ADOLESCENCE: A PROBLEM IN SEX-ECONOMY*

By Alexander Lowen

This article aims to explore some of the problems of youth in the light of sex-economic principles.

That young people have problems no one who has worked with them or taken an active interest in their affairs will deny. One need only enter into serious discussion with adolescents to ascertain the depth of their emotional conflicts. One phase of the subject, juvenile delinquency, has received widespread public attention. Recently, November 1944, the American Academy of Political and Social Science devoted its entire issue to "Adolescents in Wartime." The emotional difficulties of young people are not due to the war, however; for, as Dr. Caroline B. Zachry states in an article in the above journal, "the war has only aggravated and made more overt in youth an instability which has long been present." That the problems are such as to cause concern is indicated in another remark by the same writer: "we face what amounts to a crisis in regard to our youth; there is grave danger of widespread emotional breakdown among them."

Our field of inquiry will include not only the overt problems, those which arise from conflict with authority but also the inner conflicts. Some of these are within the adolescents' awareness; others are revealed by irrational and neurotic behavior, and may be more severe for the lack of contact with them.

An adolescent may be troubled by guilt feelings about masturbatory practices or by an inability to establish social and physical contact with some member of the opposite sex. Or, only slightly less pathological, the adolescent may have this contact but be unable to obtain the requisite satisfaction. In all these cases we are dealing with unhappy adolescents, and their number is far greater than one would suspect.

But, as we said before, these are not all. Zoot-suiters and jitterbugs present a type of behavior which is hardly what we would expect of healthy adolescents. The type of boy who roams in gangs, swashbuckling, destructive, and who thinks it is the height of manhood to get drunk on beer, is merely hiding his misery from himself. But, in this category too, we must include those young people who are paragons of good deportment, docile and obedient to their parents, submissive to authority. This should not be surprising: the unhealthy rebellion of the hoodlum or so-called "victory girl" is but the opposite extreme of the reaction of submission of the teacher's pet.

It should be evident, then, that we wish neither for "goody-goodies" nor for adolescents in whom all "goodness" of disposition is lost. What criterion can we apply? The healthy adolescent is characterized by natural motility of action and spontaneity of feeling and expression. He is aggressive for his pleasure but not sadistic, self-asserting but not dominating. In his behavior, he exhibits a sense of responsibility for his own actions and affairs; and to others engaged in constructive activities, he extends his cooperation. Therefore, we cannot accept as criteria that the adolescent is quiet, that he conforms to approved modes of conduct and that his grades in

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school are excellent. We must ask: is he happy? is he lively? and is he growing towards adulthood?

In contrast to this simple statement of what sex-economy considers to be healthy adolescent behavior, what do we find in the great mass of literature on the subject?

Luella Cole in *Psychology of Adolescence* states: “The main purpose of appropriate training during the early years is therefore the production of better-adjusted, healthier adults through the development of better-adjusted, healthier children.” What this adjustment consists of emotionally we find in another paragraph: “The small child inhibits his emotions hardly at all; whatever he feels is translated into action. If he does not like a new acquaintance, he pushes him away. An adolescent has somewhat more self-control and can inhibit his expression well enough to observe the common courtesies to those whom he does not like, although he soon regresses to childish levels if he is forced to work with or be with a disliked person. It takes an adult with well developed powers of inhibition to work day after day in moderately close contact with someone he dislikes and neither wear out under the strain nor precipitate scenes.”

So the adult takes it, but the child rebels. Unfortunately, the child’s rebellion is crushed very early, and he, too, is forced to adopt the common hypocrisies which to some people pass for courtesy. Adjustment means more, however; it means he must learn to accept the deprivations of a social system which, in many ways, is in conflict with his real nature and biological needs—without protest.

Dorothy Hankins in “Mental Hygiene Problems of the Adolescent Period” writes: “Moreover, in our society it is during the adolescent years that the psychological problem of achieving such a balance (between one’s self as an individual and one’s self as a member of society) is at its peak, and many of the difficulties of the adolescent can be traced to his conflict over his own individuality and his relation to the community as represented by his parents, other adults, such institutions as school, church, and law, and society’s customs in general.”

So here, too, the test of the adolescent is his power to adjust, to compromise his biological needs with the demands of the social system, regardless of whether these demands are rational or irrational.

What this involves more specifically is stated by Dr. George E. Gardner in “Sex Behavior of Adolescents in Wartime” and published in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science previously mentioned: “...is the ever-present demand that the adolescent forego the expression of the sex instinct. That this repression and control is necessary if the best interests of the child and the community are to be served is of course beyond argument... The presence of this inner control, this ability to forego the pleasure of the moment for a later socially acceptable type of expression, in short, the strength of the ego of the individual, is also... an indicator of maturity.”

But when we subject the basic premise to analysis, we will find that it is not in the best interests of the child nor in the best interests of the community, though it may be to the advantage of some social institutions. But Dr. Gardner is right. There are forms of sexual expression which should be controlled. One must always ask, therefore, what kind of sexual expression are we talking about. Further, if one wishes effectively to control such behavior, one must seek, first, to determine scientifically its cause.

Such a scientific investigation must be based primarily upon an understanding of the biological functioning of the human organism. Secondly, one must have a
knowledge of the interaction between the
instinctual drives of the individual and
the restrictive demands of the social sys-
tem and the effect of that interaction upon
the formation of character. This body of
information constitutes the principles of
sex-economy.

Now, what are those principles of sex-
economy which will guide this investiga-
tion? A full answer to this question is
contained in the book, The Function of
the Orgasm by Wilhelm Reich. I shall
only attempt, here, to highlight a few
of its pertinent facts and ideas.

The term sex-economy refers to the
regulation of the biological energy of the
body. A healthy sex-economic condition
exists only in those individuals who are
capable of full orgasm in the sexual func-
tion. It is coincident with the presence or
establishment of the natural, genital char-
acter and is opposed to the neurotic
personality. The healthy adolescent, there-
fore, can only be a genital character.

Disturbances in the household of bio-
ological energy are manifested in patho-
logical muscular armoring and neurotic
character traits. The individual loses his
natural motility of action. The change is
not difficult to observe. In the course of
an extensive teaching career, I have seen
many cases where gay, lively boys and
girls of thirteen and fourteen have be-
come transformed into the average, “stiff”
and conventional adolescents at seventeen
or eighteen. Frequently, the loss of mo-
tility and spontaneity occurs earlier, dur-
ing childhood; but in all cases, the factors
which cause this change are social and
environmental. For example:

"A child touches and plays with its
genitals. The mother interferes and stops
the activity. The child becomes angry and
strikes at its mother. At this point, pun-
ishment sets in. The child is severely repri-
manded or slapped for daring to strike at
its mother. It gives in, but the desire for
the sexual pleasure is not lost. In the fu-
ture the child will seek its pleasure secre-
tively for fear of being caught, and the
first step towards slyness as a character
trait has been taken. The anger towards
the mother becomes bound in a chronic
muscular spasm.

One further term needs clarification:
adolescence. It must be distinguished from
childhood on the one side and adulthood
on the other. From the former, it is
demarcated by the onset of puberty. Its
later limit, however, is subject to some
confusion. Some writers set it arbitrarily
at 18 or 21. In the periodical mentioned
above, “Adolescents in Wartime,” the age
limits are from 14 to 18. Caroline Zachry
suggests 14 to 21 with individual vari-
ations. Kingsley Davis, writing on “Adoles-
cence and the Social Structure,” says:
“The Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences,
for example, defines adolescence as ‘the
period of human development from the
beginning of puberty to the end of the
maturation process.’ The definition im-
plies that sexual maturity appears earlier
and more conspicuously than numerous
other phases of maturation, but acknowl-
edges that nothing outstanding marks
the end of the period.” His own defini-
tion, though correct, is even more in-
definite. “Adolescence is ordinarily the
time when the lag of physical develop-
ment behind social development [the
order was meant, probably, to be reversed.
—A.L.] first becomes pronounced.”

Since adolescence represents the period
of transition and growth from childhood
to full maturity, no arbitrary time limits
are valid. It begins with a biological
phenomenon, the establishment of the
genital function, and ends when that
function reaches its full development.
This occurs only when an individual
establishes a satisfactory sexual relation-
ship with a member of the opposite sex.
To be satisfactory the sexual experience
with the partner must result in orgasm.
Without it, no individual can be con
sidered a biologically sexually mature person. But two other determinants exist: A period of trial has come to an end; the sexually mature adult has one partner and the relationship between them is one of cohabitation. By this definition adolescence becomes a biological and psychological phenomenon and so not subject to the particular views of one sociopsychologist or another.

