outside the pale of morality, since it can never serve the end of procreation within lawful marriage, and all other forms of attachment were denied the right of sexual expression.

Other cultures have seen pleasure as a good in itself, quite apart from the procreative aspect, but the pursuit of pleasure, as in the case of the prostitute, could also entail becoming a social outcast with no prospects of conventional marriage. So the freedom of one was purchased at the price of another's degradation or servitude.

All these considerations reveal only how far modern Western civilization is from a solution to the "sexual problem," a solution that must take into account the risk of contracting **sexually transmitted diseases**, the possibility of unwanted pregnancy, and similar misfortunes. Even if a future society adopts a wholly positive attitude toward sexual pleasure, the need to shield both the individual and the collective from the negative consequences of unregulated sexual practice poses a problem that cannot be wished away.

Warren Johansson

SEXUAL LIBERTY AND THE LAW

Sexual liberty has been of particular interest in Anglo-Saxon thought. The reception of the **Enlightenment** from the Continent, from **Beccaria**, Filangieri, the French *philosophes*, and the Code Napoléon mandated a reexamination of **common law** traditions that long resisted the wave of criminal law reform.

The ideas of John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) have been enormously influential in this sphere. Perhaps unaware of his father James' friend Jeremy **Bentham's** incisive unpublished treatises arguing for the decriminalization of sodomy, Mill defended individual liberties and in the tradition of the *philosophes* urged minimal state interference with speech and conduct of individuals. Mill's ideas have not gone unchallenged. Champions of traditional **Judeo-Christian** morality, including Sir James Fitzjames Stephen in 1874 and Baron Patrick Devlin in the 1960s, argued that a society that failed to control the morality of individuals would disintegrate.