

Indecent Practices and Erotic Trance: Making Sense of Tantra

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Vimalananda's story is certainly exotic and a far cry from the experience of the average Westerner some 2000 years after the death of our collective guru -- who preached a kingdom not of this world, was born of a virgin, and remained a virgin himself. Svoboda's guru by contrast -- although he remained in the ordinary world with difficulty -- describes a sexual way of life that he finds satisfying and liberating. No doubt few of us can be so enthusiastic about the role of sex in our lives and fewer still are able to see sexuality as our primary form of worship. Western mystics have said they were thankful not to have faced two obstacles as formidable as sex.

Peter Trachtenberg, tells a story about our *conflict* with sex. In his rueful and intelligent account of his life as a "sex addict," *The Casanova Complex*, he says he "slept with at least two different partners a week for close to two years," until his "wicked moral hangovers" drove him to seek "help" that he evidently found in the form of twelve-step programs modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous (Trachtenberg, 1988: 16, 69). His "addiction" to sex, he believes, predated his sexual experience. This apparently means that he had been unconsciously longing for what sex could do for him over a period of some years -- presumably through adolescence. He was afflicted with "feelings of worthlessness" and a "tenuous sense of self" which the rush of sexual adventure seemed to ease by promising safety and reassurance (*Ibid.*, 28). Although "pretty sure" that such promiscuous behavior is "not normal," he suspects that "ninety percent of American men" will be able to see themselves in his story (*Ibid.*, 17). Not that we are all "sex addicts," but our day-dreams and misadventures intersect with his narrative often enough to give us a profound sense of discomfort.

When I met a woman, my desire for her was immediate and crippling -- a hammer blow to the heart. Whether I wanted to sleep with her or marry her and give her children didn't matter: it usually took me some time to figure out what I wanted. In the beginning there was just that longing, and the sense of myself as a starved orphan gazing through a window at a room where a happy family is sitting down to dinner. To attain that happiness I would do anything, say anything, make myself into whatever kind of man I thought most likely to be admitted into it. At the moment I first knew that she would sleep with me, I felt a triumph as galvanizing as a rush of cocaine. This sense of grandiose aliveness was better than sex. In time, it became my main reason for having sex, for my penis was increasingly just a tool, and aid to my partner's enjoyment and to my further mastery of her. If I reached orgasm at all, it was only an interruption of the siege: I did not consider my triumph complete until my partner was begging me to stop.

But in the next moment, triumph turned into something else. Sometimes it immediately gave way to the old yearning, fiercer now and coupled with the suspicion that my lover had just been playing with me, feigning attraction, faking her orgasms, and that she would now write me off as some creep she'd taken home in a weak moment and couldn't wait to get rid of me. To lay that dread to rest, I had to see her again and again, to conquer her in different ways, to win her heart or her mind or whatever else I imagined there was to win. It might take anywhere from a few days to a few years -- a whole relationship based on hunger and frustration. Or triumph might give way to a sense of being drained yet paradoxically filled to the point of sickness, and I would look down at the woman beside me as though she had violated me and be certain that she would want more at any minute. She would want more, and I had nothing more to give her; she had taken all of me and left me as withered as a used condom, and I would scramble out of her bed and into my clothing, trying to be polite but trembling inwardly with panic and the rage of someone who feels he has been horribly cheated (*Ibid*, 16-7).

This story bears some strange similarities with Vimalananda's. We have a combat in which the man seeks to determine what the woman wants, uses his penis as a "tool," and experiences ejaculation as defeat -- either "an interruption of the siege" or a total vanquishment, leaving him feeling "as withered as a used condom." But this battle is no "friendly competition." There is no "give and take," no "rhythm" or "choreography," and above all no "union of two personalities into one." Even more telling is the fact that Vimalananda wants to move forward, to bring himself and his consort into identity with Sadashiva, while Trachtenberg wants only to regress to a pre-conscious state: "Every time I made love, I tried to reenter my partner's womb, to possess it and to be possessed by it. I wanted nothing less than to be annihilated in the sleep of the unborn" (*Ibid.*, 73). Vimalananda learned some important lessons from his Bhairavi. She made up for his "deficiencies," and he never wanted to leave her. He was convinced that their friendship is "eternal." But Trachtenberg has "to see her again and again, to conquer her in different ways" only to prove to himself that he has not lost. In the end, he cannot wait to escape. One of the men he interviewed for his book refers to this situation as a "coyote fuck": it makes "you want to gnaw your arm off if that's what it takes to get away without [the woman] knowing it" (*Ibid.*, 72).

While Vimalananda wants to ride the horse of his pre-orgasmic arousal into transcendent unity with God, Trachtenberg and the many men he interviewed are compulsively ridden by their arousal toward the illusory goal of momentary victory, behind which lurks certain defeat. Through the "ultimate reality" of the funeral pyre, the Aghori is taken "beyond the Eight Snares of Existence: lust, anger, greed, delusion, envy, shame, disgust, and fear" into the freedom of "the Eternal Flame, the Supreme Ego." In contrast, Trachtenberg is imprisoned by those "snares." His book is based on his repeated experience that lust is a delusional compulsion that exposes his anger, greed, envy, shame, disgust, and fear. Instead of overcoming his delusional ego through a mutual competition whereby he discovers the

Supreme Ego, Trachtenberg is overcome by "an underlying hunger and impoverishment of spirit and an unconscious view of women as instruments of pleasure, ego-gratification and relief. All women are interchangeable and divided into two rigid categories: those to pursue and those to run from" (*Ibid.*, 19). There is no possibility of "eternal friendship" or "spiritual relationship"; for when a woman says, "I love you," "it's a dunning letter, a demand that fills me with rage" (*Ibid.*, 54). For him the woman is no Bhairavi who teaches him to be a Bhairava. As an "interchangeable" object, she serves him best when he is able to take no notice of her at all. The combat between them never makes them a dyad in his eyes. He is obsessed only with himself, interested only in "the exhilarating rush of brain chemistry" -- the "dopamine and norepinephrine . . . that are [also] released by cocaine" (*Ibid.*, 56).