If, according to the above, many persons who are otherwise regarded as adults would be considered here as adolescents, the fault is not with the definition. The bachelor of thirty or so whose sexual relationships are haphazard and promiscuous is not only acting as an adolescent, he is one. We are now provided with another important distinction. Healthy adolescent behavior is characterized by the growth of sexual power from puberty to maturity; that behavior which is indicative of the retardation or failure of that development is neurotic. The over-extension of the period of adolescence is one unfortunate result of our present civilization.

You will agree, now, that too few adolescents can be described as healthy. Is this, then, too much to expect? If I thought so, this article would be superfluous. Fortunately, both the cause and the mechanisms of the neurotic character are known. Therapy, though effective, is difficult and limited, but it is not too much to hope that prevention is possible.

THE PROBLEM OF MASTURBATION

With these few introductory remarks, we may proceed to a more detailed consideration of adolescent behavior and conflicts.

The story of Ned F. illustrates one of the most common and avoided problems of youth. He was sent to me by Dr. Reich. The manner in which he came to Reich's attention is interesting and revealing. An old woman was selling papers on the street in one of the better residential neighborhoods of the city. Sales were few and she was crying bitterly. Two young boys competed with her and were effectively depriving her of business.

Reich approached her and asked why she cried. The reason wasn't the lack of sales, it wasn't the competition, it wasn't her condition. She had a son, a boy of seventeen, who sat home all day brooding and demanding money. Her son was unhappy and she could not help him, nor could she give him all the money he asked for. Reich told her to send the boy to him.

Ned had left school a year before this but he was unable to work. He had a hang-dog expression: shoulders hunched, neck forward, head drooping. His eyes were wild and shifting, his face looked distraught. He sat home most of the time with his head buried in his arms or stared vacantly at the walls. He was close to a catatonic condition.

The present trouble, as Reich learned, began about a year ago. One day Ned's mother discovered him masturbating. She became hysterical. With a look of horror on her face, she told Ned that if he did that, he would go crazy. Frightened and embarrassed at being caught, he stopped. Immediately afterwards his condition deteriorated.

Fortunately for Ned, he was reached in time. The feeling of guilt about his masturbation was removed and he was encouraged to continue. The problem was not so easily solved, however. Each act of masturbation brought in its wake a fit of depression. He suffered from a feeling of worthlessness and he was tormented by a strong feeling of inferiority when he tried to approach a girl. Continued treatments brought about a marked improvement in his physical appearance; the distraught look disappeared from his
face; and he manifested a desire to learn to dance.

It now became necessary to help Ned find a job. Sex-economy, in its theory and practice, recognizes the interplay of social forces and biological needs. Success in therapy cannot be achieved, therefore, if the effort is made in one direction only. But Ned did not hold his first job nor his second. He had come late and was fired. No one but the physician knew that he had not slept that night but had tossed on his bed. Once again, the old trouble arose. And again, it was the physician whose help was sought.

The number of boys and girls—though the former exceed the latter—who suffer from conscious masturbation conflicts which rob them of their vitality and happiness is almost unbelievable. Most physicians will advise the boy or girl that the practice is natural and harmless if kept within reasonable limits. It is regrettable that there are some who for religious or so-called moral reasons think otherwise and add further to the confusion of the adolescent. But the cases which come to the physician are few; the heart-breaking anxiety which these young people suffer is beyond imagination.

If masturbation is an expression of a natural impulse, and harmless, why is there an almost universal reaction against it? Before we proceed to an answer, let us consider another case history, one which presents the problem in an entirely different light.

Frank S. was twenty-nine, lonely, almost defeated but making one last desperate effort to gain some happiness. He was completing his studies towards a master's degree in bacteriology at one of the large state universities. Frank was clubfooted, but this handicap could not be accounted responsible for his difficulties; for he was also personable and talented: he had a good voice, knew music and could draw well.

At twenty-two, this boy fell in love with a girl of fifteen who lived in his neighborhood. She was not only his first love, she was the first girl he had ever gone with. Both were ignorant about sex; it was a matter of growing up together; and their feeble attempts at love were confined to kissing and petting. Lack of knowledge was not the only cause of this. Frank lived in a three-room apartment with his mother and sister, his girl friend lived with her parents in the back of a candy store.

We have here another example of how economic pressure and environment interfere with and thwart basic biological drives. As we shall see later, the lack of a proper place where the two lovers could have some privacy was one of the most important factors in the failure of this relationship to mature.

Sometime during the first year of this friendship, Frank began to suffer from ulcers of the stomach. When I met him, the condition had lasted for six years. He was frequently hospitalized and had just recovered from a particularly severe attack. Frank was bitter about the doctors who had attended him at the hospital. Not one of them made an effort to discover the cause of his illness, which he earnestly believed was due to his sexual tension.

During all this time, Frank and his girl continued to "go steady." She visited him constantly whenever he was in the hospital despite the objections of her parents who regarded Frank as an unworthy suitor because of his sickness. Yet, notwithstanding the real affection each had for the other, Frank felt that they would break up and he would lose the girl unless they were able to establish a more solid basis for their relationship on the grounds of sexual satisfaction. He made the attempt just before his last attack of ulcers. They were in her home, her parents were out; but they did not un-
dress for fear that her parents would return. The girl was willing, the boy tried; the result was a premature ejaculation, and both were disappointed and unsatisfied. One other later attempt was equally unsuccessful. The girl accepted a position in Washington and left New York. Frank became ill again. She visited him once during this illness, but her feeling for him was gone, she said. She had met another boy in Washington.

It would not be correct to ascribe Frank's emotional difficulties to the ferment of an unsuccessful love affair. We may ask why this boy, at twenty-two, chose a fifteen-year-old girl for his love interest. This fact belies any assumption that Frank had reached maturity. And what of the years between puberty and so-called maturity? Frank made little mention of them; he referred only to the circumstances of his affair. I asked Frank, point-blank, if he had masturbated during that time. He was not surprised. His answer was in the negative. His wife was also not surprised. Had he not, then, felt any impulse to do so? Again, no. He had masturbated once, he admitted, when he was fourteen, but never again.

Here is the core of his problem. No intercourse, no masturbation, not even an impulse to masturbate. Then Frank told me that he had great difficulty in falling asleep at night. He would lie awake and toss for two or three hours before dropping off into a fitful slumber. And this had gone on for years, extending back to his puberty. Little wonder that with such pent-up energies and passions, of which he had made himself unaware, his body should succumb to disease!

Is masturbation really an important problem of youth? Are not the two cases cited exceptions? Do all adolescents masturbate?

The figures are misleading. There is no adequate attempt to define masturbatory action. Therefore despite reports which show an incidence of the practice, at one time or another, of sixty to ninety percent of boys and forty to sixty-five percent of girls, we must agree with Dr. Harold Kelman that, "In some form, it occurs at some time in the normal development of all individuals."

A more revealing conclusion is the following by R. R. Willoughby in *Sexuality in the Second Decade*: "A surprising subsidiary finding that masturbation is rather often practiced without orgasmic climax, and even without (i.e., before the appearance) of sex feeling, and in both sexes." This is an observation that will require more extended discussion later.

The situation is accurately described by Caroline B. Zachry and Margaret Lighty in their book, *Emotion and Conduct in Adolescence*: "His body is urgently ready for expression for which society affords him no approved means. Masturbation, which is his readiest available response to this urgency, is a source of emotional conflict for him, even though many adults now recognize—intellectually, at least—that it is normal. It is forbidden by one of his strongest early moral imperatives. Whatever may be his own factual knowledge or his rationalization in this dilemma, he is unlikely to escape self-reproach."

Before we proceed, we may ask how this fits into the sex-economic concepts of the energy relationships in the body. We have known for many years that sexual activity is a phenomenon which is manifested throughout life. In fact, as Reich has shown, the sexual process may be equated with the life process which follows the rhythm of tension, charge (biological energy charge), discharge and relaxation. At puberty the tension becomes intensified and the excitation is strongly felt in the genitals. Masturbation is "his
readiest available response to this ur- 
gency."

It matters little to us how or where the 
adolescent learns about masturbation. 
Some say that they learned about it from 
an older friend, others that the practice 
developed spontaneously. But learn about 
it they will. What is important are the 
attitudes which accompany the action and 
their effect upon the adolescent.

