

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BIRTH OF SEX

The last chapter was a chapter of semi-digression. We now return to the straight course. Is the straightness none too evident? Ah well, it's a matter of relativity. A child is born with one sex only, and remains always single in his sex. There is no intermingling, only a great change of rôles is possible. But man in the female rôle is still male.

Sex--that is to say, maleness and femaleness--is present from the moment of birth, and in every act or deed of every child. But sex in the real sense of dynamic sexual relationship, this does not exist in a child, and cannot exist until puberty and after. True, children have a sort of sex consciousness. Little boys and little girls may even commit indecencies together. And still it is nothing vital. It is a sort of shadow activity, a sort of dream-activity. It has no very profound effect.

But still, boys and girls should be kept apart as much as possible, that they may have some sort of respect and fear for the gulf that lies between them in nature, and for the great strangeness which each has to offer the other, finally. We are all wrong when we say there is no vital difference between the sexes. There is every difference.

Every bit, every cell in a boy is male, every cell is female in a woman, and must remain so. Women can never feel or know as men do. And in the reverse men can never feel and know, dynamically, as women do. Man, acting in the passive or feminine polarity, is still man, and he doesn't have one single unmanly feeling. And women, when they speak and write, utter not one single word that men have not taught them. Men learn their feelings from women, women learn their mental consciousness from men. And so it will ever be. Meanwhile, women live forever by feeling, and men live forever from an inherent sense of purpose. Feeling is an end in itself. This is unspeakable truth to a woman, and never true for one minute to a man. When man, in the Epicurean spirit, embraces feeling, he makes himself a martyr to it--like Maupassant or Oscar Wilde. Woman will never understand the depth of the spirit of purpose in man, his deeper spirit. And man will never understand the sacredness of feeling to woman. Each will play at the other's game, but they will remain apart.

The whole mode, the whole everything is really different in man and woman. Therefore we should keep boys and girls apart, that they are pure and virgin in themselves. On mixing with one another, in becoming familiar, in being "pals," they lose their own male and female integrity. And they lose the treasure of the future, the vital sex polarity, the dynamic magic of life. For the magic and the dynamism rests on otherness.

For actual sex is a vital polarity. And a polarity which rouses into

action, as we know, at puberty.

And how? As we know, a child lives from the great field of dynamic consciousness established between the four poles of the dynamic psyche, two great poles of sympathy, two great poles of will. The solar plexus and the lumbar ganglion, great nerve-centers below the diaphragm, act as the dynamic origin of all consciousness in man, and are immediately polarized by the other two nerve-centers, the cardiac plexus and the thoracic ganglion above the diaphragm. At these four poles the whole flow, both within the individual and from without him, of dynamic consciousness and dynamic creative relationship is centered. These four first poles constitute the first field of dynamic consciousness for the first twelve or fourteen years of the life of every child.

And then a change takes place. It takes place slowly, gradually and inevitably, utterly beyond our provision or control. The living soul is unfolding itself in another great metamorphosis.

What happens, in the biological psyche, is that deeper centers of consciousness and function come awake. Deep in the lower body the great sympathetic center, the hypogastric plexus has been acting all the time in a kind of dream-automatism, balanced by its corresponding voluntary center, the sacral ganglion. At the age of twelve these two centers begin slowly to rumble awake, with a deep reverberant force that changes the whole constitution of the life of the individual.

And as these two centers, the sympathetic center of the deeper abdomen, and the voluntary center of the loins, gradually sparkle into wakeful, conscious activity, their corresponding poles are roused in the upper body. In the region of the throat and neck, the so-called cervical plexuses and the cervical ganglia dawn into activity.

We have now another field of dawning dynamic consciousness, that will extend far beyond the first. And now various things happen to us. First of all actual sex establishes its strange and troublesome presence within us. This is the massive wakening of the lower body. And then, in the upper body, the breasts of a woman begin to develop, her throat changes its form. And in the man, the voice breaks, the beard begins to grow round the lips and on to the throat. There are the obvious physiological changes resulting from the gradual bursting into free activity of the hypogastric plexus and the sacral ganglion, in the lower body, and of the cervical plexuses and ganglia of the neck, in the upper body.