Surely Trachtenberg's experience is as "not normal" as Vimalananda's vajroli contest. In both cases, the draw toward orgasm pulls the individual outside of society's norms. In the one case, the practitioner sets out to conquer his own physiology -- even to the point of vajroli's urethral reversal. In the Aghora tradition, however, this physiological mastery is but a small achievement within a lifetime of training. If ejaculation is a small defeat, death is the ultimate defeat. The Aghori confronts these potential disasters head-on and thereby cultivates an extraordinary relationship with himself, his body, and human life in general. He claims to have found a freedom and an identity with his consort, with God, and with the cosmos. Meanwhile, Trachtenberg shows us the corruption, imprisonment, and desperate isolation of a man whose physiology has mastered *him*. The sexual arousal that is Trachtenberg's poison has become Vimalananda's medicine of immortality. And the difference between them lies in a sort of mastery which the Aghora tradition presents as spirituality. We are faced with the question as to whether spirituality consists in some sort of "mastery" and whether the thing to be mastered may not be the most formidable danger we can find.

The second reason Trachtenberg's "abnormal" story is worth considering is that it cannot be completely foreign to any of us. We do not have to be sexual athletes to recognize the problematic nature of our psycho-biological drive toward orgasm. What man has not felt his desire for a woman as "a hammer blow to the heart," or that her agreement to sleep with him gave him a "grandiose aliveness that was better than sex"? Who has not feared "that my lover had just been playing with me," had "violated me," would "want more and I had nothing more to give"? Eliade goes to far as to say, "If in the presence of the naked woman, one does not find in one's inmost being the same terrifying emotion that one feels before the revelation of the cosmic mystery, there is no rite, there is only a secular act, with all the familiar consequences . . ." (Eliade, 1969: 259). Every "hammer blow" is potentially "cosmic," though we miss it all the time by reducing it in our minds to the merely personal and banal. Trachtenberg spells out the "consequences" for us, and we cannot help but recognize them as "familiar."

The Liberated Orgasm

Furthermore, it is not only men who have found sex to be both a poison and a promising, if often delusional, cure. Lucy Bregman's overview of the literature of "inner experience" contains a chapter on women's orgasm (Bregman, 1982). Drawing from contemporary popular books, Bregman finds that the female orgasm has recently been touted as a life-changing experience that marks the difference between a woman "oppressed by the

patriarchy" and one who has become "liberated." By way of indicating what orgasmic liberation may be, Bregman cites a woman's testimony from the popular *Hite Report* [1]:

Orgasm is an explosion which clears my mind, a force collected from my entire body, revitalizing and inspiring -- like becoming one with the rhythms that run the universe, like receiving a personal message that life is good and beautiful (Bregman, 1982: 90).

Other reports have a similar mystic ring, but Bregman remains skeptical: "The claim that sexual experience can be mystical may be an authentic expression of spontaneous, joyful discovery, or it may be an endorsement of a shallow hedonism" (*Ibid.*, 102).

In Bregman's summary, however, mystical claims are incidental in popular feminist literature. The central theme is that the feminine orgasm constitutes a personal triumph and ultimate proof of a woman's identity (*Ibid.*, 89). Orgasm, therefore, establishes a woman's social status in the private forum of her own awareness. It is an interior achievement that concerns only her prestige in her own eyes. Women who wonder whether they have had an orgasm demonstrate by their uncertainty that they have fallen short. Despite the doctrine of all-or-nothing certainty, however, not a few writers provide detailed accounts of the sensations one may expect in an orgasm, apparently in hopes of removing that fatal doubt (*Ibid.*, 93).

This overriding concern with self-worth as a private judgment of one's gender-determined social acceptability coincides precisely with Trachtenberg's obsession. In popular opinion, therefore, it makes no difference whether one is a man or a woman. Both parties, regardless of gender, are focusing on their own performance, fearful of being "played with," "violated," and above all of betraying themselves. In both cases self-betrayal consists in trying to win points with one's partner instead of being concerned with one's own personal and sexual needs. For Trachtenberg, even his quasi-Tantric refusal to ejaculate proves he is a worthless sycophant, because he is afraid of nothing more than going limp "like a used condom." Detumescence leaves him unable to "give more," incapable of pleasing his partner, so that he cannot wait to escape in shame, disgust and fear.

The ultimate crime a woman can commit against her own integrity is the "faked orgasm," whereby she acquiesces in powerlessness -- trying to gain self-esteem through flattering her partner rather than standing by her own orgasmic needs (Bregman, 1982: 96). A faked orgasm, being no orgasm at all, proves her failure as a woman. Trachtenberg and his men see it differently. For them, the woman's faked orgasm means that she has "just been playing with me . . . and that she would now write me off as some creep she'd taken home in a weak moment and couldn't wait to get rid of me." It drives Trachtenberg to outdo himself, to force the woman to have orgasm after orgasm and make her "beg me to stop."

Even a real orgasm is not much better than a fake when the woman values it for what it can prove to her partner, when she hopes it will raise her worth in his eyes rather than her own. The same is true for Trachtenberg. It makes little difference whether they beg for more or beg him to stop. In either case, he is trying to obliterate his chronic sense of self-disgust by winning an invitation to that "happy dinner" taking place on the other side of the window. Trachtenberg is as much in search of the "liberated orgasm" as are Bregman's women, that is, the orgasm that pleases oneself and that is enjoyed "under any comfortable circumstance" (Bregman, 1982: 92). Times have changed. It is no longer the man's duty to "give" a woman

an orgasm. "‘You must take responsibility for your own orgasm.’ It is impossible to overestimate the centrality of this theme in much of the newer literature written for women" (Bregman, 1982: 97).

What a strange pass we have come to. Sexual intercourse remains, as it must, a two-person activity. But our contemporary notions of what is right and honorable separate those two partners into isolated units, each working for herself. The very idea of being concerned for one’s partner during an activity we continue to describe as "making love," epitomizes our shame. We are afraid of "co-dependency," of "failing to maintain boundaries," of losing the heroic quest to be self-sufficient and independent. We are even encouraged to take our unbridgeable separateness as a physical fact:

Your sexual response is locked within your own body. Even during intercourse, male and female are separated by the skin of the penis and the lining of the vagina. Just as you taste and digest your own food, so you take responsibility for your own orgasm (Bregman, 1982: 95). [2]

How To Do It

It must be admitted that there are a few exceptions to this dismal picture of popular doctrines on making love. One such is Stephen and Ondrea Levine’s *Embracing the Beloved* (1995). It is a rather self-conscious book in which the authors present themselves as experienced elders on the path of relationship, offering suggestions the reader "may want to try." The book has the feel of a new age workshop, complete with guided meditations designed to "open" us to experiences that may generally be deemed "impossible" in our cultural milieu. The Levines encourage us to break down the boundaries that separate us from one another, basing their imagery on another numinous physical reality, the double helix of the DNA molecule, which is said to represent the single "shared body" of the lovers.