Psychologically and physiologically, the 
experience is pleasurable and satisfactory 
only when the discharge of the energy is 
quantitatively equal to the amount of 
tension or charge. If, then, because 
of guilt feelings, the adolescent holds 
back (inhibits the full release by con- 
tracting the expanding musculature), the 
result is pain and disappointment. The 
failure of a full discharge to occur leaves 
a residue of energy (tension) which is 
experienced as displeasure and perceived 
as regret or sin when mixed with moralis-
tic or religious values.

We are now in a position to answer a 
question which was propounded earlier. 
If masturbation is a natural act and harm-
less, why is there such fear of it? As Dr. 
Kelman says, "Unfortunately the mis-
taken notion still exists that masturba-
tion is a particularly harmful practice," de-
spite the fact that "there is no medi-
cal basis for this belief." But masturba-
tion is healthy only when it results in deep 
satisfaction and pleasure, i.e., when a pre-
existing tension (energy charge) is fully 
discharged. The ability to achieve a full 
discharge is dependent upon the capacity 
to give one's self over to the sexual feel-
ing. However, it is just this capacity to 
give one's self over (sexually and other-
wise) which has been destroyed in adoles-
cents and lost to adults by a false education 
in the home and outside of it.

Long before the boy or girl reaches 
puberty, a state of mind inimical to the 
natural function of masturbation has been 
created. From the talk on the streets,
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The first break in his misery came when he was twenty years old. His physician told him, then, apropos a routine examination, that masturbation was harmless and that everyone did it. But the physician advised against overdoing it; once in two or three weeks was all right. The young man was afraid to admit that he masturbated as often as twice or three times a week. The misery did not end for him, he told me, until two years later when he found his way to sexual intercourse.

Why is the adolescent receptive to threats about his masturbation? Should not his own experience convince him that the act is natural and harmless? It should, if (and this is the critical point in any understanding of the subject) his experience of the act approaches the orgasm in pleasure and satisfaction. We must recognize, therefore, that for the majority of adolescents the act of masturbation is not a pleasurable experience. Their capacity to surrender to their sexual feelings (a prerequisite to the pleasure of which we spoke earlier) has been lost through a pathological character armoring—represented in the physiological sphere as a muscular inhibition of the flow of biological energy to the genitals. And this armoring process begins not in adolescence, nor in pre-adolescence, but in early childhood and infancy.

Masturbation begins with sexuality which begins with life. If Freud had made no other contribution, his forceful presentation of the facts of infantile sexuality would mark him as one of the great benefactors of mankind. Today, the knowledge of infantile sexuality is fairly common. One has only to observe children, particularly between the ages of three to five, on the street or in their homes, to become convinced that genital masturbation is practised. But despite this general knowledge, an affirmation of the infant's right to sexual pleasure is found nowhere but in sex-economy.

Here are two specific instances. A young lady told me that her three-year-old brother casually walked up to her holding his penis in his hand. She was surprised and she remarked involuntarily, “Don't hold it, put it away.” He looked hurt, then brightened and said, “You hold it for me.” Someone should, he knew.

A student at the Sex-Economic Institute recollected the following from the time when he was five years old. He used to walk through his apartment holding his penis outside his pants. His father saw him doing it one day. With a severe and angry expression, the parent scolded the boy. My informant still recollects the innocent and bewildered expression with which he looked at his father. He was hurt that so natural and harmless an act should bring this censure upon him. The next day, to get even for his hurt, he urinated all over the apartment, defying his father. This, however, resulted in a beating which was never forgotten. He continued his masturbation, but now his practice became secret.

In an article entitled "Psychological Aspects of Pediatric Practice," Drs. Benjamin Spock and Mabel Huschka speak of the effect of parental interference with infantile and childhood masturbation: “The harm lies not in the habit itself but in the guilty feelings associated with it... Finally, the most destructive feature of the whole experience is that usually when the parent discovers his child playing with its genitals, he becomes deeply perturbed and often makes amazing threats in the effort to stop the habit at once. Such threats usually carry the idea that the genitals will be cut off, infected or otherwise incapacitated; as a result the child's fears of mutilation are stirred to the depths and he develops anxiety.”

It is not even necessary for the parent to voice such drastic threats to accomplish
this purpose. The attitude of the parent has an important effect regardless of how it is expressed. Witness what Zachry and Lighty say on this subject: "Boys and girls who have grown up in families in which the body has been regarded by adults with fear and shame are likely to experience anxiety over their physical development."

If the danger lies in the child's developing guilty feelings over his masturbation, what, then, should the parents do when confronted with such actions? The almost unanimous answer is sublimation.

Spock and Huschka write: "Instead the procedure of choice is to so enrich the child's social and recreational life and his facilities for creative pursuits that he will find opportunity for sublimation in more appropriate pleasures."

Sublimation sounds good; unfortunately, it doesn't work. Of course, one can tire a child with strenuous physical exercise to a degree that it has no energy for sex play; but how long can one keep it up? And is it in the best interest of the child?

Sublimation proceeds upon the theory that the organism has a certain quantity of energy, and if part of it is diverted into cultural channels, less is available for sexual pursuits. Physiologically, however, the very attempt to block the expression of a sexual impulse (the development of inner controls) ties up energy in the mechanism of the block, the muscular armor, and less is available for other interests. In addition, the sexual impulse is not eradicated; rather it becomes distorted and finds expression in daydreams, fantasies or other symbolic acts.

Today, many more parents are aware of infantile masturbation than ever before. Their attitude may be summed up in the remarks of one parent to me: "We know it's natural and harmless. We don't try to stop it. When we see the child touching its genitals, we simply try to distract its attention; offer it a toy to play with or something to eat."

The incongruity of this remark is obvious. Of course they stop the activity. Further, their own guilt feeling is revealed in the following: "We don't want him to masturbate in front of people when he grows up." I don't think they fool the child by these tactics. After all, its desire for sexual pleasure is unsatisfied, and it is aware of the fact that the activity is being discouraged.

Many adolescents to whom I have spoken echo this attitude. They say: "We know that masturbation is harmless, but we refrain." At most, they admit to occasional acts in early adolescence. But then, they have no heterosexual intercourse, either. There is an incongruity here too; for, if they have no guilt feelings, why do they refrain?

The problem of masturbation is completely misunderstood by most writers, parents and adolescents. And so long as they think in terms of discouraging or, at most, tolerating the practice, the real nature of the problem will escape them. Masturbation serves an important physiological function. In infancy and childhood it is one of main mechanisms by which the organism releases its sexual tension. In adolescence it fulfils the same function until the individual takes up regular heterosexual intercourse. That masturbation may produce a deep, "soul-satisfying" pleasure is indicative of the importance of this function. The real problem of masturbation lies in its failure to fulfil, adequately, this function. In such cases, one should always ask why.

Let me illustrate. The average psychologist, when confronted with a case of excessive masturbation, will say: it is harmful, it must be stopped, he should sublimate. The sex-economist, on the other hand, will inquire why. What im-
pedes the full release of the sexual tension? What characterological and muscular blocks prevent the full discharge of the biological energy? What guilt feelings are present? He would try, then, to remove these blocks and, thereby, remove the cause for such action. And, in a similar way, he would handle any other disturbance in or resulting from the practice of masturbation. The cardinal point in this technique is that satisfactory masturbation never creates a problem for the adolescent or his environment.

One illustrative experience is, I believe, worth recounting. One summer, I was a counselor at a children's camp in charge of a bunk of nine boys, between 10 and 11 years of age. They were a tough bunch to manage, I was told. Many were old campers who knew all the ropes. And, indeed, they were tough. They had their cliques, but they could present a united front against me. I was their friend, but I was also authority, and I could sense the barrier between us.

Returning from a visit to the girls' camp, one day, they began to use some "dirty" words. Towards the girls, they certainly were not "cissies." When they met a girl, they immediately began to wrestle with her. I introduced two boys to some girls, and in sheer embarrassment they ran down to the lake, a quarter of a mile, and back in less than ten minutes. I remarked that a knowledge of such words was no manly achievement, which they obviously thought it was, and that I could tell them all they wanted to know about this subject. Would I dare? They were ready to put me to the test.