Why the growth of hair should start at the lower and upper sympathetic regions we cannot say. Perhaps for protection. Perhaps to preserve these powerful yet supersensitive nodes from the inclemency of changes in temperature, which might cause a derangement. Perhaps for the sake of protective warning, as hair warns when it is touched. Perhaps for a screen against various dynamic vibrations, and as a receiver of other suited dynamic vibrations. It may be that even the hair of the head

acts as a sensitive vibration-medium for conveying currents of physical and vitalistic activity to and from the brain. And perhaps from the centers of intense vital surcharge hair springs as a sort of annunciation or declaration, like a crest of life-assertion. Perhaps all these things, and perhaps others.

But with the bursting awake of the four new poles of dynamic consciousness and being, change takes place in everything, the features now begin to take individual form, the limbs develop out of the soft round matrix of child-form, the body resolves itself into distinctions. A strange creative change in being has taken place. The child before puberty is quite another thing from the child after puberty. Strange indeed is this new birth, this rising from the sea of childhood into a new being. It is a resurrection which we fear.

And now, a new world, a new heaven and a new earth. Now new relationships are formed, the old ones retire from their prominence. Now mother and father inevitably give way before masters and mistresses, brothers and sisters yield to friends. This is the period of Schwärmerei, of young adoration and of real initial friendships. A child before puberty has playmates. After puberty he has friends and enemies.

A whole new field of passional relationship. And the old bonds relaxing, the old love retreating. The father and mother bonds now relax, though they never break. The family love wanes, though it never

dies.

It is the hour of the stranger. Let the stranger now enter the soul.

And it is the first hour of true individuality, the first hour of genuine, responsible solitariness. A child knows the abyss of forlornness. But an adolescent alone knows the strange pain of growing into his own isolation of individuality.

All this change is an agony and a bliss. It is a cataclysm and a new world. It is our most serious hour, perhaps. And yet we cannot be responsible for it.

Now sex comes into active being. Until puberty, sex is submerged, nascent, incipient only. After puberty, it is a tremendous factor.

What is sex, really? We can never say, satisfactorily. But we know so much: we know that it is a dynamic polarity between human beings, and a circuit of force always flowing. The psychoanalyst is right so far. There can be no vivid relation between two adult individuals which does not consist in a dynamic polarized flow of vitalistic force or magnetism or electricity, call it what you will, between these two people. Yet is this dynamic flow inevitably sexual in nature?

This is the moot point for psychoanalysis. But let us look at sex, in its obvious manifestation. The sexual relation between man and woman

consummates in the act of coition. Now what is the act of coition? We know its functional purpose of procreation. But, after all our experience and all our poetry and novels we know that the procreative purpose of sex is, to the individual man and woman, just a side-show. To the individual, the act of coition is a great psychic experience, a vital experience of tremendous importance. On this vital individual experience the life and very being of the individual largely depends.

But what is the experience? Untellable. Only, we know something. We know that in the act of coition the blood of the individual man, acutely surcharged with intense vital electricity--we know no word, so say "electricity," by analogy--rises to a culmination, in a tremendous magnetic urge towards the magnetic blood of the female. The whole of the living blood in the two individuals forms a field of intense, polarized magnetic attraction. So, the two poles must be brought into contact. In the act of coition, the two seas of blood in the two individuals, rocking and surging towards contact, as near as possible, clash into a oneness. A great flash of interchange occurs, like an electric spark when two currents meet or like lightning out of the densely surcharged clouds. There is a lightning flash which passes through the blood of both individuals, there is a thunder of sensation which rolls in diminishing crashes down the nerves of each--and then the tension passes.

The two individuals are separate again. But are they as they were before? Is the air the same after a thunder-storm as before? No. The

air is as it were new, fresh, tingling with newness. So is the blood of man and woman after successful coition. After a false coition, like prostitution, there is not newness but a certain disintegration.

But after coition, the actual chemical constitution of the blood is so changed, that usually sleep intervenes, to allow the time for chemical, biological readjustment through the whole system.

So, the blood is changed and renewed, refreshed, almost recreated, like the atmosphere after thunder. Out of the newness of the living blood pass the new strange waves which beat upon the great dynamic centers of the nerves: primarily upon the hypogastric plexus and the sacral ganglion. From these centers rise new impulses, new vision, new being, rising like Aphrodite from the foam of the new tide of blood. And so individual life goes on.

Perhaps, then, we will allow ourselves to say what, in psychic individual reality, is the act of coition. It is the bringing together of the surcharged electric blood of the male with the polarized electric blood of the female, with the result of a tremendous flashing interchange, which alters the constitution of the blood, and the very quality of being, in both.

And this, surely, is sex. But is this the whole of sex? That is the question.