Making love in the shared body is the natural expression of living in the shared heart. Such boundaryless interaction is called "sacred sexuality." . . . The boundaries break and we pour into each other’s space. . . . It is at this stage that monogamy becomes an absolute necessity for further ascension. . . . This mystical union gives breath to the scriptural image mentioned earlier, for experiencing oneself as a cell in the body of Christ. As a thought floating free in the mind of the Buddha (Levine & Levine, 1995: 162-3).

The Levines go on to describe a bleeding tooth socket in Stephen’s jaw that was healed by the cosmic energy generated during such a "shared body" intercourse. They also call it "non-dual sexuality" in which, "Sometimes I am Sita, sometimes I am Ram" (*Ibid.*, 164). This last statement appears to be roughly equivalent to Vimalananda’s claim that Bhairava and Bhairavi may become Sadashiva.

Although the mystical component of love and sex is undoubtedly part of the Levines’ discussion, the fact that it appears within a soft-focus, feel-good context reminds us of Bregman’s puzzlement: it is hard to draw the line between "spontaneous, joyful discovery" and "shallow hedonism." The possibility that the Levines may be articulating a shallow mysticism, despite their high-flying language, is emphasized by the "how-to" structure of their book. They agree with mainstream American popular culture that we all have to "tinker" with ourselves so as to learn how to do what ought to come naturally. At the same time they have located themselves on the fringe by arguing against our fascination with

boundaries and isolated self-sufficiency. Possibly to bolster their countercultural claims, they have found it rhetorically effective to appeal to numinous invisible realities: the double helix of DNA and the mystical body of Christ.

When Vimalananda veers close to a step-by-step approach to mystical discipline, he frustrates our literalistic American tendency to try it out at home by giving us impossible and wholly unexplained directions: start with water, then proceed to milk, clarified butter, honey, and mercury; after Vajroli comes "Rajjoli, Sahajoli, Amaroli, and Gaupya -- but no one knows about Gaupya except Lord Siva Himself." Vimalananda tweaks our imagination and encourages us to think for ourselves. This "Sun among exaggerators" belongs to a tradition that stretches back to the Vedas, which can be memorized but whose meaning eludes unequivocal interpretation. Like stories, the Vedic hymns are truer than philosophy but impossible to specify. In contrast, the Levines do our imagining for us -- rather like television -- giving us the comforting but illusory sense that there is a single undisputed truth behind the metaphors.

In the last analysis, it is this "how-to" approach that trivializes what might well be some significant discoveries that the Levines may have made in the realm of sex and spirituality. It is the reason that their book is to be found on the same self of the bookstore along with the lesser books that Bregman has reviewed, rather than in the section that stores Svoboda's Vimalananda trilogy. Bregman, too, has little patience with the "how-to" books that give detailed instructions on: "how to drive a man wild in bed, how to masturbate, how to overcome sexual hang-ups, how to enjoy sex in groups, with same-sex partners, with your dog. . . .the immense cultural prestige of tinkering as an orientation toward the self" (Bregman, 1982: 90). One book details eleven steps to achieve orgasm through masturbation and ten for intercourse (Bregman, 1982: 98).

Cultural Definitions of Sex

The fact that we need to be told how to do the things our primate forebears took for granted, as well as the fact that sexual combat for contemporary men and women has become much more vicious and desperate than Vimalananda's vajroli contest can only make us wonder what has happened to us humans in recent centuries. In the Middle Ages, perhaps, it was clear that what distinguishes us from the animals is our "spiritual" determination to control the drive toward orgasm, limiting it to monogamous compliance with the divine command to "increase and multiply." In this context, celibacy would epitomize the highest form of human life, just "a little lower than the angels" -- who, having no bodies, are eternally above and beyond our wrestling with the problem of orgasm. Historian of Christianity, Samuel Laeuchli (1972) has taken up this question, and by a minute examination of the language of the bishops at the Council of Elvira, Spain, in 309 c.e., reveals the socio-political intentions of the Catholic Church's decision to require celibacy of the clergy. Laeuchli shows that by declaring themselves celibate, the clergy sought to set themselves above common humanity and thereby guarantee their authority as "mediators" between an asexual God and sexual humans. Such socio-political definitions of spirituality are by no means unique to the Christian West. The Brahmin caste of India, for instance, places itself above the vast numbers of "untouchables" by their ritual purity. In this role, they exemplify the last stage in the process of human perfection that may require many lifetimes of striving and enables

them to be the spiritual advisors to kings and politicians.

These two examples make it clear that, however biological the orgasmic drive may be, its problematic nature has a great deal to do with cultural definitions. For this reason, it is impossible to speak of sexuality "in itself." Its cultural, religious, social, and political meanings inevitably complicate any picture we draw. Sexuality is always encountered in some story or other. The story behind the Council of Elvira concerns God's intentions in setting up a hierarchy of creation, in which angels are higher than humans, humans higher than animals, and so on, with orgasmic sexuality as the deciding factor. Vimalananda's story, too, makes sense only within a cultural context in which monogamy, procreation, and ritual purity are mainstream ideals. In practicing vajroli with a Bhairavi who is not his wife, while smeared with the ashes of cremated human bodies, and drinking wine from a human skull, he violates the laws of purity which organize the everyday world of his contemporaries and reverses the law of nature which would cause his semen to ejaculate. In both Christian and Hindu contexts, therefore, spirituality is attained by opposing what society deems "normal."

Once we have grasped this, it becomes clear that the feminist popular literature on orgasm reviewed by Bregman and Trachtenberg's indictment of "the Casanova complex" constitute socio-political tracts. They are concerned with what is or "should be" normal. They are cultural artifacts. They are stories that would make little sense to a contemporary Hindu or even to an American of the nineteenth century. They reveal our need for a larger story, one that takes in the whole sweep of human life on earth. In *The Prehistory of Sex: Four Million Years of Human Sexual Culture* (1996), British archaeologist Timothy Tayler tells just such a narrative. The thrust of his book is to call into question many prevailing archaeological theories by showing that they are based on Western cultural biases. He provides more questions than answers -- most of which go well beyond the scope of this book. But like any story-teller who does not wish to lose his audience, Tayler needs a narrative that he hopes will *not* be disputed. It is this central story with its three major episodes which I summarize: (a) the evolutionary emergence of *homo sapiens* as a unique species, (b) the contrast between the "natural" sexuality of non-human primates and the cultural sexuality of humans, and (c) the shift in the cultural meaning of sexuality when primitive hunter-gatherers settled down and became agriculturalists.

