

## CHAPTER ONE:

# INTRODUCTION: THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE SEXUAL BODY

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The term “the sexual body” is a deliberately chosen one. There may come a day when such a term is in fact a redundancy, when it will be no more than a synonym for “the human body.” At present, however, the term is needed. It has been chosen as the title of this study in order to postulate that consideration of human realities must include the body, and that inherently, the body is sexual, in all the range of meanings that the word has. The term is chosen to prevent the elision, pervasive in most disciplines (indeed within most forms of thought) in contemporary culture, of the whole topic of the sexual (Efron, 1975). In the philosophy of science, this bias shows itself in the title of a volume written by Sir Karl R. Popper and Sir John C. Eccles, *The Self and Its Brain* (Popper and Eccles, 1977). The interdisciplinary argument of these two distinguished thinkers indeed supposes that the human self possesses or owns a brain, which in turn is connected to the central nervous system. The possibilities for raising mind over body with such an approach are easy, and sexuality need never be discussed. A reader will discover, in fact, that sexuality is absent throughout the book’s 560 pages, even though the authors’ object is to discuss “the relation between our bodies and our minds . . .” (p. vii). Popper, in his section of the book, acknowledges that the body is good for some things, but certainly not for understanding human identity. With little difficulty Popper commits himself to a view of human nature which once more values mind over body: “Temporally, the body is there before the mind. The mind is a later achievement; and it is more valuable” (p. 115).

I would rather err on the side of the body and sex, if a value preference must determine my own approach. Given the prevalence of biases such as Popper's, the common sense notions that the living body must not be mistaken for the person, and that human realities include much that is not sexual in any meaningful sense, are to be foresworn for the duration of this study. They will be set aside on the grounds that these notions almost always turn out in practice to be ways of evading the sexual, along with its emotional and cognitive dimensions. Another dimension is lost as well: those implications for social change that emerge from a consideration of human sexuality. Beyond the decision to write *as if* the sexual body is synonymous with human life, however, is a suggestion that the equivalence is warranted. In this regard I find especially valuable Stephen C. Pepper's concept of evidence and its corroboration by means of hypotheses which allow for the formation of large-scale theories (Pepper, 1942, pp. 39-70). If we consider all the available evidence in the spirit of Stephen C. Pepper's concept of "world hypotheses," we may find that there is relatively adequate support for a view of the world in which the sexual body is central. In the concluding chapter, after giving argument and evidence in the light of the approach taken here, I will come back to this possibility.

Seen from a slightly different conceptual angle, the term "sexual body" is of course a designation; it is an act of "naming," as Dewey and Bentley would say (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, pp. 88-91), which segregates certain "subject-matters" for investigation. Namings and that which is named develop together in the process of inquiry. The particular name, "the sexual body," is not intended as a "hard fact" (a concept of which Dewey and Bentley would take the dimmest view), but of a theory in the making. At this stage of inquiry, it is a theoretical perspective, but it is not a formal theory with testable hypotheses, a distinction explained by Gibbs (1966). Gibbs observed that in the social sciences, what purport to be new theories are actually little different than conceptions. "Apart from its tautological character, a conception is too general to constitute a testable idea" (Gibbs, p. 9). In a somewhat similar vein, Searle has argued that what is put forth currently as "cognitive science" is actually a group of research projects which do not add up to a theory at all (Searle, 1982, p. 3). Searle's intention is to unmask the "myth" of the computer, whereas Gibbs' was to avoid the myths of scientism by starting out with a recognition that most of the time when inquiry begins, what we first have to work with is a general theoretical perspective. The sexual body is one such perspective.

Although the perspective is a general one, it obtains some firmness in the following proposition which I offer along with the perspective itself: Any finding in science concerning the human being, even if it concerns "intelligence" or the "cognitive," will turn out upon investigation to have meaningful connections with human sexuality. The reason these connections have not

been seen is that researchers are usually not trying to discover them. Often, they may be said to be trying to avoid them, as I shall argue in the coming chapters.

A tempting simplification, which would allow us to avoid the threat of the sexual body, would be to reframe the axiom just given so that it refers to the connection of all scientific findings about people to the human body. But this will not do. In *Messages of the Body* (Spiegel and Machotka, 1974), for example, it is shown that adult perception of the adult body changes drastically when the perceived body is regarded in sexual terms, even though the body delineation is objectively no different than it is when sexuality is not in the foreground of the perceiver's consciousness. The discipline involved in that inquiry has been named "somatotactics." In keeping with the perspective of the sexual body, I am highlighting only the finding that shows the more intense, threatening feelings connected with perception of the body as sexual (in the conditions of that study, which were intergroup and not intimate conditions), as a warrant for the theoretical perspective of the sexual body. There are many such warrants, as the present study will show.