After coition, we say the blood is renewed. We say that from the new, finely sparkling blood new thrills pass into the great affective centers of the lower body, new thrills of feeling, of impulse, of energy.--And what about these new thrills?

Now, a new story. The new thrills are passed on to the great upper centers of the dynamic body. The individual polarity now changes, within the individual system. The upper centers, cardiac plexus and cervical plexuses, thoracic ganglion and cervical ganglia now assume positivity. These, the upper polarized centers, have now the positive rôle to play, the solar and the hypogastric plexuses, the lumbar and the sacral ganglia, these have the submissive, negative rôle for the time being.

And what then? What now, that the upper centers are finely active in positivity? Now it is a different story. Now there is new vision in the eyes, new hearing in the ears, new voice in the throat and speech on the lips. Now the new song rises, the brain tingles to new thought, the heart craves for new activity.

The heart craves for new activity. For new collective activity. That is, for a new polarized connection with other beings, other men.

Is this new craving for polarized communion with others, this craving for a new unison, is it sexual, like the original craving for the woman? Not at all. The whole polarity is different. Now, the positive

poles are the poles of the breast and shoulders and throat, the poles of activity and full consciousness. Men, being themselves made new after the act of coition, wish to make the world new. A new, passionate polarity springs up between men who are bent on the same activity, the polarity between man and woman sinks to passivity. It is now daytime, and time to forget sex, time to be busy making a new world.

Is this new polarity, this new circuit of passion between comrades and co-workers, is this also sexual? It is a vivid circuit of polarized passion. Is it hence sex?

It is not. Because what are the poles of positive connection?--the upper, busy poles. What is the dynamic contact?--a unison in spirit, in understanding, and a pure commingling in one great work. A mingling of the individual passion into one great purpose. Now this is also a grand consummation for men, this mingling of many with one great impassioned purpose. But is this sex? Knowing what sex is, can we call this other also sex? We cannot.

This meeting of many in one great passionate purpose is not sex, and should never be confused with sex. It is a great motion in the opposite direction. And I am sure that the ultimate, greatest desire in men is this desire for great purposive activity. When man loses his deep sense of purposive, creative activity, he feels lost, and is lost. When he makes the sexual consummation the supreme consummation,

even in his secret soul, he falls into the beginnings of despair.

When he makes woman, or the woman and child the great center of life and of life-significance, he falls into the beginnings of despair.

Man must bravely stand by his own soul, his own responsibility as the creative vanguard of life. And he must also have the courage to go home to his woman and become a perfect answer to her deep sexual call. But he must never confuse his two issues. Primarily and supremely man is always the pioneer of life, adventuring onward into the unknown, alone with his own temerarious, dauntless soul. Woman for him exists only in the twilight, by the camp fire, when day has departed. Evening and the night are hers.

The psychoanalysts, driving us back to the sexual consummation always, do us infinite damage.

We have to break away, back to the great unison of manhood in some passionate purpose. Now this is not like sex. Sex is always individual. A man has his own sex: nobody else's. And sexually he goes as a single individual; he can mingle only singly. So that to make sex a general affair is just a perversion and a lie. You can't get people and talk to them about their sex, as if it were a common interest.

We have got to get back to the great purpose of manhood, a passionate unison in actively making a world. This is a real commingling of many. And in such a commingling we forfeit the individual. In the

commingling of sex we are alone with one partner. It is an individual affair, there is no superior or inferior. But in the commingling of a passionate purpose, each individual sacredly abandons his individual. In the living faith of his soul, he surrenders his individuality to the great urge which is upon him. He may have to surrender his name, his fame, his fortune, his life, everything. But once a man, in the integrity of his own individual soul, believes, he surrenders his own individuality to his belief, and becomes one of a united body. He knows what he does. He makes the surrender honorably, in agreement with his own soul's deepest desire. But he surrenders, and remains responsible for the purity of his surrender.

But what if he believes that his sexual consummation is his supreme consummation? Then he serves the great purpose to which he pledges himself only as long as it pleases him. After which he turns it down, and goes back to sex. With sex as the one accepted prime motive, the world drifts into despair and anarchy.

Of all countries, America has most to fear from anarchy, even from one single moment's lapse into anarchy. The old nations are organically fixed into classes, but America not. You can shake Europe to atoms. And yet peasants fall back to peasantry, artisans to industrial labor, upper classes to their control--inevitably. But can you say the same of America?

America must not lapse for one single moment into anarchy. It would be

the end of her. She must drift no nearer to anarchy. She is near enough.

