EUGENIC ASPECT OF
SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Those Affected Are Inferior In Eugenic Quality and the Decrease of Their Racial
Contribution Is Directly a Gain Rather Than Loss—Social Hygiene
Therefore Opposed to the Eugenic Movement

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S O WIDESPREAD is the confusion
in the minds of the general public
as to the distinction between
eugenics, sexual hygiene and the
sexual purity propaganda that sexual
morality is thought by some to be
substantially synonymous with eugenics
or to be included by it.

On a previous occasion I have
protested against this extension and
modification of the valuable word
"eugenics" as defined by Galton. It is
my purpose here to analyze sexual
immorality in order to see to what
extent it may have eugenic and dys-
genic effects.

Let us consider first whether sexual
immorality increases or decreases the
marriage rate of the offenders. We
may conclude that it reduces the
marriage rate. Although it is true that
some individuals of less strong sexual
passion might by sexual experience
become so awakened as to be less
satisfied with a continent life and might
thus in some cases be led to marriage,
yet this is more than counterbalanced
by the following considerations:

1. The mere consciousness of loss of
virginity has led in some sensitive
persons, especially women, to an un-
willingness to marry from a sense of
unworthiness. This is not common, yet
I have known of such cases.

2. The loss of reputation has pre-
vented the marriage of the desired
mate. This is not at all uncommon.

3. Venereal infection has led to the
abandonment of marriage. This is
especially common.

4. Illicit experiences may have been
so disillusionary, owing to the disaffect-
ing nature of the consorts, that an
attitude of pessimism and misanthropy
or misogyny is built up. Such an
attitude prevents marriage not only di-
rectly, but also indirectly, since persons
with such an outlook are thereby less
attractive to the opposite sex.

5. A taste for sexual variety is built
up so that the individual is unwilling
to commit himself to a restriction of that
variety.

6. Occasionally, threat or blackmail
by a jilted paramour prevents marriage
by the inability to escape these impor-
tunities.

We consider next the relative birth
rate of the married and the inconti-
nent unmarried. There cannot be the
slightest doubt that this is vastly
greater in the case of the married. The
unmarried have all the incentives of the
married to keep down the birth rate
in addition to the obvious powerful
incentive of concealment as well.

Passing to the relative death rate of
the illegitimate and legitimate progeny,
the actual data invariably indicate a
decided advantage of the legitimately
born. The reasons are too obvious to be
retailed.

THE QUESTION OF QUALITY

Now then, knowing that the racial
contribution of the sexually moral is

1 Read in New York City at the thirteenth annual meeting of the American Genetic Associa-
tion, December 27, 1916.
greater than that of the sexually immoral, to get its evolutionary effect, it remains to compare the quality of the sexually moral and immoral.

For this purpose we should distinguish between the individual who is chaste till the normal time of marriage and then marries and whose sexual life is truly monogamous, and that abnormal group who remain chaste and celibate to an advanced age. Strictly speaking, these last are not moral, if they have valuable and needed traits, because their failure to reproduce affects decidedly adversely the welfare of their group in the long run. While the race suffers through the failure of many of these individuals to contribute progeny, probably in the long run it does not so far as males are concerned as much as might be supposed. Such individuals are often innately defective in their instincts or, in the case of disappointed lovers, may have a badly proportioned emotional equipment, since it leads them into a position so obviously opposed to race interests.

But, to pass to the essential comparison, that between the sexually immoral and the sexually moral as limited above, it is necessary first of all to decide whether monogamy is a desirable and presumably permanent feature of human society.

We conclude that it is:

1. Because it is spreading at the expense of polygamy even where not favored by legal interference. The change is most evident in China and India.
2. In monogamy, sexual selection improves valuable traits of character, rather than mere personal beauty or ability to acquire wealth; and
3. The greatest amount of happiness is produced by a monogamous system, since in a polygamous society so many men must remain unmarried and so many women are dissatisfied with sharing their mates with others.

Assuming this, then adaptation to the condition of monogamous society represents race progress. Such a race profits if those who do not comply with its conditions make a deficient racial contribution. It follows then that sexual immorality is eugenic in its result and that, if all sexual immorality should cease, an important means of race progress would be lost. We have an illustration in the case of the negro in America, whose failure to increase in number faster than whites is attributable to the widespread sterility resulting from venereal infection. Should venereal diseases alone be eliminated, we would expect that race immediately to increase in numbers faster than the whites.

It may be felt by some that this position would have an immoral effect upon youth if widely accepted. This need not be feared. On the contrary, I believe that one of the most powerful factors in ethical culture is pride due to consciousness of being one who is fit and worthy.

The traditional view of sexual morality has been to ignore the selectional aspect here discussed and to stress the alleged deterioration of the germ-plasm by the direct action of the toxins of syphilis. The evidence relied upon to demonstrate this action seems to me to be vitiated by the possibility that we had, instead, a transmitted infection to the progeny. We cannot then credit such an action since it is so highly improbable from analogy until it has been demonstrated in cases where the parents have been indubitably cured.

Is it necessary, then, to retain sexual immorality in order to achieve race progress? No, because it is only one of many factors in race progress. We can mitigate this as well as alcoholism, disease, infant mortality—all powerful selective factors—without harm, provided we make up for it by increased efficiency of other selective factors such as the segregation of defectives, more effective sexual selection, a better correlation of income and ability, and a more eugenic distribution of family limitation.