Merely to enclose the sexuality of the human body within the concept of body in general would also avoid certain specifics. Human sexuality is different than any other kind, in some ways. Anderson has summarized the differences recently, in terms of the differences between humans and other primates. We humans, Anderson writes,

seem to be the only primate in which the female has forsaken the behavioral phenomenon of oestrus, during which she is instinctively attractive and receptive to the male, for a situation in which she is potentially attractive and receptive throughout the menstrual cycle and at any time from adolescence to old age. We also appear to be the only primate in which the female receives added pleasure from sexual intercourse in the form of orgasm. The exploitation of sex for social purposes may have left its mark in the fact that man has the largest penis of all primates but relatively small testes and sperm reserves, so that if ejaculation occurs more frequently than once every two days semen volume and sperm density decline. This suggests that we are adapted for a low level of continuous sexual activity, which, in contrast to all other animal species, normally takes place in private. (Anderson, 1983, pp. 25-26; 6 supporting references omitted)

Although Anderson's interpretations of the phenomena described are arguable, it is most reasonable to assume, from the perspective of the sexual body, that the phenomena are psychologically meaningful. Anderson goes on to describe further human differences from other primates with regard to the female breast. The breast functions erotically, as it does not appear to do in any other mammal,

and we are the only primate in which full breast development occurs at puberty. In all other species, including the great apes, the breasts only fully develop during the first pregnancy, several years after puberty. (Anderson, 1983, p. 26, references omitted)

These peculiarities of human sexuality are among the factors which continue to puzzle students of human behavior, and to arouse controversy. (See again Anderson, 1983, and the replies to his article.) The recent emergence of research in primatology on the part of women scientists is already providing doubts over some of the assertions Anderson thought to be factual. In particular, it now appears that the oestrus cycle in many species of monkeys and in apes does not limit the female to having intercourse only while ovulating (Eckholm 1984; cf. Small, 1984). There is a complexity here which precludes any simple substantive definition of what the sexual body "is."

In fact, I am not attempting to give a definition of the sexual body. My strategy is to allow a "descriptive definition" (Pepper, 1946) build up in the course of the study itself. In the descriptive definition, the elements of the symbol to be defined, in this case the term "the sexual body," are continually revised in accordance with new observations. In this way definitions can be socially responsible acts of naming, rather than reifications or conceptually empty conventional markers (Pepper, 1946). Dewey and Bentley, in their stringent review of proposals for the construction of definitions, gave Pepper's theory of the descriptive definition an unusually high level of approval (Dewey and Bentley, 1949, pp. 189-195).

The philosophical contributions of John Dewey will play a guiding role in what follows. It was Dewey who provided, in fact, the painful central question: "Why is the attempt to connect the higher and ideal things of experience with basic vital roots so often regarded as betrayal of their nature and denial of their value?" As he went on to say, "A complete answer" to such a question "would involve the writing of a history of morals that would set forth the conditions that have brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh to spirit" (Dewey, 1934, p. 20). Nothing like a complete answer can be expected, but at least this will be part of the writing of such a history in fields where it has not been adequately pursued. I hope to convey the idea that there is at present a new set of ways being invented, within some of the disciplines I am discussing, to re-create an opposition between flesh and spirit, although in our day we might call it the opposition between flesh and the cognitive. If this is the case, can we understand the "why" of it, as Dewey's statement suggests? I will refer to this again in the conclusion. It should be understood, however, that Deweyan ways of thought are in the background of this perspective throughout. I refer especially to his book, *The Quest for Certainty*, (Dewey, 1929b), an unnerving exploration of the human penchant to seek certainty and security in knowledge, and hence to have no knowledge at all, but a series of new superstitions, labelled scientific. *The Quest for Certainty* is even more disturbing however, in its positive advice that we step experimentally into the unknown world of modern social values, into the good and the bad values that we ourselves must create. From the perspective of the sexual body, such thinking is still the most appropriate,

since we know so little, yet are required to know enough to make our major life decisions.