The Emergence of *Homo Sapiens*

Tayler emphasizes two factors which distinguish humans from other primates. First is the loss of distinct periods of estrus whereby pre-human females go into "heat" immediately before ovulation and are capable of being impregnated only during certain seasons of the year. While in estrus, specialized areas of skin become swollen with blood and change color as a "signal" of sexual availability. Human females, by contrast, ovulate monthly and have no estrus display. They are "always available" in the words of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, a fact which carries not only the biological meaning that children can be conceived throughout the year but also the universal cultural fact that women are everywhere enjoined to close their legs while seated (Sheets-Johnstone, 1994: 79-88).

The second and more obvious fact that distinguishes humans from other primates is our upright stature and walk. This hides the female genitals, placing them largely out of sight

between the legs. Such biologically imposed modesty, however, has by no means brought an end to sexual signaling by the human anatomy. As the "naked ape," we humans are the only primates not covered by hair: "Nakedness developed as a form of sexual signaling to compensate for the disappearance of estrus skin, which had formerly performed that function" (Tayler, 1996: 36). Our loss of hair extends our "sexual skin" so as to include the entire human body. By our upright walk, that skin is more effectively displayed. Both genders have developed rounded, fleshy buttocks to accommodate that walk. Women have developed breasts proportionately much larger than those of any other species and permanently plump with fat deposits. By our upright stance, they are always on display. Meanwhile the clitoris has been reduced in size, while the penis has been dramatically enlarged: "What is important about the human penis is not its mechanical fertilizing capacity when erect but its flaccid visibility" (Tayler, 1996: 5, 24).

From a purely biological point of view, then, the evolutionary emergence of *homo sapiens* has made us a species for which sexuality is never in the background. While we might like to believe that we distinguish ourselves from the "lower animals" by our conscious control over the orgasmic impulse, the evolutionary evidence suggests we are silently, inadvertently, and constantly confronting one another with our sexual attractiveness and preparedness. While most mammals, including most primates, hide their availability most of the year and then signal only with specialized estrus skin, antlers, and the like, our entire bodies constitute a sexual display; and we are always available. Very likely this is the core biological reason human culture has been so concerned with the control of voluntary sexual expression.

Cultural Control of Human Sexuality

It has become a truism that -- by mammalian standards -- the human infant is born before its time, leaving it totally dependent and unable to survive without constant care that would be beyond the capabilities of any other species. It is as though we spend several years of "womb time" out in the world, where we are forced to learn and become conscious. Our "premature" birth is therefore more a blessing than a curse. It more convincingly accounts for our evolutionary success than even our upright stance or our opposable thumb. Such considerations make it unlikely that we were ever as unconscious as chimpanzees or gorillas. Regarding our knowledge of sex, Tayler believes the human line has been consciously able to separate sex from reproduction for the past four million years (Tayler, 1996: 7). The most convincing ground for this belief is the very nature of human reproduction. Humans are "K-strategists: that is, they have few children, but invest heavily in them" (*Ibid.*, 94). The fact that we are born prematurely by mammalian standards means that so much energy and attention is required from parents that children born in primitive conditions have to be spaced several years apart if either they or the adults are to survive. *Homo sapiens* could not have enjoyed its evolutionary success unless sex was known pretty much from the very beginning as the act which conceives children. [3]

But as soon as humans knew that ejaculatory intercourse produces babies, they also knew sex could be used in other ways. Non-ejaculatory intercourse, fondling, anal and oral sex, all these things could be used for pleasure and power, as ends in themselves, without danger of producing children that could not be cared for. Indeed, even in the apparent absence of reproductive knowledge, primates and other higher animals have discovered similar uses for

sex (Taylor, 1996: 74). Taylor illustrates this point with a description of the behavior of a little known species, the bonobo, or "pigmy chimp" from Central Zaire. He avoids speaking of the great apes (chimpanzees and gorillas), our usual models for pre-human sexuality, because he believes they have been chosen to confirm our "fondly held view that male dominance is natural and universal in both primate and human society" (*Ibid.*, 80) -- as well as "our sexual puritanism." Bonobos are no smaller than other chimps, but have a "more upright gait and a less 'specialized' skeleton," making them "the closest living analogue to the early australopithicines of four million years ago" (*Ibid.*, 81).

Bonobos have sex most of the time. Aside from adult heterosexual activities, females indulge in a lot of genital rubbing with each other (. . . called *tribadism* in humans). Males indulge in "penis fencing" and rub their swollen rumps together, back to back. Most shocking to human eyes, adults and children have a lot of sex. In fact, infants are often initiated by their mothers -- the only observed taboo is on sex between mothers and sons over six years of age. Sex is a natural part of childhood for bonobos, researchers believe, and it mingles imperceptibly with care, play, all the other elements of growing up. Sex for bonobos appears to be a fairly quick, perfunctory, and relaxed activity that functions as a social cement.

I am not saying that bonobos provide a model for what human sexuality *ought* to be like -- that, but for cultural constraints, we would all behave more like bonobos. They challenge us to think more openly about the range of sexual behaviors that were potentially open to our remote ancestors. In physical terms, there is nothing that bonobos do that some humans do not sometimes do (Tayler, 1996: 81).

The story of the bonobos is central to Tayler's thesis, not only because it demonstrates that without cultural constraint all forms of sexuality are acceptable. He also insists that the activities of the bonobos constitute *mute* facts -- facts that have no meaning in themselves but require interpretation -- just like the archaeological evidence we have collected from pre-historic civilizations. In the case of the bonobos, for instance, some observers claim to have seen males trading food with females for sex. Tayler does not deny that both food and sex are shared. But in the context of their constant sexual activity, he sees the sharing of food as incidental. Furthermore, "trading" food for sex implies that sex is something the female has to "give" and that the male "takes" it without "giving" in return. Such an interpretation coincides all too suspiciously with our own "dating" behavior. It makes little sense in a bonobo context, where, as seems evident, sex is always available between any two potential partners.