Well, then, Americans must make a choice. It is a choice between belief in man's creative, spontaneous soul, and man's automatic power of production and reproduction. It is a choice between serving man, or woman. It is a choice between yielding the soul to a leader, leaders, or yielding only to the woman, wife, mistress, or mother.

The great collective passion of belief which brings men together, comrades and co-workers, passionately obeying their soul-chosen leader or leaders, this is not a sex passion. Not in any sense. Sex holds any two people together, but it tends to disintegrate society, unless it is subordinated to the great dominating male passion of collective purpose.

But when the sex passion submits to the great purposive passion, then you have fulness. And no great purposive passion can endure long unless it is established upon the fulfillment in the vast majority of individuals of the true sexual passion. No great motive or ideal or social principle can endure for any length of time unless based upon the sexual fulfillment of the vast majority of individuals concerned.

It cuts both ways. Assert sex as the predominant fulfillment, and you get the collapse of living purpose in man. You get anarchy. Assert purposiveness as the one supreme and pure activity of life, and you

drift into barren sterility, like our business life of to-day, and our political life. You become sterile, you make anarchy inevitable. And so there you are. You have got to base your great purposive activity upon the intense sexual fulfillment of all your individuals. That was how Egypt endured. But you have got to keep your sexual fulfillment even then subordinate, just subordinate to the great passion of purpose: subordinate by a hair's breadth only: but still, by that hair's breadth, subordinate.

Perhaps we can see now a little better--to go back to the child--where Freud is wrong in attributing a sexual motive to all human activity. It is obvious there is no real sexual motive in a child, for example. The great sexual centers are not even awake. True, even in a child of three, rudimentary sex throws strange shadows on the wall, in its approach from the distance. But these are only an uneasy intrusion from the as-yet-uncreated, unready biological centers. The great sexual centers of the hypogastric plexus, and the immensely powerful sacral ganglion are slowly prepared, developed in a kind of prenatal gestation during childhood before puberty. But even an unborn child kicks in the womb. So do the great sex-centers give occasional blind kicks in a child. It is part of the phenomenon of childhood. But we must be most careful not to charge these rather unpleasant apparitions or phenomena against the individual boy or girl. We must be very careful not to drag the matter into mental consciousness. Shoo it away. Reprimand it with a pah! and a faugh! and a bit of contempt. But do not get into any heat or any fear. Do not startle a passionate

attention. Drive the whole thing away like the shadow it is, and be very careful not to drive it into the consciousness. Be very careful to plant no seed of burning shame or horror. Throw over it merely the cold water of contemptuous indifference, dismissal.

After puberty, a child may as well be told the simple and necessary facts of sex. As things stand, the parent may as well do it. But briefly, coldly, and with as cold a dismissal as possible.--"Look here, you're not a child any more; you know it, don't you? You're going to be a man. And you know what that means. It means you're going to marry a woman later on, and get children. You know it, and I know it. But in the meantime, leave yourself alone. I know you'll have a lot of bother with yourself, and your feelings. I know what is happening to you. And I know you get excited about it. But you needn't. Other men have all gone through it. So don't you go creeping off by yourself and doing things on the sly. It won't do you any good.--I know what you'll do, because we've all been through it. I know the thing will keep coming on you at night. But remember that I know. Remember. And remember that I want you to leave yourself alone. I know what it is, I tell you. I've been through it all myself. You've got to go through these years, before you find a woman you want to marry, and whom you can marry. I went through them myself, and got myself worked up a good deal more than was good for me.--Try to contain yourself. Always try to contain yourself, and be a man. That's the only thing. Always try and be manly, and quiet in yourself. Remember I know what it is. I've been the same, in the same state that

you are in. And probably I've behaved more foolishly and perniciously than ever you will. So come to me if anything really bothers you. And don't feel sly and secret. I do know just what you've got and what you haven't. I've been as bad and perhaps worse than you. And the only thing I want of you is to be manly. Try and be manly, and quiet in yourself."

That is about as much as a father can say to a boy, at puberty. You have to be very careful what you do: especially if you are a parent. To translate sex into mental ideas is vile, to make a scientific fact of it is death.