One boy, bolder and shrewder than the others, asked me to explain a "son of a b——." I did. Then, a "bastard." Without hesitation, I told them what it meant. He was not surprised; he, too, knew their meanings. Then, with a sly look on his face, he pulled one boy aside and whispered in his ear. He had a word which could not even be mentioned. "I know what word you are thinking of," I said. He looked up challengingly "What is it?" "It begins with an F," I said. Would I dare say it, he demanded. I did, and he was surprised. All the other boys were listening very attentively, now. Would I tell them its meaning. Yes, I said, when we get back to the bunk.

We returned to the bunk, it was a rest period, and everyone sat back. I began slowly. That word refers to a man and a woman. Yes, but what do they do, one demanded. They were no longer interested in the word, they wanted some honest sexual information. Without embarrassment, I told them simply all about the sexual act. My first inquisitor knew about rubber contraceptives. How were they used? What were they for? he wanted to know. Facts was what they were after, without moralizing or preaching. But I also told them the difference between the loving embrace of a girl and "f——." It was a difference they grasped immediately. Henceforth, they never used the slang expression, but always referred to the act of intercourse as "a sexual embrace." Fortunately, I had an anatomy book with me, and I could satisfy their curiosity with pictures.

They knew my wife was up at camp. "Did I do that to her?" Yes, but not in the dirty sense of the word. "I didn't do anything to her. We were in love, and our embrace was a mutual affair. A girl has the same feeling for sex as a boy," I explained. And so the questions ran on. "Could they do it?" Strangely, the slyness had vanished from their manner. With no fear of punishment, they spoke simply and directly of a subject important to them. And without my admonitions, they did not babble about our conversations to other campers. It was something our bunk had in common.

Towards me, their manner also un-
derwent a profound change. No longer was I an “asexual authority.” I was simply their friend. I had lost the authority to command, but I had won their confidence and affection, and they extended to me their sincere cooperation. It was, for me, a thrilling experience.

Infantile sexuality manifests itself in another form, sexual curiosity. We can agree, in general, with Dr. Kelman in this statement on the subject: “Many of us attempt to blind ourselves to normal and abnormal manifestations of sexual curiosity in childhood. It is something of an anomaly in our society that the natural curiosity of children is applauded in all directions except with respect to biological facts. A child is aware of its body before it has any real appreciation of self. It is normal and natural for it, therefore, to explore all the bodily orifices and to stimulate any part of its body for pleasure. Yet the attitude of the majority of parents is such that the child’s natural curiosity becomes inhibited and frustrated. This consequently leads to the development of abnormal fears with resultant distortions of interest and activities in bowel, bladder and genital functions.”

This statement, however, is incomplete in that it fails to include reference to the natural curiosity of the child in the opposite sex. This interest is, at first, centered on one of the parents. It is in such situations that the shame of the adult in his own body is communicated to the child. Deliberate display of the body by a parent, on the other hand, is equally harmful, for the child can sense the guilt feeling of the parent behind the mask of indifference. Fortunately, the child has another outlet in children of the same age. If, then, the natural sexual play of children is obstructed, the harm to the future health of the individual will be considerable. The morbid curiosity and pornography of some adolescents and adults has its roots in the frustration of this early infantile curiosity. It is the same with all neurotic sexual manifestations. We lay the basis for the disturbance in early childhood, then try, in later life, to prevent its manifestation through law and order. How much easier to prevent the disturbance!

However, direct sexual suppression during childhood is not the only way in which parents inhibit the normal functions of children and so prepare the groundwork for the neurotic adolescent and adult. That independence of character (born with the child and so integral a part of the capacity to give one’s self wholly) is destroyed through a blind but vicious authoritarian upbringing. The most important factor is training to excremental cleanliness at an age when the child is without the ability to comprehend the necessity for such cleanliness. The harm engendered by this universal practice is well detailed by Reich in *The Function of the Organ.* Perhaps more than any other factor, anal sphincter training is responsible for the loss of sexual sensations. But in every aspect of the child’s life, feeding and sleeping, in play or at rest, the natural rhythms of the child are displaced by mechanistic rituals. If the child learns that he cannot determine when and what he will eat, how can we, later, expect him to show more independence in the more remote problems of life—politics, etc.?

I cannot say too much or speak too strongly against this early authoritarian upbringing. Both in its theory and therapy, sex-economy is forced back into the conflicts of this critical period of life. In an article entitled “Sex-Economic Upbringing” in Volume I, Number 1 of this Journal, Dr. Paul Martin sets forth what can be done as opposed to what is done in the early upbringing of children. I can only incorporate his remarks by reference here.
A complete understanding of the problem of masturbation is impossible without some knowledge of masturbatory practices and the feelings and thoughts which accompany them. Many of the following ideas and illustrations, I have taken from Reich's book, Der Sexuelle Kampf der Jugend. Among the practices which are definitely harmful are those in which the pleasure is inhibited: provocation without permitting the final satisfaction (in the boy by cessation before the seminal flow); or prolonging the provocation by too frequent interruptions; and the attempt to bring the slack penis to erection without the existence of sexual excitation. In the girls, masturbation with sharp pointed instruments is not an uncommon practice. Or the masturbation may be between a boy and girl or with members of the same sex in which the final satisfaction is prevented.

It is important, too, to know the fantasies which accompany masturbation. Fantasies of sexual intercourse, of kissing and embracing, are perfectly natural; but when the fantasies are those of beating or being beaten, there is some cause for alarm. Then there are the ideas which youth has with respect to the act of masturbation. It is a common belief that masturbation weakens the body: as one boy expressed it, "When I have a discharge, it feels as if my lifeblood were ebbing away." This phenomenon is quite real. It is due to the inhibition of the strong preorgastic sensations which then are not followed by the experience of orgasmic pleasure and satisfaction, and is one of the reasons why boys stop the act before the discharge.

This phenomenon, so completely misunderstood by the boy or girl, is distorted with future serious consequences. The flow of biological energy to the genital during masturbation or during the sexual act is experienced as feelings and sensations of "melting" and "draining" in the thighs and pelvic musculature. In healthy individuals, this feeling of melting suddenly becomes intensified just prior to the discharge or release. This increase in the excitation, perceived as a sensation of the whole body flowing or melting into the genital, is what the boy or girl fears most and tries to prevent. But it is this melting sensation of the whole body which constitutes the giving one's self over of which we have spoken so much. Without it no orgasm is possible; the ejaculation of the boy then becomes a sluggish outflowing instead of the quickened pulsation it should be. Then, indeed, a waste has occurred and the fantasy is not unjustified.

How does the adolescent, boy or girl, prevent the increase of the excitation? The mechanism of inhibition consists in becoming muscally rigid, extending the legs and constricting the musculature surrounding the abdominal and pelvic cavity. In contrast, the body of the healthy individual is mobile and responsive to the impulses. But since character armoring likewise consists in a muscular rigidity, the individual with neurotic character defense mechanisms is incapable of yielding to the consummation of the preorgastic sensations.

Masturbation is not the central problem of youth; but in their relation to it, they manifest all the contradictions in their attitude towards their sexuality. Also, because masturbation is the threshold to the mature and satisfactory sex life, any disturbance which occurs at this point will exert a detrimental influence upon the future sexual happiness of the individual.

Sex-counselors must know that masturbation is beneficial only when it is deeply satisfying, and it is their function to remove all hindrances to the complete enjoyment of the act. It is not sufficient, therefore, to tell an adolescent that he need have no guilt feelings about his masturbation; it is necessary to follow...
through the counseling to the point where the adolescent achieves the capacity of full surrender. Frequently, this may require vegetarian treatment, and where this is indicated, counseling alone is inadvisable. Nor would it do to encourage masturbation where it would result in conflicts which cannot be handled within the scope of the counseling service.

How long shall the period of self-satisfaction continue and how often shall recourse be had to it? The answer to these questions in individual cases must depend upon the individual. From a biological point of view, the answer is simple: As long as masturbation affords a satisfactory and pleasurable release from a pre-existing tension, it is beneficial and may be continued. This concept, based upon natural self-regulation and the pleasure principle, is basic to any understanding of this problem.

If masturbation serves the function of bridging the gap between childhood and sexual maturity, it can become harmful if unduly prolonged. We must be careful, however, not to condemn masturbation even during maturity. In addition to the personal problems which most young boys and girls face, there are, frequently, almost insurmountable obstacles to a healthy sexual relationship between young persons. The difficulty of finding a place where the boy and girl can be alone and undisturbed is tremendous, especially in large cities where whole families, including grown children, live in a series of interconnecting rooms.