Furthermore, since any sexual act is as possible between human beings as between bonobos, it is culture which sets the values and the controls; and cultures differ widely. To mention just one fact, "Although the largest population blocks have adopted monogamy, a majority of individual societies worldwide still practice some form of polygamy" (Taylor, 1996: 40). Similarly, it seems likely that every "perversion" recognized by modern society has been common throughout history in one society or another: homosexuality, transvestitism, a wide variety of multiple partners, hiding one's sexuality or displaying it, group sexuality as a rite or an orgy. It is only the meanings ascribed to these acts, and their relative degrees of acceptability that differ from culture to culture.

What remains the same among human societies is the fact that human consciousness is a variable thing. We humans have the capacity to attend to almost anything while engaging in sex. Striving to be loved, for example, or to dominate one's partner, to submit, or to turn coitus into a "friendly competition," any one of these concerns -- or none of them at all --

may belong to any human act of sexuality. Human love, and its avoidance, become associated with sexuality as soon as the human capacity to *attend* to one thing or another enters the picture:

The pleasure of sex is increased by the empathy the participants can have for each other. Sex ceased to be necessarily short and sharp and became an act of potentially ecstatic mutual contemplation. On the other hand, fantasy opened up the possibility that the participants could become almost completely *disengaged* from sex, allowing minds to drift to other subjects, such as where the next meal is coming from. It is this mixed blessing that we have inherited. It has led not only to widely varied individual experiences of sex but to the establishment of marked differences in what particular societies feel sex actually is, according to the sorts of learning, fantasies, or myths they share (Taylor, 1996: 51).

In short, it all depends upon the stories we tell about sex. These are the central facts which change from culture to culture. Even the notion of a "liberated orgasm" implies a story that *may not* be peculiar to our society.

Ice-Age Hunters

The cultural transition in prehistory from the very early hunter-gatherer style of life to that of the first agriculturalists is treated by Taylor as a three-stage process: (a) the Upper Paleolithic, roughly 30,000 to 10,000 b.c.e., during the last Ice Age, which produced stone figures of very heavy women like the Venus of Willendorf, and the cave art of hunting scenes and shaman-like figures; (b) the Mesolithic, roughly 10,000 to 5000 b.c.e., when the last glaciers were receding, temperatures rose higher than they are today, and people lived in movable hunting camps; and (c) the Neolithic, roughly 5000 to 2000 b.c.e., when people settled down to sedentary farming communities and began clearing forests. From one end of this transition to the other, humans moved from stationary hunter-gatherer communities to stationary farming communities. Meanwhile the meanings of sexuality, gender, and reproduction underwent a sea-change.

Although our ancestors gained the ability to represent themselves artistically sometime between 800,000 and 230,000 b.c.e. (Taylor, 1996: 98), [4] it was not until about 30,000 b.c.e., that the art was solid enough to survive (*Ibid.*, 107). These objects mainly take the form of stone figures of faceless women, with strongly emphasized breasts, bellies, and hips. The figurines are, of course, mute facts that require interpretation. Possibly they represent an idealized feminine form, even a goddess. If so, one might think immediately of Smashan Tara, the naked Indian goddess dancing in the cremation fire that Vimalananda designed for the front cover of Svoboda's *Aghora* (1986). Vimalananda's goddess is active and bursting with what any of us would see as sexual power, making her both desirable and terrifying. She has a narrow waist, high swelling breasts, and broad hips. The Venus of Willendorf-type of figure, however, appears inert, and her breasts and hips are enormous. If she was sexually desirable in her day, fashions have certainly changed.

Taylor reviews a number of theories that attempt to account for these Ice Age figurines and arrives at two conclusions that he thinks are modest and reasonable. The first is that women during the Ice Age had to be very fat by the end of the short summer in order to be able to survive the long, cold winter while gestating or nursing. Obese women were essential, he thinks, to the survival of *homo sapiens*. Furthermore, being sedentary and living close

together probably insured that all the women achieved "menstrual synchrony." Very likely the men, "as they do in many traditional societies," organized their hunting expeditions while the women were menstruating (*Ibid.*, 105-6). In a period when food supplies were uncertain, communal life had to be based on "sharing and complementarity," and births had to be widely spaced (*Ibid.*, 143, 147).

The second conclusion concerns why these figures are faceless and rubbed smooth, as if by constant handling. Tayler believes they were "portable and exchangeable" and may have represented "marriage tokens, given to a bride's mother as a keepsake when her daughter transferred to a far-off group to bear children to a strange man" (*Ibid.*, 125). If women were exchangeable in this way, their personal identity would not have been as important as their reproductive potential (*Ibid.*, 124). The cave art, probably made by men, also represents passive, "objectified," and impersonal females. By contrast, the male figures are active (*Ibid.*, 125). The caves themselves might represent "some symbolic womb out of which the herds would suddenly flow, as they appeared to do when they suddenly came in sight around the head of a valley, on the annual migrations that the hunter relied on intercepting" (*Ibid.*, 133-4).

Mute Stones and Cosmic Mystery

Tayler's views, here, bear a strange similarity to Trachtenberg's: woman as passive, "interchangeable object" (Trachtenberg) contrasted with highly active, ithyphallic men who do have faces but who want to lose them through being "possessed by" and "possessing" "some symbolic womb." Tayler's story, however, ostensibly does not concern the present. He sees himself as a "liberated" investigator who accepts all sorts of bonobo permutations on intercourse as natural and ubiquitous. He is not concerned to pass judgment on what might be considered "pathological," as Trachtenberg is. And he supports his conclusions with a variety of arguments that point out the inconsistencies in theories that contradict his own.

Nevertheless, he leaves us unsatisfied. First of all, why should we think that the figurines depict average women? For if the caves themselves are cosmic wombs, would this not more likely suggest the female figurines represent the goddess whose capacious womb the caves must have been? Furthermore, since there are very few Indian women who have a body as ideally proportioned as Vimalananda's Smashan Tara, why would we want to assume that the Ice Age figurines represent the shape of average women in the Paleolithic era?

Just as the Aghori sits trembling in awe before the aggressive nakedness of Smashan Tara, would it not be reasonable to think that the Willendorf "Venus" embodied that "hammer blow to the heart," the numinous "cosmic mystery" that Eliade claims "every naked woman" inspires? If so, perhaps the constant handling and rubbing that smoothed those figurines was inspired by worshipful reverence and trembling awe rather than profane trade. Even the facelessness of the figurines would support this interpretation, for what is experienced as "holy" is always a "*mysterium tremendum et fascinans*" (Otto, 1958) and always impersonal. Indeed, there is as much reason to think that Ice Age society was polyandrous as that it was polygynous; for if every woman was the goddess, every man would be overwhelmed by the prospect of "possessing and being possessed by her womb," as Trachtenberg puts it. Sexual congress with the goddess would make any man a worshipful servant, privileged to have a

part in the awe-inspiring mystery of the generation of new life. The representation of male figures in the cave art would support this view, for they almost invariably appear with prominent erections. If these were sacred scenes, as nearly every commentator agrees, the man's participation in the cosmic mystery of death and birth implied erotic ecstasy.