Dewey's clarification of the human significance of fruitful inquiry I take as fundamental to the topic of the sexual body. As we learn more about this topic, we are not simply building up our knowledge of an area in which we were previously ignorant. Inquiry does not consist of uncovering "antecedent" objects of knowledge: it both creates new objects where previously there had just been an amorphous "something" to be investigated, and it also leads inevitably to new problems of inquiry regarding these objects. As soon as any major aspect of the sexual body is tentatively discovered by scientific investigation, that aspect becomes part of the use of knowledge in ways that could not have been predicted. Recently McIlvenna, a research director for the Institute for Advanced Study of Sexuality, has said, "I'm having difficulty thinking about sex as it relates to marriage" (quoted in Grosskopf, 1983a, p. 110). He was speaking not of his personal problems nor of the eternal questions of sex in marriage, but of the typically Deweyan—and typically human—problem of what to make of new knowledge. McIlvenna had just completed a careful statistical survey of the sexual lives of married American women. The results led him to ask the question of how sex and marriage are related in American life now, and in the likely future, given the new data at hand. As this example indicates, research concerning the sexual body is a prime example of Dewey's theory of inquiry: we uncover not antecedent objects that have just been waiting there for us to find, but objects of knowledge which themselves are part of a process of further changes in the relations of experience and nature (Dewey, 1929a, 1929b). McIlvenna's survey, in other words, had shown something new about the sexual mores of married women in America, but it had not shown anything about what sexuality "is"; nor could its findings be prevented from becoming part of an inquiry leading to further change, which will in its turn call for a new survey, contributing to further change, and so on into the future. New and problematic contexts are inherent to the process of inquiry. This is nowhere more true than in the study of the sexual body.

To understand the bearing of Dewey's experimentalism and contextualism, it is necessary to refer to alternative philosophical positions in a systematic way. For this purpose, Pepper's concept of "world hypothesis," a name for the philosophical framework within which the categories of thought in any discipline have their grounding, is preferable to the nearly synonymous "worldview" or "metaphysics" (Pepper, 1942). The "hypothesis" is part of an empirically oriented and pluralistic approach that Pepper developed over a period of 50 years, and which later researchers in numerous disciplines have increasingly found to be valuable.

The disciplines of the sexual body are potentially limitless. They are by no means confined to sexology. I have chosen to emphasize certain areas, and

would expect my understanding to be modified by other writers. I will be discussing the continuing "explosion," since about 1960, of research in the field of infancy; the contributions toward understanding the sexual body made by the Reichian and Bioenergetic traditions; and the surprisingly neglected discipline of the adult sexual body. Anthropological evidence will be considered, in terms developed by Prescott (1979). Most of all, I will attend to psychoanalytic theory: its roots in Freud, the unconsciously sadistic development of Freud's theories in such fashion as to remove them from their grounding in the sexual body, and several more recent psychoanalytic theories. There are a number of serious interdisciplinary challenges at the present time to psychoanalytic theory as it stands, and this set of challenges seems to be producing an opening of theory that is rare in any discipline, let alone in one that has become as professionally organized as has psychoanalysis.

Up until the current crisis, the history of psychoanalytic theory has been another example, in many respects, of a retreat from the whole perspective of the sexual body. There is a great deal of sexual hatred in that history. Five current theories within psychoanalytic thinking seem to be genuinely different than what has gone before. The theories of Bowlby, Peterfreund, Lichtenstein, Kohut, and Lacan are worth examining in detail because there is a chance in at least four of them for a renewal of contact with the perspective of the sexual body, while even in the remaining theory, that of Lacan, there looms the possibility of a confrontation (not evasion) which will give the definitive separation of psychoanalysis from the sexual body at last.

If it is true that sexual hatred finds its way into psychoanalytic theory, and no doubt into other theory as well, that could only be due to the personal factor. To be sure, what is personal occurs within a cultural context, and in thinking about the sexual body, it is important to not lose sight of the long tradition of opposition to sexual expression at virtually all levels. Nonetheless, the personal factor remains. Theorists are human beings, a platitude which has special pertinence in discussion of sexuality. Dewey's realization that the separation of flesh and spirit, fear of the senses, and contempt for the body was the underlying problem behind the various dysjunctions between theory and practice, or thought and action that he had been criticizing for decades, came only in his 7th decade of lived experience; his earlier statements along the same lines, even in *The Quest for Certainty* (Dewey, 1929b), are not focused on the sexual body. In referring to "the" sexual body, I am referring at some level to my own. I assume that such reference is inevitable, and indeed valuable, in the perspective being developed in the present study. There is a theoretical bearing of intimacy upon theory in this perspective which is unusual in the sciences. That relationship will be worth considering in the concluding chapter, when the evidence has been displayed. But reference to one's own sexual body also helps to avoid reification: the reader will remain aware that the term does not refer to a collective entity, such as "the body