But masturbation at maturity does have the disadvantage of isolating the individual. It is an easy way out and removes the necessity on the part of the boy or girl of going out and finding a partner of the opposite sex. Its undue continuance may lead to homosexuality which is further encouraged by a society which in many ways segregates the sexes.

Masturbation is not the solution to the problem of the adolescent's sexual need and must not be regarded as a satisfactory substitute for intercourse. After a short period of masturbation, the healthy adolescent will demand a sexual partner and in this he will not be frustrated.

ADOLESCENT SEX LIFE AND THE PARENTS

To close one's eyes to the fact that many adolescents have sexual relations is both foolish and a gesture of helplessness. To inveigh against this situation is futile. Healthy adolescents will find their way to satisfactory sexual relationships; others may not reach this goal but they, too, will engage in sexual acts under a variety of conditions.

Some indication of the extent of adolescent sexual activity may be obtained from the following statement by George E. Gardner in "Sex Behavior of Adolescents In Wartime": "However, in a recent as yet unpublished study by the writer, it was found that in a group of 221 late adolescent males (17-20) 172, or 78 per cent of them, had had heterosexual experiences by the age of 15.5 years."

It is certainly not a question of the proper environment, as this quotation from "The Social Background of Wartime Adolescents" shows: "The increase in this type of delinquency (sexual) has been startling. The young girl has become a serious problem even in the transmission of venereal diseases. It would be a great mistake also to suppose that these girls who are offering themselves to soldiers and sailors come only from homes of poverty and ignorance. Although no doubt in greater proportion they do, every experienced social worker will bear testimony that they also come forth from families that are of high quality."

Judge Lindsey has an interesting comment in "The Revolt of Modern Youth" on one such case of the very many which came to his attention: "They thought they knew all about their daughter; that
her mind in adolescence was as much an open book to them as it had been when she was just coming out of infancy—and fearlessly prattled whatever came into her little head—and continued to prattle till she found for some reason or other, she mustn't, and henceforth educated herself in hypocrisy and deceit for her own protection."

Of course, the answer to this is greater parental supervision. James S. Plant, in the *Annals*, says: "A considerable amount of the present increase in delinquency is due to the lack of home supervision." But what to do? In view of the above, shall we lock the children in?

Then, more school supervision. Dr. E. R. van Kleeck, in an article entitled, "A Return to Religion—The Cure for Delinquency," makes this recommendation among others: "Get increased state aid . . . and thus get smaller classes and more individual attention. Then you can catch the germ in time. Then the teacher can give the home more information about the individual child. Thus two-thirds of the trouble will disappear."

Here is another quotation from Lindsey's book. Speaking about the principal who thought she knew what went on in her school and could control the activities of her students, he wrote: "The amazing thing, not only about her but about an unfortunately large portion of the teaching profession, was this belief that the job could be done that way; that people could be managed that way; and that the thing was actually working, when she could not have made it work if she had had a hundred eyes, and a corps of trained spies with periscopes and microscopes in every nook and recess of her school."

In New York, in the poorer sections of the city, it is not uncommon for a boy to take a girl up to the roof and there "lay her," as he puts it. Among the wealthier classes, the automobile, parked on some lonely road, affords the necessary privacy. Or it has been done (and is done) in dark hallways behind the stairs, in the living room of the girl's home after her parents have gone to bed. In the summer, a secluded spot in a park behind some cover is a favorite place. Yes, youth finds some way. If, now, we deplore the expression of the sexual impulse under these circumstances, we do not condemn the boys or girls who engage in such acts. It is only because full surrender to the sexual feeling is impossible under these circumstances, that such actions lose their character as expressions of love.

This lack of condemnation must not be construed as an approval of the neurotic sexual behavior of adolescents referred to above. Two viewpoints are possible. One is to attempt to prevent such acts by restricting the expression of the sexual impulse in adolescence; for example, the demand for premarital chastity. This is the attitude of our present social organization. Unfortunately, it doesn't work despite every pressure brought to bear upon the adolescent, and its failure is becoming more evident every day. Where, in specific cases, it is effective in suppressing adolescent sexuality, the result is an unhappy adolescent and a neurotic adult. Superficially, he has conformed; inwardly, the rebellion takes the form of neurotic sexual fantasies, neurasthenic symptoms, etc.

On the other hand, one can proceed scientifically to investigate the reasons for such behavior. Behind every case of indiscriminate and promiscuous sexual conduct, one will find a disturbance in the sexual function. To the sex-economist the actions of the so-called "victory girl" are as much a medical problem as a tic of the diaphragm or a psychotic condition. But, though the problem can be handled therapeutically in individual cases, on a mass scale, the only solution lies in prevention. We must know, therefore, the causes of
the common disturbances in the sexual function, and knowing this, we must eliminate them. The individual capable of orgastic experience in the sexual act does not enter into promiscuous sexual relations, is not a bearer of venereal disease, and is, always, a productive member of society.

Adolescents must be helped to a satisfactory sexual life, if possible. Bear in mind that the alternative is a generation of neurotic adults, dominated by secondary drives, who confuse pornography with sex. How is this help to be extended? Certainly not by clamping a lid of secrecy upon the sexual needs of youth, nor by all the talk about venereal disease. Strangely, those most impressed and frightened by the danger of venereal disease are the strongly inhibited and repressed adolescents, those furthest from any sexual contact.

The effect of secrecy has only been to create an estrangement between parents and children about the most vital problems of the adolescent. Few, indeed, of the boys and girls I have known, or have had occasion to speak to, have told their parents about their sexual experiences. In fact, the idea that one or both parents should know was quite shocking to them. One young lady, about thirty-four, who had had relations with men since her early twenties, was amazed when I asked her if her mother knew of it. “Oh, no,” she said, “I couldn’t bear to let her find out.” And one adolescent I knew, past thirty, would not let the thought be mentioned in his mother’s presence that he had ever been intimate with a girl. In most cases, it is the mother of whom most fear is felt. Another girl, of nineteen, who had been sexually intimate with one boy for three years and frequently spent week-ends at his home, was certain that her mother suspected nothing.

Are parents really ignorant about the sexual activities of their children? Some undoubtedly are. Many, I feel, suspect the possibility but are themselves afraid openly to recognize the fact. Here, then, is one cause of the mess.

In one home with which I am familiar, the mother learned, by opening a letter, that her eighteen-year-old daughter had been intimate with a sailor to whom the mother objected. She found out, too, that they had had relations without contraceptive precautions. It would seem that a frank discussion about sex between mother and daughter was called for now. The mother could not have prevented the girl from continuing her relations with this boy; she was too much under his domination; and on one previous occasion, the girl had defied her mother successfully. But contraceptive advice would have been welcome if properly presented.

Yet the mother could do nothing; she could no more mention the subject than if it had been taboo. Between the two there were acrimonious arguments about other matters, then gushing reconciliations. The girl was obviously neurotic and had stated that she had experienced no sensation whatsoever in the sexual act. And without the mother’s support no one else could help the girl, until deterioration had progressed to the point that psychiatric treatment would be necessary.

Are the parents responsible for these situations? To a great extent, yes. We do not blame them, however. They are burdened with guilt feelings about their own sexuality and are more in need of counsel than their children. The latter cannot be effectively approached, however, unless the parents are included in the discussion or program of action. So in his European work, Reich found it necessary and advisable to speak to adolescents and parents in one group. Both have similar problems (for in these meetings the parents were as concerned with their own personal sexual problems as their children
were with theirs), and are brought closer together in the common solution.

Such neighborhood discussion meetings have not yet proved possible here. It becomes the duty, therefore, of the parents to become acquainted with sex-economic information. There are two groups of parents, however. One consists of those parents who have so repressed their children that the latter are utterly incapable of entering into any sexual relationship with the opposite sex. Dominated, frequently, by strong religious feelings, they are deaf to any rational appeal. On the other hand, there are those parents who profess a liberal attitude towards their children's sexual needs. These parents encourage their children to be popular and have frequent dates, they manifest an active interest in their children's social life, and play the part of the modern mother of modern children. And it is in just these homes, that the greatest tragedies often occur.

Is that statement surprising? It does require some elucidation and the explanation of a phenomenon which is completely misunderstood. In the Puritanical, authoritarian home, regardless of religion, the children, brought up under a moral code which imposes duties but provides for no pleasure, are, in large measure, resigned to their fate. This is not an absolute statement, but is dependent on the degree of repression and the innate energy of the child. Where there is no expectation, there can be no disappointment; only great aspiration can result in great tragedy. In the modern home, where repression is not severe and the sex attitude is tolerant but not negative, where the promise of real happiness is held forth but unfulfilled, the threat of an acute misery and unhappiness is greatest.