From the ithyphallic cave man to Shiva the God of Sex and the Greek Hermes, male erotic ecstasy has always been portrayed in art by exaggerating the size of the phallus. Perhaps it suggests pornography to our profane consciousness, but we have little doubt that the artists and worshippers of ancient times were possessed by a more sacred notion. If we are certain this is true as well of the exaggerated breasts and hips of the goddesses of India, why would it not be most reasonable to take the same approach to the Ice Age "Venuses"? Tayler tells a profane story of the Ice Age despite the fact that everything we know about other styles of ancient art speaks of our ancestors' awe before cosmic mystery. If such "spiritual" views are not wrong, we might still agree with Tayler that women were of central concern in the Ice Age. Their marvelous wombs and breasts, with their miraculous maternal and erotic potential, were essential to survival -- and not merely for economic reasons but for mythic ones as well.

The Tragedy of Agriculture

As the glaciers retreated, this art was abandoned. During the Mesolithic period, movement from one place to another became possible and, according to Tayler, the need for female obesity vanished. Food was more available and women became more "active at a basic nutritional level." Apparently he means that the gathering of roots, tubers, and fruits played a much larger role as the ice receded and the earth became more productive. Hunting may have been easier, too, but it was no longer such a crucial necessity. Thus women's economic power and mobility increased. In Tayler's view, if they did not like the way they were being treated, "they could simply walk away" (*Ibid.*, 146).

But this period of gender equality did not last long. The emergence of agriculture placed women in an even worse position than the one they had occupied during the Ice Age. Feuerstein calls this transition "the tragedy of agriculture," when women became property for the production of children:

The hunting-and-gathering groups of the paleolithic era had been relatively egalitarian. Now, however, the larger agricultural settlements depended for their survival on a steady population that could be put to work in the fields. In the period from around 11,000 b.c. to 3000 b.c., the world population is estimated to have grown from three to 100 million.

As Gerda Lerner has convincingly argued, women gradually came to be regarded as a precious tribal commodity, since they alone could guarantee future laborers. [5] Once this idea had taken root, it proved ineradicable. Thus objectified, women were henceforth almost universally treated as property that could be exchanged between tribes or, when an exchange was impossible, simply stolen (Feuerstein, 1993: 52-3).

Sharing is fundamental to hunter-gatherer societies, where only certain members are fit enough to hunt and others are biologically adapted for the rearing of future hunters and child-bearers. Ownership plays a very small role. Every individual is dependent on all the others. Farming, on the contrary, is based on the exploitation of the land and of labor.

Owning the land and the crops he grows, the farmer generally also produces a plentiful and reliable food supply. This not only reduces the need for wide birth spacing, it creates a pressure to produce as many children as possible; for each child becomes a potential unit of labor. On this basis, the cultural "attitude changes from trust to exploitation" (Tayler, 1996: 146-7). Attitudes toward sex change, too, becoming: "voyeuristic, repressive, homophobic, and focused on reproduction. Afraid of the wild, farmers set out to destroy it" (*Ibid.*, 143). Waves of forest clearing, the loss of detailed knowledge of wild plant foods along with the domestication of grains, the scheduling of breast-feeding and deliberate weaning, the domestication of animals, and a five-fold increase in the population of Europe [6] (*Ibid.*, 149-155) were all results of this exploitative attitude.

Again Tayler gives us a profane economic story. Very likely it is correct as far as it goes. But this time we do not have to speculate so much in order to see the role of myth. The religious attitudes behind the Bible, the Indian Vedas, the code of Hammurabi, and the like, all reflect a patriarchal and agricultural consciousness. The holy no longer speaks through the human phallus, womb, and breast, inspiring worshipful awe through a mystery that is at once biological and spiritual. Now a divine ruler lays down laws, declaring which acts are sacred and which sinful, polluted, or profane. The sacred structure of the cosmos has undergone a drastic change. Formerly the earth herself was holy: the rising sun, the changing moon, the streaming herds, the bleeding womb, the birth of children, the erect and ejaculating penis, the milk-giving breast -- every one of these things was a religious mystery. Now it is the proper governance of human action that is holy or profane. Reproductive sex is holy -- not in itself but because it obeys the law of God. The "social cement" of the bonobos' casual sex has become thoroughly profane and utterly reprehensible.

The changes Tayler describes took place over perhaps 10,000 years. Only about 4000 years have passed since agriculture was firmly established, and it has been less than a hundred years since the United States was primarily an agricultural nation. We can hardly be surprised, then, to note that until the recent appearance of reliable and readily available birth-control methods, "voyeuristic, repressive, homophobic, and focused on reproduction" well described our own attitude toward sexuality. Apart from voyeurism -- always available on the fringes -- we could appeal to our sacred scriptures for stories that seemed unequivocally to declare that God Himself threatened us with hellfire if we failed to abide by the farmer's sexual code. Evidently we have entered upon a transitional time, like Tayler's Mesolithic, when women who are unhappy with their situation can "simply walk away."

But our contemporaries -- Trachtenberg's men and Bregman's women -- reveal something else. The so-called Sixties Revolution that invited us to live our sexuality somewhat in the fashion of the bonobos has revealed that orgasm is a real problem for us. Bregman's women feel that they have not been "allowed" to "be responsible for their own orgasms." In fact, they may not know what an orgasm is. In their view, the last 4000 years of patriarchal repression has made orgasm itself a forbidden pleasure. They would love to enjoy it, but they do not know how; and if they learn, they are in danger of doing so only to "win points" with their partners. Trachtenberg's men are not quite so repressed. They know very well what a throbbing orgasm feels like. They are compulsive in their pursuit of it, and have mostly learned to control it so as to perform heroically for their women. Still their orgasms are just as "unliberated" as those of Bregman's women. They are slavishly trying to please their partners and win acceptance. They wish they could have "liberated orgasms" -- just for

themselves and no one else. They seem to long for a kind of bonobo paradise, even though they know nothing of the "social cement" that orgasm can provide. [7]

The bonobos, we might imagine, are constantly blissing themselves out on the erotic rush they obtain by rubbing and caressing one another. There is no thought of conquering. They melt into one another. They dissolve their "boundaries" for a moment, yield to the magnetic pull of a kindred being. They are overcome in an instant of ecstatic oneness. They bond themselves to one another in a flash of eternity and then walk away and rub against someone else. Probably they spend most of their time with their favorites. But if we believe Taylor's story about them, it appears that no one is excluded. The whole community is held together by a network of sexual bonds. Nothing is said of jealousy.