politic," nor should it suggest that all sexual bodies are precisely the same as one's own. The reader will have some awareness that even his or her own body has not always been the same as it is today. The complexities of a life that is lived in the body, but in a body which had once been an infant, then a child, then an adolescent, and also an adult are much to the point. We can speak of each of these existences as "the sexual body," knowing also that they are all part of one life cycle. I do not wish to suggest that anyone has four (or more) different sexual bodies, but I do want to say that the paucity of serious thinking about the sexual body has much to do with the failure of most common sense talk as well as scientific discourse to give this complexity its due. The central chapters of this study, on the infant sexual body and on the adult sexual body, are intended as a corrective; they are proposed as a way of showing the sexual body has a complexity which is beyond the grasp of any existing theory, and that only a perspective which focuses on the sexual body can hope to develop such a theory.

### **Inquiry in the Context of a Continuing Sexual Revolution**

The entire study is intended to demonstrate the theoretical perspective of the sexual body in operation, and to show its value as an instrument for critical thinking in several disciplines. The special disciplines in their separate activities should not be mistaken as entities remote from social processes. The sexual body has great interdisciplinary possibilities, but these would not merit as much attention as I am asking from readers here, were it not that the performance and application of research regarding the sexual body continues to be badly needed. Without it, a vast range of human decisions will continue to be made unintelligently.

A similar statement could be made wherever human decisions must be based on controversial value judgments and made against a background of empirically grounded, but not very clear, facts. These decisions are the stuff of life, the "genuine options" referred to by William James (1955). In our own period of history, however, the context of decisions concerning sex take place within what has been called, rightly, the "sexual revolution." Just when and how this revolution began is not my concern at this point; the rough dating of "around the turn of the century," offered by Skolnick (1973, pp. 188-192) will serve for my purposes. Wilhelm Reich, whose name is associated with the term "sexual revolution," published a volume entitled *La Crise Sexuelle* (Reich, 1934), revised and enlarged it as *Die Sexualität im Kulturkampf* (Reich, 1936), before he revised it again and brought it out in English under the title *The Sexual Revolution* (Reich, 1945). The term has come into general use. Skolnick does not cite Reich in her discussion, and it is possible to recognize that there was and is a sexual revolution on without knowing anything about Reich. A recent excellent volume on sex education, which bears the subtitle

*The Challenge of Healthy Sexual Revolution* (Brown, 1980) does not mention Reich anywhere in its 18 chapters, although several of the contributors do mention him in a conference on childhood sexuality in which they also happened to participate (Samson, 1980). Peter Gay, the historian who has offered substantial evidence for dating the sexual revolution back into the middle or late 19th century in Europe and the U.S., seems to avoid the very phrase "sexual revolution"; yet Gay's "principal intellectual obligation," as he points out, "is obviously to Sigmund Freud" (Gay, 1984, p. 463). In other words, Gay's intellectual roots are in the same intellectual discipline as were Reich's.

No work known to me discusses the sexual revolution on a worldwide basis. Yet the revolution goes on, even though it is a long way from being completed, whether it is underway in the Western world, in China, or the Mideast. The revolution is slow moving, partly because it is opposed. My view is that there are very strong cultural forces at work which aim at the fantasy goal of "eliminating" the human body precisely because it is sexual (Efron, 1980, 1981, 1982a, 1982b, 1982c). On the other hand, there is little doubt that a change, not simply in the decline of traditional mores, but toward sexual self-regulation in Wilhelm Reich's sense (Reich, 1945) has been going on for nearly a century, as shown by such varied developments as the creative restructuring of divorce laws in the U.S. since 1969 (Price-Bonham, Wright, and Pittman, 1983), the legalization of contraception and divorce in even so Catholic a country as Italy, and the beginning of opposition to the practice of clitoridectomy and labial excision in certain Mideast cultures (Hosken, 1979; Lightfoot-Klein, 1984).