Looked at from the biological viewpoint, the greater the amount of free energy, the more it becomes imperative to release that energy through the primary sexual channels. In this respect, the genital is the safety-valve of the human organism; any failure in its proper function can result only in explosive releases in secondary (destructive) channels. This explains the attraction of fascism for the modern youth and the sexual perversions which go with it. For in these cases, it is not a question of sex or no sex but of a healthy and satisfactory sexual life as compared with the secretive, promiscuous, and unsatisfying relationships which occur. The sex-tolerant attitude must be replaced by a sex-affirmative attitude.

We must distinguish the so-called progressive home where the patriarchal authority is replaced by the domination of the mother. Simply stated, it is a home governed by the precept "mother knows best," and is in no way less authoritative than the patriarchal establishment. Superficially, these homes appear to be progressive; but insidiously, and with sweetness, the mother imposes her will upon the conduct of her children with their active acquiescence. Adolescents, in these homes, never make a decision or take a step without previously "talking it over with mother." These are not the almost healthy adolescents; they are severely repressed; and their path to sexual happiness is seriously blocked.

The whole problem of the relationship between the adolescent and his parents sooner or later becomes focused on the question of whether the youth shall leave or remain in his parental home. In his answer to that question lies the key to an understanding of the youth's attitude towards his sexual feeling. For the girl, this question frequently crystallizes about her right to stay away from her home overnight or for a longer period. In the literature on the subject, this problem is recognized as one of the major conflicts of adolescence. Peter Blos, in his book, _The Adolescent Personality_, lists "emancipation from the family" as one
of the three major goals of adolescents. In the Psychology of Adolescence, Luella Cole lists the following as problems of adolescence: "He must develop heterosexual interests, he must become free from home supervision, he must achieve economic and intellectual independence." The effect of the war upon this conflict is set forth by E. R. and G. H. Groves in an article, "The Social Background of Wartime Adolescents": "It is apparent that one of the most important effects of the war has been both to increase this desire for independence in the emotional feeling of being self-important and self-controlled, and to provide extraordinary opportunity for the establishment of the self-direction so deeply craved."

There are several aspects to this adolescent-parent conflict. Superficially, it represents the rebellion of a younger generation against domination by an older generation and frequently the clash of different cultures. More fundamentally, however, it is the struggle of youth for sexual happiness. Few writers are aware of this phase of the conflict for it has already become internalized. Psychologically, the desire for sexual pleasure is restrained by fear of punishment. Physiologically, the impulse for sexual satisfaction is inhibited by repressive mechanisms which have in the past been developed in the child. On no other basis can we adequately explain phenomena such as are revealed in the following account taken from Phyllis Blanchard's Problems of the Adolescent Girl:

"Much has been written of the rebellious attitude of the girl toward her parents when she becomes adolescent, but less has been said of the guilt and remorse which assail her after her outbursts of defiance and rebellion. Perhaps the tormenting conscience of the adolescent is less apparent to ordinary observation than the defiant and rebellious behavior; the latter is shown openly, the former is endured secretly in many instances. But any one who has worked professionally with girls in a therapeutic situation, has heard not only their descriptions of their behavior towards their parents, but also their questions as to whether after all, the parents may be 'right' and themselves 'wrong,' and their accounts of remorseful feelings and tears shed in secret after they have disobeyed parents or criticized them."

So that even if the girls are "right," they are without that inner certainty which would enable them to translate their conviction into constructive action. How then are young people to gain that "emancipation from the family" so requisite to adulthood? The answer is that they don't. The almost universal reference to mother-in-law problems is a humorous allusion to a tragic situation. With this background, we are prepared to consider the first of the two case histories which follow.

Howard was a pre-dental student at one of the New York Universities when he came to consult with me about his emotional difficulties. Howard was twenty-two; and he had been in love with a girl for about four years. During this time, there was an interval of about one year when they did not see each other. The affair was not a satisfactory one, and Howard's face reflected his unhappiness. His eyes were small and, behind his glasses, hateful; his face was thin and drawn. There had been no sexual intimacy between them.

The crux of his problem was, as he stated it: shall I leave my girl or shall I continue seeing her? The boys at the place where I work say that I am a fool; they say that I am just buying her affections. But I don't think so; I think she really cares for me. They say that I should go out and get laid, and they want to take me out and get me fixed up. I don't want to leave her, but I'm afraid that I am going to lose her. She wants the same thing that I want; and if I can't make her
happy, she will turn to someone else. Shall I leave her?

There were, in addition, obstacles interposed by their parents. Howard's mother objected to his becoming serious with the girl because, as a student, he was in no position to assume marital obligations. Her parents were opposed to him because he was too moody and he was not yet earning a living.

Howard was sure that the girl cared for him; she liked to be close to him physically, and she dated with him regularly. He believed, and in this he was right, that her affection would remain unsteady unless it could be established upon more substantial happiness than dates and kisses. What was the difficulty, then? When he brought her home at night, after an evening out, her mother would join them in the living room and watch them until after midnight. Howard was certain, too, that after she retired to her bedroom, which was just off the living room, she lay awake and listened to hear what was going on. In the early morning hours, she would get up and cross the living room to go to the bathroom. Under these circumstances, Howard was afraid to do anything but lie close to the girl fully dressed. Frequently, he ejaculated in his clothes but the experience was unsatisfactory. And, he said, he dared not take her to his mother's home.

Well, young man, you might solve your problem if you had your own apartment or furnished room. Howard was working, and the money he spent on one date alone could have paid for a furnished room. But as soon suggest that he commit a crime! No, he couldn't do that; his mother would object. His condition was really desperate: he couldn't study, his frustration and desire drove him constantly to the girl's house. There, he was uncomfortable, and in consequence he suffered protracted periods of depression.

On the other hand, the advice he got from the men with whom he worked only confused him further. They derided his affection and ridiculed him for the lack of sexual intimacy; they found no difficulty in going to sleep with a girl, in fact with a different girl every other night.

This attitude of the “street” towards sex made it difficult for Howard to approach his own girl physically. It disgusted him and he could not reconcile it with his own feelings for his girl. But he was uncertain; maybe they are right, he said.

This same attitude is responsible for much of the misery of youth. Young people cannot easily deny their sexual needs, but they hesitate, too, to accept a barren sex, one that is divorced from their feelings of love and affection. And in this confusion, they adopt the double standard of society.

Howard was quite surprised when I told him that sex was love, love in action; that is, if we distinguish between a sex based upon the ability to give one's self to a partner and a sex dominated by secondary drives (domination, the desire to assert one's manhood, sadism). The distinction is important: the former is as much to be desired as the latter is to be condemned. And youth will reject any advocacy of sex which does not emphasize this distinction.

Individual problems, as we have seen in Ned's case, are frequently not solved with advice. Underlying Howard's difficulties were disturbing sexual fantasies. He was under the impression that intercourse with a girl in whom the hymenal membrane was unbroken would result in a voluminous flow of blood. True, some blood would flow, but his fear was irrational. In addition, he lacked the feeling that he could bring a girl pleasure by caressing her body with his hands. He had never touched a girl's breast, and he was convinced that if he did, she would shrink from his touch. This phenomenon is not unknown in vegetotherapy. The feeling of
lack of contact with one's hands—biophysically, a reduced orgone charge in them deriving from muscular tensions—is of widespread occurrence.

Now, what about Howard? He shows the picture of an immature youth, unhappy, sexually disturbed and in a fair way to make a failure of his career. His mother is unaware of this situation, but, nonetheless, plays a decisive role in it. The central conflict in Howard's life is his relationship to his mother: his dependence on her and resentment of that dependence; his need for her affection and anger at her lack of feeling; his sexuality and her aloofness. In the crush of these conflicting emotions and impulses, a young man's soul and body are being ground to ashes—the ashes of bitterness. This dependence upon the maternal influence (I have never seen it manifested so strongly towards the father) has its counterpart in a lack of independence and maturity in the social and emotional life of the youth.

Howard's conscious difficulty is but the superficial manifestation of his fundamental mother conflict. He cannot approach his girl sexually because she is his mother and he cannot give himself to her sexually. But she is at the same time the antithesis of the maternal influence, the object of an impulse directed away from the home, and he cannot yield to it. Yet the need for sexual expression is urgent, and the outlet is a girl who is outside of his class or social group and, therefore, does not represent the mother.