It is, indeed, a paradise. In fact it resembles quite closely the hippie vision of the Sixties. We know that utopian dream was too naive, having failed to acknowledge the vicious and fearful sides of human nature. Nevertheless, fragments of this paradisaical vision persist in our society -- pushed to the fringes, perhaps, but sufficiently available. Slithering through our farmland culture is the notion that we might, after all, be rather repressed in our attitudes toward sexuality. Possibly in that Saturday night ritual of playing the beast with two backs distractedly and letting our minds wander -- perhaps to midnight snacks -- we might sometimes think that we are missing something. It is a horrifying thought, for finding what we are missing could well involve confronting a conscience informed by stories derived from the gods of the Age of Agriculture.

An American Bhairavi

No lack of devils lurk behind storefronts and within the *Yellow Pages*, tempting us with bonobo delights -- in limited form, of course. Kenneth Ray Stubbs has solicited and edited the first person stories of nine American sexual initiatrixes in his book, *Women of the Light* (1994). All but two of them provide telephone numbers or addresses where interested readers can inquire about their services. All invite us to a more liberated and guilt-free sex life. It will be sufficient to consider the story of one of them, Juliet Carr, who describes herself as "the Porn Star," in reference to a series of low budget films she made while in her forties. Her story implies she was about fifty-five when Stubbs' book appeared.

Juliet Carr says that she determined at the age of eighteen to learn everything she could about sex and began by promising a boyfriend that she would "go all the way" with him if he would agree to first devote the summer to foreplay, "kissing and exploring each other's bodies." She spent the next thirty-three years seeking out men who could teach her "all the things they had learned." Now she earns her living doing "individual consultations, workshops, . . . stage shows, and seminars." Her chapter in *Women of the Light* begins with the story of Bill, married thirty-two years, but without sex or even an erection for the last ten. He consulted her "to find out if he was impotent."

He reclines, nude, on his back, on a slightly raised futon as I gently stroke his body from head to toe, alternating feather-light touch with my hands, nails, fingertips, lips, tongue, hair, arms, breasts, and full-body nude contact. . . . I tell him it's OK to surrender to the delicious erotic sensations, to feel instead of think, to breathe deeply, and to let the energy slowly spread out from his genitals to his entire body. . . . He quivers in an intense orgasm. "Don't hold your breath," I

remind him. "Feel the release all the way from the top of your head to your fingertips and toes." . . . Afterward, we lie in each other's arms, cherishing the deep connection we've made (Stubbs, 1994: 27-8).

Later she advises him to "initiate nonsexual, gentle touch with his wife." It works, "their sex life became fulfilling." Bill has continued to visit Carr for five years "because what I offer fuels *their* flame -- positively affecting not only their marriage but the quality of their lives in general" (*Ibid.*, 29).

Carr, like all of Stubbs' "Women of the Light/Night," presents herself as liberated from the repressive, homophobic, and reproductive orientation of our culture's dominant sexual attitude. Her approach, too, resembles that of the bonobos insofar as a summer's foreplay was designed to precede her first orgasmic completion of intercourse. She has lived nearly all of her young-adulthood and middle-age bonding with one individual after another and then walking away to bond with still others. She reports with pride that the sailor "with a heart of gold" who followed the summer boyfriend continues to stay in close contact by exchanging letters (*Ibid.*, 37). She guides women as well as men, sometimes including the wives of people like Bill.

Her technique with Bill -- reflected as well in her advice as to how he should approach his wife -- repeats the lesson of her first summer of sexual exploration. Orgasm may well be a completion, but it is not a goal to be striven for. Her goal is a general, whole-body sensuality which awakens sexual arousal and makes it an experience to dwell in and savor. For her and for the bonobos, sexuality is not a combat in which one seeks to conquer one's partner; nor is it a test to determine whether one is "liberated." There is no fear of giving oneself away in a "betrayal of self" through trying to please one's partner instead of oneself. Although sex for her is no "friendly competition," as it is in Vimalananda's vajroli contest, there is a "giving over" in which pleasing one's consort becomes an exercise in mutuality. She and her clients learn to "explore each other's bodies." There is no possessing or being possessed, no exploitation. Nothing is said of jealousy, apart from the assertion about some married men that their wives have not been "threatened" but "come to me to learn more about their erotic natures" (*Ibid.*, 33).

Carr declares that women's "lust, fantasies, and fears" are blocked by "a taboo that must be challenged" (*Ibid.*, 33). Her story of Bill suggests that the same is true of men. He says: "Your gifts would brand you a witch, a slut, a whore in much of the world today. To me you're an angel. I can't thank you enough" (*Ibid.*, 29). Her story sketches a glorious, paradisaical vision. She began her sexual apprenticeship in 1958 and (we can only imagine) rode the crest of the Sixties Revolution in which she must have been perceived as a budding "adept." But we are discouraged from seeing in her the naivete in which the hippies were drowned -- not only because she has not succumbed to the shifting sands of popular consciousness that went on to elevate an "upwardly mobile" economic *Zeitgeist* in the Eighties and Nineties nor, indeed, because she proudly bears the banner of "counterculturalism" -- but above all because she has taken on sexuality as a discipline in which there is much to learn by hard work. Having "dropped out" of the mainstream, she has eschewed standardized credentials, earning her "degree" in the much more dangerous underworld that lurks below our social taboos.