The extent and the multiple manifestations of the sexual revolution are probably not generally realized. From the perspective of the sexual body, they become noticeable as part of an overall world social change, penetrating into unlikely areas. Iran, even within the context of a highly conservative theocratic revolution, has enacted a law allowing women to initiate divorce proceedings ("Iranian Law," 1983). The Mullahs who put this change into the lawbooks pointed out that while some men might claim it deprived them of their rights, it actually only took from them powers which they should not have been entitled to, under Islamic law. To be sure, the newsclip from which I gathered this information is not enough to overcome my scepticism—and I presume the reader's—of any major movement toward sexual self-regulation within an Islamic theocracy, but there does seem to be some movement toward change even there. A recently published oral history of a Moroccan family includes an account by a woman outraged at the traditional status of women in Islamic society (Munson, 1984), and Fatma A. Sabbah has published a booklength critique of Islamic cultural documents, including marriage manuals for young Muslim men, which inculcate male supremacist attitudes in erotic relationships (Sabbah, 1984).



In the Soviet Union, where ideology would not be disposed to take a favorable view of the individual as the regulator of sexuality, there is a deep commitment to the concept of romantic love within marriage; that is, Soviet citizens are encouraged to believe that they choose their mates for reasons of personal attraction and self-determined values, and not because of social status (Fischer, 1980). Attempts by letter-writers in the Soviet press to criticize this romantic outlook have been vociferously rejected by other letter-writers. Divorce has become a frequent phenomenon or problem (depending on your perspective) in the Soviet Union, and a few experiments in marital therapy have even been permitted in an effort to "save" marriages. Stern (1980) argues that there is ample evidence for saying that the restrictive sexual mores of the Stalin era have begun to dissolve, even in the face of such social backwardness as the relative unavailability, in the U.S.S.R., of contraceptives. Kerblay (1983) points to figures showing that the Soviet government's campaign in recent years to increase average size of family, that is, to have a rise in the birthrate, has been a failure. Under certain conditions, people today just won't have those babies, and they will take advantage of the availability of abortions (Kerblay, 1983, pp. 122-123).

In Spain, a Socialist government that came to power in 1983 offered the peculiar campaign promise of not nationalizing industry on any noticeable scale while helping to consolidate and codify changes toward self-regulation in sexual behavior that had been largely carried out already among the populace. A visit by the most politically influential Pope in recent times was not thought to have any chance of reversing or even slowing the direction of change in Spain. In October, 1983, a few months after the visit, a limited legalization of abortion was approved by the Spanish Parliament (Darnton, 1983). Later, when the Constitutional Tribunal, the highest court in Spain, voided most of the legislation, virtually all political factions including the conservative ones prepared new legislation to enact the changes now desired by most of the populace, as surveys in fact showed (Schumacher, 1985). In February, 1985, the Parliament of Ireland passed legislation allowing for the sale of contraceptives without prescription to anyone 18 years of age or older. This was the first "defeat ever sustained by the Catholic Church in a head-on confrontation with an Irish Government on social legislation (Feder, 1985, p. A11).

In the meantime, the Catholic Church itself slightly loosened one of its sexual prohibitions: in the first revision of the code of canon law since 1917, it was decided in 1983 that priests who marry before being properly relieved of their vows will no longer be subject to automatic excommunication. They will merely be given "just" punishment ("Vatican Eases," 1983). This change apparently formalizes a policy shift set in motion by Pope John XXIII, who is "reliably reported" to have urged special "dispensations from their vows to priests who had married" (Rynne, 1985, p. 9). His successor, Paul VI, continued new policy by granting nearly 30,000 such special dispensations in the

late 1960's (Rynne, 1985, p. 9; see also Hebbelthwaite, 1985). The Church has been having difficulty for some time, in fact, in recruiting new priests precisely because its requirement of celibacy is increasingly perceived as unwise; Dean R. Hoge, a sociologist, has cited survey evidence showing that most American Catholics favor permitting priests to marry (cited in Cornell, 1984; see also Simons, 1984). At a recent conference held by the 615 active priests in Brooklyn and Queens, called for the purpose of dealing with a major crisis in attracting an adequate corps of new priests to the Church, it was suggested by one priest, Rev. Charles Kinney of St. Brigid's Church in Brooklyn, that "optional celibacy" might be the solution to the shortage (quoted in Goldman, 1985, p. B3). Some, but not all, Catholic Bishops are now requiring that couples who cohabit prior to marriage separate for a 3-month period before a marriage rite can be performed; this is hardly a blanket refusal to countenance cohabitation ("New Hurdles," 1984). Even the recent refusal of the Archdiocese of New York to accept a requirement by the city that it agree not to discriminate against homosexuals in its employ, was not followed by the nearby Diocese of Brooklyn, which finds no objection to the homosexual job protection provision (Dunlap, 1984). In theological circles, the learned study by the Jesuit Theodore Mackin, arguing that the church should reconsider its ban on divorce (Mackin, 1984), surely will be read. Mackin in fact concludes that "a woman's happiness in sexual intimacy" is one good reason within Church tradition and doctrine to release her from a marriage which has gone bad (Mackin, 1984, p. 546). There is also the openly rebellious work by Greeley and Durkin (1984), entitled *How to Save the Catholic Church*. These authors argue that sexual love is a sacrament which is essential to the understanding Catholics have of God, and that God loves human beings not only "with the tender passion of a mother" but also with "the fierce passion of a sexual lover" (Greeley and Durkin, 1985). They hold that such love is a vital part of the special commitment toward social justice which Catholics may cultivate (*ibid.*).