In almost every case in which an adolescent approaching maturity lives in his parental home, an ambivalence of emotion towards the mother can be demonstrated: love and hate, desire and repulsion. And in their sexual conduct, such adolescents invariably exhibit a double standard of morality.

It is virtually impossible for an adolescent, or for an adult, too, for that matter, to surrender fully to his or her sexual feelings without the privacy of a separate room. The average apartment affords no such privacy. True, the fact that a youth does have his own place is no guarantee that he will experience the orgasm but it does provide the prerequisites (both in terms of character and surroundings) for its occurrence. And the failure of a youth to make the break is indicative of retardation in his sexual and emotional development.

I spoke of another case history. George W. is also twenty-two and a student in one of the engineering schools in the city of New York. During the past year in which I have known him he has resided in a furnished room not far from where his family lives. I visited the home of George's parents; it is in most respects superior to the home of the average New York family. His parents are well educated and intelligent.

Why, then, did George leave? His answer was that his presence gave rise to innumerable small frictions with his mother. Her well-intentioned advice about the small details of everyday existence annoyed him, and he could not tolerate the feeling of surveillance which his parents aroused in him. This answer is valid but superficial. There were two more fundamental reasons. There was the desire to have a place of privacy where he could sleep with his girl friend. No parental home, no matter how luxurious, satisfies this need unless the adolescent's room has a private entrance and bath. And there was the underlying desire to break away from the parental influence, to gain his independence and freedom.

In contrast to Howard, George was happy. His relationship with his girl friend was good and he had no low moods or depressions. The effect of this showed in his work; not in his school work which was average but in his other pursuits. He read extensively in psychology, economics
and anthropology and his grasp of social problems was excellent.

George was not financially independent; his father contributed to his support. Where it is financially necessary that a young man, or girl, should live with his parents, the economic pressure is a factor which, in these cases, adversely affects the satisfaction of biological needs. It is my experience, however, that this is rarely the real reason. It is the first assigned motive and becomes a point of irrational defense. Can we criticize a young man who claims that he is under obligation to contribute to the support of his parents and that, therefore, he cannot afford to establish an independent domicile? But, then, this young man marries, and he finds no difficulty in supporting a wife, maintaining a home, and, perhaps, raising children.

Girls advance one other argument. They do not wish to lose the companionship of their mother. To live alone is lonely but only until one establishes a sexual relationship that is satisfactory. The need for this liaison becomes so strong that living alone becomes painful without it; and the need is not assuaged by casual dates or temporary intimacies be they ever so numerous. But this is good, for just such a longing forms the basis of a true union between a man and a woman. This dependence on the mother (both a cause and the result of the disturbance in the economy of the biological energies) is rationalized by youth to avoid the reality of his sexual need.

What are the causative factors which bring about this condition of dependence on the mother? To answer this question, we must go back to the early upbringing of the child. Our remarks, necessarily, will be general. The interplay of the instinctual demands of the child with the environmental forces, parental and social, is such that in particular cases only an extensive character-analysis can assign respective spheres of influence.

Educators and pediatricians have long been aware of the importance of and need for affection in the emotional development of the child. There is no question but that the lack of affection provides the basis for the neurotic character. What is not so well understood, however, is the exact nature of this affection.

Child guidance counselors speak of the need of a child to feel that it is wanted. They emphasize, too, the fact that a child is aware of its parents' attitude. It is our contention that the child can sense the difference between genuine affection and pretended love, that it knows when it is really wanted and when the parents are merely trying to cover a real antagonism or indifference. There is no sense, then, in making a child feel that it is wanted if, in fact, it is unwanted. Such hypocritical situations only serve to pervert the child's natural honesty. One cannot give a child affection if one has no affection to give.

One mother told me that she and her husband had difficulty with their child at dinner. The child, a boy of about twenty months, insisted upon sitting on his father's lap while the father ate. The father, middle-aged and hard-working, wanted to enjoy his meal quietly but, knowing that he paid little attention to the child, took him up. The child was not content just to sit; he wanted his father to give him constant attention and to play with him, and his constant efforts to obtain attention aggravated the situation. Such situations are possible only because the parent has guilt feelings about the child. Where they are present, one feels compelled to cater to every wish of the child. But even this does not satisfy the child; the real affection which it wants is missing. The spoiled child is not the result of too much affection, rather it is a product of overindulgence growing out of the parent's feelings of guilt.

The real affection is characterized by a regard for the infant or child as a per-
sonality in its own right able to receive
and to give love. Too many parents con-
sider the love of their children to be their
due. Unfortunately, the child fails to un-
derstand this. As a little animal, free and
independent in its emotional responses, it
gives its love only in return for the par-
ent's affection. When the parents, exercis-
ing their superior power and authority,
dominate the child's life, its reaction is
resentment and aggression. The healthy
child will strike its parents or kick at
them. At this point, the parents buttress
their position with a moral authority. To
hit a parent, to speak in anger to one, nay,
even to refuse to obey, is sinful. What
child can express hatred of a parent? The
necessities of existence require a show of
affection and the hate, too, is repressed.
Years later, the picture shows a devoted
and loving adolescent in whose depths are
wells of hatred.

It is the existence of this subconscious
stratum of hate which is responsible for
the dependence of children upon the par-
ents, especially the mother. Rising up-
wards through unconscious guilt feelings,
this hatred becomes transformed into a
surface devotion the strength of which
is proportionate to the amount of hatred
in which it has its genesis.

In another respect, however, the de-
pendence upon the mother grows out of
a withholding by her of the physical affect-
ion which the infant and child need. Here
we come to the essence of a real love. The
infant derives most of its pleasure from
the body of its mother and from her
caresses. An infant can be as emotionally
starved through a failure to obtain this
physical intimacy as any adult through the
lack of sexual intimacy. In each case, the
result is the same: a nervous tension and
anxiety which become familiar as the "in-
security" of psychologists. Security is never
an objective phenomenon; it is only a
mental state growing out of an awareness
of continuing deep satisfactions.

And now we see why the dependence
of the adolescent is always on the mother.
He craves her body (frequently this desire
is directed towards her breasts) which she
withheld from him in his infancy and he
hates her for having denied him on the
one hand and dominated him on the
other.

We have yet to inquire into the ways
in which this domination is expressed and
also into the reason why a mother will
deny to her offspring this physical contact
and affectionate understanding. To fully
appreciate the significance of the present-
day upbringing of children we must con-
ceive of the infant as a young animal as
indeed it is. The same person who would
deem it absurd to set up a sleeping sched-
ule for a pup would not hesitate to apply
one to a child or infant. If we consider
that nature provides the young animal
with an awareness of its own needs, why
except the human? When parents intrude
their wishes into the lives of their children,
that is, when they determine when and
how the child is to sleep, when and what
it is to eat, how long it shall play and
how long it shall rest, they are interfering
with the innate vital rhythm of the new
personality.\(^1\) Unfortunately, the disturb-
ance is not limited to the time of the acts;
once the child acquiesces and adjusts to
this artificial and formulary pattern of
living, its character becomes anchored in
a muscular armor which may stifle its
energies throughout its life. In addition,
there is the brutal training to excremental
cleanliness the effect of which, as Reich
has so clearly demonstrated, is to destroy
the free pelvic movement and decrease
the intensity of genital sensations.

In view of the foregoing, how much
real constructive value is there in such
general statements about love and domina-
tion as the following by Caroline Zachry:
"Similarly, those who have never really

\(^{1}\) Cf. Martin, Paul: Sex-economic "Upbringing,"
This Journal 1, 1942, 18ff.
felt or even known the love of their parents approach adolescence lonely and unsure and afraid, without the basic belief in themselves to weather its stresses and strains. And those who have been dominated by one or both parents, whose fathers and mothers have been trying to force them to conform to some pattern of behavior, or to choose a profession simply because this represented their ideal and not that of the boy or girl himself—these will be unable to achieve real independence.”

Compare this talk about “some pattern of behavior” with what actually happens. A little boy ran up to his mother, who was sitting and talking with other mothers, and said that he wanted to go down to the corner to play with some friends. His mother said, “No.” The boy persisted trying to obtain her consent. She looked at him sternly for annoying her and with a tone of absolute finality, said, “I said no.” I had witnessed the scene and could see no rational reason for her refusal; the other children were just a short distance away. On another occasion, a mother told her small son to go upstairs. He refused. She grabbed him and administered a solid smack. Hurt, he turned and went up, but I heard him mutter under his breath, “Louse.”