As a matter of fact there should be some sort of initiation into true adult consciousness. Boys should be taken away from their mothers and sisters as much as possible at adolescence. They should be given into some real manly charge. And there should be some actual initiation into sex life. Perhaps like the savages, who make the boy die again, symbolically, and pull him forth through some narrow aperture, to be born again, and make him suffer and endure terrible hardships, to make a great dynamic effect on the consciousness, a terrible dynamic sense of change in the very being. In short, a long, violent initiation, from which the lad emerges emaciated, but cut off forever from childhood, entered into the serious, responsible pale of manhood. And with his whole consciousness convulsed by a great change, as his dynamic psyche actually is convulsed.--And something in the same way, to initiate girls into womanhood.



There should be the intense dynamic reaction: the physical suffering and the physical realization sinking deep into the soul, changing the soul for ever. Sex should come upon us as a terrible thing of suffering and privilege and mystery: a mysterious metamorphosis come upon us, and a new terrible power given us, and a new responsibility. Telling?--What's the good of telling?--The mystery, the terror, and the tremendous power of sex should never be explained away. The mass of mankind should never be acquainted with the scientific biological facts of sex: never. The mystery must remain in its dark secrecy, and its dark, powerful dynamism. The reality of sex lies in the great dynamic convulsions in the soul. And as such it should be realized, a great creative-convulsive seizure upon the soul.--To make it a matter of test-tube mixtures, chemical demonstrations and trashy lock-and-key symbols is just blasting. Even more sickening is the line: "You see, dear, one day you'll love a man as I love Daddy, more than anything else in the whole world. And then, dear, I hope you'll marry him. Because if you do you'll be happy, and I want you to be happy, my love. And so I hope you'll marry the man you really love (kisses the child).--And then, darling, there will come a lot of things you know nothing about now. You'll want to have a dear little baby, won't you, darling? Your own dear little baby. And your husband's as well. Because it'll be his, too. You know that, don't you, dear? It will be born from both of you. And you don't know how, do you? Well, it will come from right inside you, dear, out of your own inside. You came out of mother's inside, etc., etc."

But I suppose there's really nothing else to be done, given the world and society as we've got them now. The mother is doing her best.

But it is all wrong. It is wrong to make sex appear as if it were part of the dear-darling-love smarm: the spiritual love. It is even worse to take the scientific test-tube line. It all kills the great effective dynamism of life, and substitutes the mere ash of mental ideas and tricks.

The scientific fact of sex is no more sex than a skeleton is a man. Yet you'd think twice before you stock a skeleton in front of a lad and said, "You see, my boy, this is what you are when you come to know yourself."--And the ideal, lovey-dovey "explanation" of sex as something wonderful and extra lovey-dovey, a bill-and-coo process of obtaining a sweet little baby--or else "God made us so that we must do this, to bring another dear little baby to life"--well, it just makes one sick. It is disastrous to the deep sexual life. But perhaps that is what we want.

When humanity comes to its senses it will realize what a fearful Sodom apple our understanding is. What terrible mouths and stomachs full of bitter ash we've all got. And then we shall take away "knowledge" and "understanding," and lock them up along with the rest of poisons, to be administered in small doses only by competent people.

We have almost poisoned the mass of humanity to death with understanding. The period of actual death and race-extermination is not far off. We could have produced the same barrenness and frenzy of nothingness in people, perhaps, by dinning it into them that every man is just a charnel-house skeleton of unclean bones. Our "understanding," our science and idealism have produced in people the same strange frenzy of self-repulsion as if they saw their own skulls each time they looked in the mirror. A man is a thing of scientific cause-and-effect and biological process, draped in an ideal, is he? No wonder he sees the skeleton grinning through the flesh.

Our leaders have not loved men: they have loved ideas, and have been willing to sacrifice passionate men on the altars of the blood-drinking, ever-ash-thirsty ideal. Has President Wilson, or Karl Marx, or Bernard Shaw ever felt one hot blood-pulse of love for the working man, the half-conscious, deluded working man? Never. Each of these leaders has wanted to abstract him away from his own blood and being, into some foul Methuselah or abstraction of a man.

And me? There is no danger of the working man ever reading my books, so I shan't hurt him that way. But oh, I would like to save him alive, in his living, spontaneous, original being. I can't help it. It is my passionate instinct.

I would like him to give me back the responsibility for general affairs, a responsibility which he can't acquit, and which saps his

life. I would like him to give me back the responsibility for the future. I would like him to give me back the responsibility for thought, for direction. I wish we could take hope and belief together. I would undertake my share of the responsibility, if he gave me his belief.

I would like him to give me back books and newspapers and theories. And I would like to give him back, in return, his old insouciance, and rich, original spontaneity and fullness of life.