The outbreak in Brazil of "machismo" murders of wives who were having love affairs and/or leaving their husbands can be seen as evidence of a conservative marriage institution in that country now reacting violently to increased self-regulation in women's sexual behavior that has been going on, perhaps, for about two decades (Hoge, 1983). In Mexico, where research on sexuality has been minimal, recent findings show that birth control is now having a serious impact on the rural areas, altering the status of women, and changing the lived quality of poverty. Among the middle class, which is officially estimated to comprise 18% of the Mexican populace, the taboo of virginity is being openly questioned, even while it is prized by men who want to get married. Rape, which apparently is omnipresent in Mexican society, has at last begun to be opposed by feminist groups, although these are still rather new and few (Ross, 1983). These indications remind us that the sexual

revolution is not confined to the middle classes. In England, a study recently completed of some 1000 lower-class families, over a three generation time-span, has shown that the practice of contraception within the poor family slowly frees it from the burden of unwanted children (Madge, 1983).

India and China are also undergoing cultural change which shows evidence of sexual revolution. In India, it is now estimated that one of seven inhabitants may be counted amongst the middle class, a figure that is equivalent to about 100 million people. The rise of the middle class is having its effect on sexual mores, as it has in other cultures. Evidence of incest within the extended family, especially among siblings who must live together as adults and are unable to marry, has begun to draw attention in psychiatric discussion. In an effort to achieve some degree of self-regulation, Indian adults in some instances have started the practice of putting "personal" advertisements in the press (Stevens, 1983).

China, on the other hand, can hardly be said to have undergone a sexual revolution in the Reichian sense. The relevance of such a term for contemporary Chinese society is probably inappropriate. It would be more in keeping with Chinese society since the Revolution to say that a change in sexual mores was imposed through ideological and political pressure, and that the concept of self-regulation did not govern this process. It appears that Communist efforts to forcibly change the sexual, marital, and child-rearing practices of the peasant population have met with serious resistance, but it is also probable that in China's cities, there has been a considerable departure from the old ways (Johnson, 1983, pp. 223-225; see also Andors, 1983). If that is the case, then it might also be true that further changes will come about and sexual self-regulation will begin to come into existence. Press reports hint, in fact, that there now is concern in China over the spread of divorce. A TV report I saw recently depicted the angry concern of Chinese authorities over coddling of children. Some amount of coddling, however, is a result that might have been predicted, given the government's forceful policy of limiting families to one child. The one child, it turns out, is sometimes spoiled to the point of not learning even the rudiments of toilet training. It would seem that such children will not learn to control themselves in the area of sexual behavior, at least not as readily as they are expected to do. The consequences and scope of such a change cannot be predicted. However, perhaps we are seeing the end of reports out of China such as that of Sidel (1972), where the Western observer admiringly noted how all the infants in a collective nursery are placed "on white enamel potties" just after breakfast and "all have their bowel movements together!" (Sidel, 1972, p. 96).

The value of a TV report in an interdisciplinary study may seem questionable. However, formal scholarship concerning the sexual revolution often lags behind informal study and anecdotal reportage, a problem to which I will return in later chapters. An example in the case of China is the book by Croll,