What is the pattern of behavior in these cases? Simply that the child must listen to and obey its mother implicitly. But is that not, asso, the basis of our so highly vaunted family life?

Visiting at the home of a couple, both teachers, I was introduced to their three-year-old son. He looked thin, unhappy and disturbed. I remarked to the mother, “You are going to have trouble with him, later.” “Oh, no!” she said. “When his father isn’t home, and I just look at him, he cries: ‘Mummy doesn’t love me any more.’ He obeys me immediately.”

These illustrations are not exceptions. They are the rule. Exceptions are rare, indeed. Talk about the family as a protective and security agency for the child is misleading unless we distinguish between the common, authoritarian family and one based upon the principle of natural self-regulation.

The actual practice of parents is, of course, supported by “authority.” Few writers fail to include discipline as one of the purposes of the family. Luella Cole writes: “Third, it should in a consistent manner supervise the child’s behavior. Finally, it should educate children in acceptable modes of response to social situations.” Dorothy Hankins states: “If a child comes to adolescence with a past experience that has included love, a reasonable degree of discipline from those who love him . . .” Lest we forget, the parent is prosecutor, judge and executioner in all cases.

We return, now, to the question as to what accounts for the fact that mothers withhold affection from their children and subject them to a mechanistic, lifeless upbringing. Reich has stated that from the point of view of the energy relationships there is no difference between the contact of the mother’s nipple and the child’s mouth on the one hand and the penis and vagina on the other. We are justified in speaking of both as sexual phenomena. If this is so, a woman who is sexually impotent will be equally frigid in her physical and emotional response to her child. And this, despite the fact that such women are most vociferous in proclaiming their love for their children!

To such women, love is not physical intimacy and affectionate caress but the guiding hand which knows what is best for the child. Whereas the sexually potent woman regards her child as an individual with its own personality capable of regulating its own life, the frigid woman treats her child as a domesticated animal which must be taught the proper responses. If this seems an overstatement, I am sure
that it can be justified by numerous cases. The armored mother must, perforce, attempt to armor her child, for to her, though subconsciously, the armor is a protective device which the child, too, will need. Unfortunately, they seem justified in this action by their own experience. How to convince them that the natural motility of the child is its own best protection is the problem. Here, too, we see that the genital character, capable of sexual surrender to her husband, is capable of surrender to her child. And to the degree that the woman is sexually disturbed the mother is physically unresponsive to the child.

It is not unknown that the woman who is sexually unsatisfied with her husband substitutes the child as a love interest for the man she cannot have. Where the healthy woman would seek a new partner who could satisfy her, the impotent woman holds on to her husband and expresses her sexuality in perverse ways with the child whom she dominates. Only on such a basis can we understand the practice of mothers who find pleasure in giving enemas to their male children. On this basis can we understand the common objections and protests mothers voice to the marriage of their sons especially when there is only one boy in a family.

Now, what about the father? If we have neglected him so far, it is not to mean that he is not in this picture. Generally, there is one dominating personality in the family. If that one is the father and if he is a strong disciplinarian, the sexual repression of the children will be equally severe, with this difference: His influence is felt at a later time in life by the child and becomes especially strong during the adolescent period. The effect upon the child is different, too. The child does not need the affection of its father to the degree that it requires it of its mother. No child or youth, therefore, depends upon the father to the point that he cannot feel anger and hate for any attempt by the latter to dominate him. If the father is so strong that the anger and hatred cannot be expressed, they become suppressed and are covered by fear.

Children cannot live in a constant state of fear. They become submissive and obedient to their father and cruel and dominating towards younger children and those weaker than themselves. This is the typical pattern of development of the fascist character (cf. Reich, The Function of the Orgasm). The existence of such a character structure precludes the orgasm reflex and so ruins both the health and happiness of such persons. When these individuals become, in their turn, parents and teachers, they enforce against their own children and students the very authority which once they hated.

The father, more than the mother in our society, represents the conventional moral force of the community. The community represses and inhibits the natural sexual function directly and indirectly through its institutions and mores. But we must remember that the sanctions of these customs gain their validity only from the authority of the father. Were it not so, each generation would re-examine the precepts and teachings of its predecessor.

Though the authority of the father is considerably weakened today, in many homes it is still the dominant influence. Prohibitions against masturbation and against staying out late on social dates stem mostly from the father. How important this latter prohibition is may be gleaned from the fact that the adolescent’s first step towards independence and maturity is his determination to stay out as late as he wishes. Among Italians, for example, stern fathers require young adolescent girls to be in their homes after dark.

One case which illustrates the extremes to which this prohibition is carried is the following: At 21, R. B. did not yet have
a key to his home. He was required to be in by ten o'clock on weekdays and twelve on Saturdays, as his family retired at that time. If he did not get home by that time, there was no way for him to get into the house.

In Middletown, the Lynds report that 45 percent of 348 boys in the upper grades of the high school and 43 percent of 382 girls who replied to their questionnaire admitted they were having difficulty with their parents about the question of late hours. The others either had no such difficulty or did not admit to it. The latter is a more probable assumption, for my experience has been that this question is an almost universal point of conflict between parents and adolescents.

If we do no more than mention some of the restrictions parents place upon adolescents, it will yet show the degree to which they dominate their children. Most parents claim and exercise the right to determine with whom their children shall associate. Many parents buy or choose their children's clothes. And even when the adolescent begins to work, it is not the rare father who takes his child's earnings.

To realize the extent to which some prohibitions are carried, we need only recall instances of interfaith marriages. A young Catholic girl married a Protestant boy. Her family renounced her and forbade her to enter their home. In three years she has not seen nor heard from them. Think of the passions which are engendered in the parents on both sides when the relationship is between a boy or girl of Jewish ancestry and one of Christian faith.

But though there be but one restriction or prohibition, if it be strongly enforced, the effect is one of autocratic authority denying the independence of the child. We must insist that in his own affairs, each adolescent, each child, and even each infant has the inalienable right to determine his own course of conduct. No less constitutes a real democracy in the home; and without such a home set-up, no real democracy is possible in the greater society outside the home. Unfortunately, our insistence is of little value unless backed by the demonstration of the fact that any other basis for the relationship between parents and children undermines the character of the children and destroys the possibility of their happiness in life.
Projeto Arte Org  
Redescobrindo e reinterpretando W. Reich  

Caro Leitor  
Infelizmente, no que se refere a orgonomia, seguir os passos de Wilhelm Reich e de sua equipe de investigadores é uma questão bastante difícil, polêmica e contraditória, cheia de diferentes interpretações que mais confundem do que ajudam. Por isto, nós decidimos trabalhar com o material bibliográfico presente nos microfilmes (Wilhelm Reich Collected Works Microfilms) em forma de PDF, disponibilizados por Eva Reich que já se encontra circulado pela internet, e que abarca o desenvolvimento da orgonomia de 1941 a 1957.  

Dividimos este “material” de acordo com as revistas publicadas pelo instituto de orgonomia do qual o Reich era o diretor.  
01- International Journal of Sex Economy and Orgone Research (1942-1945).  
02- Orgone Energy Bulletin (1949-1953)  
03- CORE Cosmic Orgone Engineering (1954-1956)  

E logo dividimos estas revistas de acordo com seus artigos, apresentando-os de forma separada (em PDF), o que facilita a organizá-los por assunto ou temas. Assim, cada qual pode seguir o rumo de suas leituras de acordo com os temas de seu interesse. Todo o material estará disponível em inglês na nuvem e poderá ser acessado a partir de nossas páginas Web.  

Sendo que nosso intuito aqui é simplesmente divulgar a orgonomia, e as questões que a ela se refere, de acordo com o próprio Reich e seus colaboradores diretos relativos e restritos ao tempo e momento do próprio Reich. Quanto ao caminho e as postulações de cada um destes colaboradores depois da morte de Reich, já é uma questão que extrapola nossas possibilidades e nossos interesses. Sendo que aqui somente podemos ser responsáveis por nós mesmos e com muitas restrições.  

Alguns destes artigos, de acordo com nossas possibilidades e interesse, já estamos traduzindo. Não somos tradutores especializados e, portanto, pedimos a sua compreensão para possíveis erros que venham a encontrar.
Em nome da comunidade Arte Org.

Textos da área do desenvolvimento infantil

Texts from the area of child development

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