

REJOINDER ON "THE ROLE OF SEXUALITY IN THE FORMATION OF IDEAS"

LEWIS S. FEUER

University of California, Berkeley

In my paper (1), I stated all too briefly my view that Dewey did not adequately recognize the role of sexuality in the formation of philosophic ideas. The origin of medieval philosophical realism, in my opinion, was to be found in thought-ways which were an expression of monastic celibacy. Dr. Leon Salzman, in his kind comment (3), attributes to me the general thesis that all philosophic ideas are sublimatory defenses against sexual interests. I have nowhere advanced or defended such a view. The extent of the influence of sexuality or economic motives or hunger on the history of philosophy can only be ascertained by actual empirical studies. I wish it were possible to pursue such studies without at once being regarded with anxiety as a sexual determinist or an economic one or a nutritional one.

With respect to philosophical realism, the factual evidence and correlations support the view that it was an outgrowth of sacerdotal celibacy. The medieval Jewish philosophers, as Abraham Wolf (4) once observed, were all thoroughgoing nominalists. They were all, however, married, and regarded celibacy as a sin; Maimonides advised the sage to find himself a beautiful wife. Similarly, Abelard, the bold innovator of nominalism in medieval Christian philosophy, is celebrated for the most passionate love affair in the annals of philosophers. By contrast, Duns Scotus, the most distinguished of medieval realists, is renowned in theology for his founding the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

Dr. Salzman argues that "celibacy was the result of philosophical realism." There is, however, a mass of evidence as to the causes of sacerdotal celibacy, set forth in such volumes as those of Henry C. Lea (2). The Church began early to receive large gifts of property which would have been dissipated by married churchmen; unmarried priests could more easily take on the role of surrogate fathers, for they were not then the objects of sexual animosity; and celibacy strengthened the ties of the churchmen among themselves, promoting their more complete identification with the organization. A considerable

party, however, opposed clerical celibacy, and it was not until 1123 that a General Council finally forbade marriage to those in holy orders. This was the time indeed when philosophical realism came to the fore, when it became a philosophical movement. People were just as concerned in previous centuries and other places about salvation, but it was only when sacerdotal celibacy was imposed as an institution that we find the formation of philosophical realism.

The question is not one of arbitrarily assigning a privileged role in human behavior to the sexual function. Rather we should restrict ourselves to particular segments of human behavior, and follow the evidence where it leads.

Religions often have had fasts, self-deprivations of food; nutritional abstinence is more characteristic of Mohammedanism. Christian "spiritualism" seems to involve especially sexual abstinence. The question, however, arises: Why should a God have been offered the sacrifice of one's sexual function? Why should a God have demanded that people make eunuchs of themselves (to use the New Testament's metaphor)? Here I think the explanation will move along the lines first indicated by Freud. No doubt philosophical interests spring from human curiosity and the need to achieve security in one's environment. The belief in Pure Ideas scarcely, however, contributed to the control of the environment. Rather it arose from a human self-laceration, under the conditions of sacerdotal celibacy, which then projected itself in metaphysical form. The history of philosophy, one must regretfully remember, is as much a history of irrationality as of rationality.

REFERENCES

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