*The Politics of Marriage in Contemporary China* (Croll, 1981). This is a serious work of scholarship, involving both fieldwork on the part of the author and perusal of the available Chinese language sources such as newspapers and Party documents. From this study, one would conclude that the effort to transform the marriage institution in rural China so that it reflects a "free choice" of mate, rather than an arranged marriage, has been a failure. Croll draws support from many sources for her conclusions, but it may be that she was too intent on gathering all the information on her topic from the time of the success of the Communist Revolution in 1950 to September, 1979, when she wrote her preface to the volume (Croll, 1981, p. xi). Actually the documentation from periods prior to, say, 1975 or even 1978 may be too old to capture the changes going on. I say this on the basis of another somewhat informal source of information, the film "Small Happiness: Women of a Chinese Village," directed by Carma Hinton and Richard Gordon.<sup>1</sup> In the village of Longbow, located about 200 miles southwest of Peking, in Shansi Province, the film supports the conclusion that marital partners are now beginning to be chosen by the couple themselves, and not according to arrangement. In other words, a primary feature of the Chinese marriage institution has begun to change in the direction of self-regulation, after thousands of years. This change does not necessarily mean that other villages in China are also changing—Chinese villages differ strongly from each other—or that such practices as female infanticide have been stopped. In Longbow, in fact, female infanticide is still practiced, and other inequalities, such as the ritual humiliation of brides who must relocate to their husband's village, remain in force. But it would seem reasonable to look for further changes toward self-regulation in this village, given that mate selection has begun to work according to that principle, and it would hardly be surprising if some other villages among China's thousands were undergoing a similar change.

At the same time, large parts of the Western world have been permeated with some of the basic elements of sexual revolution already, particularly the decline of the taboo against masturbation and of cultural support for involuntary monogamy. The virginity fetish and adolescent abstinence are obviously not the great bulwarks of moral rigidity they once were. The social prohibition against unmarried couples living together has lost most of its power. Recent reports from Sweden indicate that nearly all couples now live together before marriage, whereas only about 1 in 5 did so in Sweden in the 1950's (Lofgren, 1983).

These developments, however, do not sustain the widespread belief that the sexual revolution is "over," or that it has "failed," unless the sexual body is regarded in highly simplistic fashion. Various aspects of sexuality are under-

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<sup>1</sup>Advance showing at SUNY-Buffalo, May 1, 1984.

going change in various societies, as well as within a given society. Popular belief tends to be overly impressed with spectacular changes such as the increase in permitted nudity on screen or stage, or the "free speech" of a few years ago which has brought formerly tabooed words into many levels of public discourse, or the high-profile divorces and mate-changes of celebrities. Mixed with this credulity is a genuine realization that mores are changing, and probably some fear that they may change "too much" or have already "gone too far." This set of prejudices is fed by the popular press whenever it declares that the sexual revolution is over. What is ignored and is not given intelligent consideration are certain critical areas, such as the failure of the sexual revolution even to reach some large minorities in the population, or the disastrous effects of poor sex education, and also certain key concepts, such as the distinction between chaotic sexual permissiveness versus sexual self-regulation. One neglected minority, for example, is that considerable part of the population labelled as "retarded" (Evans, 1983). Recent evidence strongly indicates also that normal American and Canadian adolescents are woefully ignorant of sexual information even though they begin having intercourse at an average age that is lower than that of their peers in Sweden; they lag considerably behind in sexual knowledge, in fact, even compared to teenagers in Australia and England (Goldman and Goldman, 1982). Olds reports that in her recent research using some 250 intimate sexual autobiographies by college students in the U.S., the old themes of childhood terror over masturbation and sex play, negative feelings upon realizing that their parents engage in sexual intercourse, and an embarrassing ignorance upon reaching the age at which sexual relationships are expected, are all very much in evidence (Olds, 1983).

The ignorance evidently begins early, and is by no means a result of the limitations on children's capacities to understand sex. A study which asked second graders in a Swedish and in an American elementary school to draw pictures explaining "where babies come from" revealed startling cultural contrasts. The American children simply did not know the sexual origin of birth, and thus drew body imagery of the birth process that was grotesque and violent. Babies were "cut out" of the mother's stomach. The Swedish children, on the other hand, showed accurate (but not perfect) factual knowledge, combined with a joyous attitude concerning fertilization and birth. One of them even drew a fine representation of sperm racing happily to get to the egg (Barthelow-Koch, 1980; see also Goldman and Goldman, 1982). Yates (1980) has argued that such sex education as we do give children commits the error of attempting to train the child in knowledge before permitting him or her a basic enjoyment of the sexual body. Johnson, speaking at the same conference, argued that most of the colloquial language children have available to them for talking about sex is so loaded with semantic confusion and anti-sexual bias as to be worse, perhaps, than no language at all (Johnson, 1980). For those who think the American sexual revolution has gone on far too long,

it is worth noticing that as late as the 1960's, sex and dating manuals for teenagers in the U.S. were devoted to what is aptly called "Sex Prevention" by Campbell (1979) who has done a fine bibliographic study of this genre of literature. To be sure, Campbell rightly points to a much more positive outlook in the adolescent sex and dating manuals of recent years, but it is also often the case that "television programs, commercial literature, and sometimes school and community programs unwittingly reduce 'adolescent sexuality' to simply 'adolescent intercourse' . . ." (Carrera, 1983). In other words, teenage sex is still an area of adult over-reaction, fear, and one-dimensional sexual thinking.