The words and images in her chapter and the others in Stubbs' book imply a "spirituality"

that dignifies what Bregman would surely suspect of "shallow hedonism." The language is overblown. Terms from the Tantric tradition are given banal meanings. For example, the "Meditation Teacher's" phrase in Chapter Three, "G-spot orgasms with inner nectar (amrita) flowing abundantly" (*Ibid.*, 92), is given an explanatory footnote by Stubbs: "*Female ejaculation* would be the Western sexological term for "flowing amrita." This "explanation" contains a double confusion. The "Meditation Teacher" is clearly referring to the flow of vaginal juices, which is not the same as "female ejaculation." The latter involves the generation of a different, stickier substance that resembles in its content the male prostatic fluid [8] (Chia & Arava, 1996: 92-3). And neither of these has anything to do with *amrita* which, according to Tantra, is generated in the "brain" or the "crown chakra" by "reversing the flow" (vajroli). According to Tantra, if our juices flow "downward" out of the genital organs, they are following the direction of nature, which leads to death. Nectar (*amrita*) is produced by making our "juice" (*rasa*) flow *upward*, where it becomes "the medicine of immortality." Tantra's *amrita* is said to drip from the brain onto the tongue; it does not flow out of the vagina (D. G. White, 1996: 38-9).

There is a further reason to be suspicious of the claims in Stubbs' book. Juliet Carr and all but two of the other initiatrixes are giving us advertising copy. Because they are hoping we will call or write concerning the services they offer, we can expect they are telling us what we want to hear and passing over the difficulties and suffering -- apart from what they encounter by heroically fighting mainstream attitudes. Carr's story may be too good to be true. Not that Bill's erotic energy has not been mobilized or his marriage become more satisfying, but we might wonder how many failures Carr has, how many wives outraged, how many pipers demanding to be paid. As I write these lines, the day's newspaper contains a letter to Ann Landers in which a woman in Ohio bemoans the development of the "sexual performance drug," Viagra. She had hoped her sixty-four year-old husband's sexual demands were at an end, and is outraged that they are not. [9] Many in our society do not wish to be bonobos, and those who do can expect a good deal of misunderstanding and hostility.

Even the story of Bill leaves us somewhat perplexed. It is easy enough to imagine what Bill's life was like before his first visit to Carr. A decade of apparent impotence must have been preceded by another decade or more of distraction and intermittent failure to achieve orgasm. It is unlikely that either Bill or his wife was interested in a "liberated" orgasm. Probably, like the Viagra couple in Ohio, the night was deemed a success when Bill ejaculated. Surely there were few "delicious erotic sensations" running all the way "from the top of the head to fingertips and toes." Nevertheless, there must have been some vague bonobo longings in that marriage. Perhaps it was Bill's wife who longed more. We know she cooperated when Bill came home with the "nonsexual gentle touch" he learned from Carr. It is even possible that *she* urged him to seek erotic assistance. We have no certainties, but Carr's story is clear about two things. Bill's erotic capacity was successfully tapped, and he was able to take this home to awaken his wife.

What remains puzzling is that they are unable to make it last. Bill has to schedule continued visits to his American Bhairavi. It is *her* "fuel" that burns in "*their* flame." Where is their own "fuel"? We never considered the possibility that there may have been only one or two bonobos in a community with enough "fuel" to keep them all going. We would like to think that any pair of individuals would have all the "fuel" it needs. Carr fails to tell us what "fuel" is.

We do know, however, what it means to encounter an individual who is bursting with eros -- perhaps in the supermarket, on being asked our opinion about the ripeness of a certain cantaloupe. This brief "bonobo moment" probably gives us nothing to bring home with the groceries. But if we spend several hours with that individual, "alternating feather-light touch" with "nails, fingertips, lips," and so on, we might well have something to take home. A prolonged period of arousal with a Bhairavi or Bhairava is bound to set loose the endorphins Trachtenberg calls a "cocaine rush."

In likening the erotic "rush" to that derived from cocaine, with which he is evidently familiar, Trachtenberg emphasizes its brevity. Runners tell us their endorphin "high" lasts longer. If we have ever fallen head-over-heels in love, we know the erotic excitement can last weeks or months, possibly years. If Bill and his wife have had this experience, the first year or so of their marriage might well have resembled a bonobo paradise -- just for the two of them. Eventually they ran out of "fuel" but cherished a memory of how things had been and might again become. Probably the distractions of everyday life gradually increased, and they lost the knack for awakening "delicious erotic sensations." Employing Carr's services, therefore, has turned out to be a successful venture, but a limited one, because they have no "fuel" of their own and have to burn hers. Aside from Bill's consultations with a professional Bhairavi, we might guess that their marriage is rather typical.

All of this leaves us with more questions than answers. Why is it that some individuals, like Trachtenberg, have more "fuel" than they can manage, driving them to a desperate, compulsive way of life that leaves them miserable? Is it too good to believe that others, like Carr, have apparently inexhaustible supplies that they manage with ease, fueling a satisfying, meaningful life for themselves, their friends and clients? Is such a bonobo paradise only available to those who, like Carr, choose not to follow the laws of our patriarchal gods of agriculture and avoid marriage? Is monogamy a dangerous way of life that cuts us off from our bonobo roots? Does the voluptuous, aggressive image of Smashan Tara inspire terror and longing because she invites us to sever those roots and wander the world naked with matted locks? If so, what do we make of the very different proportions of the Venus of Willendorf? If spirituality involves mastering the most formidable of life's dangers, why are we so suspicious of Carr? When is "shallow hedonism" transformed into genuine "spirituality"? How do we "liberate" our orgasms? And do we even want to?

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1. Hite, Shere. *The Hite Report. A Nationwide Study of Female Sexuality*. New York: Dell, 1976: 203.
 2. Quoting Kline-Graber, Georgia and Benjamin Graber. *Woman's Orgasm: A Guide to Sexual Satisfaction*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1975: 71.
 3. Surely the practice of extended and nearly constant nursing that would be expected in such an economy would biologically inhibit conception. But Tayler does not believe that a purely biological mechanism would be sufficient for the very wide spacing of births that was necessary in the Ice Age.

4. The evidence is a pebble from the Golan Heights, Israel, whose rough resemblance to the female form has been enhanced by carved grooves.
5. Lerner, Gerda. *The Creation of the Patriarchy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.
6. The discrepancy between Feuerstein's figure (33% jump in population) and Tayler's (20%) can be accounted for by the fact that Tayler speaks of a shorter expanse of time and a smaller geographical region.
7. Trachtenberg's story goes beyond the point where I broke it off. He now knows that "intimacy" is what he has been avoiding. Intimacy seems to him to be what sex "should" be about. It is clear, however, that he has an idealized fantasy about the nature of intimacy. He longs for it the way he used to pursue the "liberated orgasm."
8. Prostatic fluid, is the clear, slippery liquid produced by the prostate (hence "prostatic") that lubricates the urethra in preparation for ejaculation.
9. Boston *Globe*, June 14, 1998.