Certain legal changes also provide evidence that the sexual revolution has yet to make any great impact in the U.S., in some respects. Thus, while I believe I have been warranted in referring to the creative rewriting of divorce laws in the U.S. (and some other countries), I might also note a regressive revision of laws regarding marital rape. According to a report from the Center for Constitutional Rights (1983), only three states in the U.S. have abolished the legal exemption from rape charges against men who rape their wives, while three others have partially stricken these exemptions.

In 1980, however, 13 other states broadened their marital rape exemptions to permit unmarried men to rape women with whom they have been cohabiting. Five of these states gave men the right to rape women with whom they have had previous sexual intercourse whether or not they have lived together, and one state, West Virginia, exempts the rapists of "voluntary social companions"—even where there has never been a sexual relationship. (1983, p. 13)

This chilling social development will undoubtedly be one of the future focal points for renewed efforts to continue the sexual revolution, making sex a matter of self-regulation and not one of coercion.

Other findings are widely taken to show that the revolution has ended. But the fact that Americans are not engaging in casual sex as much as they were a few years ago is better interpreted in Quadland's terms (quoted in Lyons, 1983): "there is a new, more careful and caring" sexual revolution going on. As Wilhelm Reich might have put it, people have begun to quit acting out the distorted desires they previously had been forced to control; they are now acting from the deeper layer of energy that is capable of becoming part of a loving relationship (Reich, 1945; Sharaf, 1976). There probably has been a shift from the emphasis on taboo-breaking to that of longterm sexuality, but that hardly indicates that we now need to know less about the sexual body. It is possible that a recently reported drop in premarital sex and in cohabitation without marriage, among college students at Ohio State University (Clatworthy, quoted in Lyons, 1983), represents a reversion to earlier standards. Before reaching such a conclusion, however, it would be necessary to find out if the new restraint is primarily a result of self-regulation by sexually aware

young people, or if it is being produced by family pressure and religious dogma, as in earlier decades. If it is the latter, then a retreat from the sexual revolution has taken place, but if the former, it is a more problematical social change. We could be seeing the results of a less affluent economy in which young people simply cannot afford to move out of their parents' homes. A qualitative problem then would be to determine if their enforced continuing habitation with parents is actually bringing their sexual mores into conformity with an older standard of premarital abstinence.

Research on this point would have to account for motivation, not merely tabulate sexual activity and living arrangements. Such research would have to consider the demographic context as well. It has been pointed out that there has been a sharp increase in the proportion of unmarried to married couples in the U.S. since 1970; were that rate of increase to continue, "America would quickly become a nation populated by cohabitators" (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983, pp. 36-39). In that demographic context, some decline in the rate of unmarried couples cohabiting can be absorbed without making a great dent in the trend. Nor would the U.S. be the only source of data to consider. The Netherlands, for example, has a substantially higher proportion of cohabiting couples among its population than does the U.S., although the proportion is not as high as that of Sweden (Buunk, 1983).

There is no point in denying, however, that the current social climate of the U.S. has a number of features which appear to threaten the continuation of the sexual revolution. Hysteria over AIDS, herpes, sexual child abuse, and abortion might be documented. Possibly the sexual revolution will be more in evidence in other cultures in a few years than it is in the U.S. On the other hand, the very force of the hysteria may signal a belated mass realization that things have gone too far, that the revolution has progressed past the point at which it might really have been turned back.

The social developments I have referred to signify that research on sexuality, even if it originates largely in the Western countries which have relatively well organized research facilities, will become increasingly pertinent with the changes going on worldwide. The great variety of changes and problems, and the different rates of change in various societies and subcultures obviously point to a mass of evidence and potential evidence which requires some organizing perspective. The best perspective will be one that considers sexuality in its many interconnections with the overall fabric of life, and not one that draws limiting demarcations which would set off the biological from the psychological from the social and historical aspects of the sexual body. In this desired perspective, interdisciplinary knowledge will be essential, but one discipline, psychoanalysis, seems to have a key role.