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THE SOCIOLOGY OF PROSTITUTION

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I

TO THE THEORETICAL even more than to the applied sociologist, prostitution sets a profound problem: Why is it that a practice so thoroughly disapproved, so widely outlawed in Western civilization, can yet flourish so universally? Social theorists, in depicting the power of collective representations and the mores as determinants of human conduct, have at times implied that institutions are maintained only by *favorable* attitudes and sentiments. But prostitution is a veritable institution, thriving even when its name is so low in public opinion as to be synonymous with "the social evil." How, then, can we explain its vitality?

A genuine explanation must transcend the facile generalizations both of those who believe that prostitution can be immediately abolished, and of those who think vaguely that human nature and the lessons of history guarantee its immortality. In what follows I have tried to give a sociological analysis—to describe the main features of the interrelational system binding prostitution to other institutions (particularly those involving sexual relations). Such an analysis, though brief and tentative, seems to carry us a long way toward explaining not only the heedless vitality of commercial promiscuity, but also the extreme disrepute in which it and its personnel are held.¹

II

Human sexuality, as Zuckerman and others have demonstrated, bears a striking resemblance to the sexual behavior of monkeys and apes.² This resemblance rests upon two orders of facts—the first physiological, the second sociological.

Due to her physical nature, the primate female, as distinct from her lower mammalian sisters, is always sexually responsive. She experiences a regular menstrual cycle but has no period of anoestrus (complete unresponsiveness to sexual stimuli), whereas among most mammals below the primates the female does have, instead of a menstrual cycle, a period of anoestrus alternating with a period of oestrus (heat). This difference has a

¹ Disapproval of purely commercial (i.e., non-religious, non-familial) prostitution is extraordinarily widespread. Though the distinction is seldom made, disapproval of the prostitute is one thing and disapproval of the institution another. In Mongolian China, for example, prostitution was viewed with no serious disfavor, but the prostitute was treated with contempt. H. Ellis, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, vol. 6, p. 236.

² S. Zuckerman, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*, N. Y., Harcourt, Brace, 1932; G. V. Hamilton, "A Study of Sexual Tendencies in Monkeys and Baboons," *Jour. Anim. Behav.*, 4, 1914, 295-318; H. C. Bingham, "Sex Development in Apes," *Comp. Psych. Monographs*, 5, 1928, 1-161.

fundamental effect upon the nature of primate (including human) society. *It introduces sex as a permanent element in social life and insures constant association of the two sexes.*³

Moreover, the primates possess a more complex sensori-motor equipment than the lower mammals, and have a longer period of infancy. These possessions, plus their continuous sexuality, facilitate more extensive *conditioning* of the sexual response, with the result that among the primates sexual behavior is not simply automatic, but is associated with numerous stimuli that are themselves non-sexual. Whereas among lower mammals the sexual responses can scarcely be conditioned at all, *the primates may be said to prostitute their sex by introducing sexual stimuli into intrinsically non-sexual situations.*⁴ In other words, the sexual responses of apes and monkeys may have no connection with sexual appetite, being used, instead, as a means of obtaining material advantages.

What leads to this sexual conditioning? Here we turn from physical to social facts. Reproductive physiology and neural complexity permit the conditioning, but sociological forces alone compel it. Zuckerman points out that monkeys and apes live in a society characterized by a system of dominance.⁵ Every ape or monkey enjoys within his social group a precarious position determined by the interrelation of his own dominant characteristics with those of his fellows. The degree of his dominance determines how his bodily appetites will be satisfied—amount of food, number of females, and degree of safety he will enjoy. Primates, both male and female, adapt themselves to such a hostile social system partly through sexual reactions. Since they are always to some extent sexually excitable and the stimuli capable of releasing this sexuality enormously varied, it is easy for their sexual behavior to become adjusted to the rigors of a social life based upon dominance. Hence all situations which evoke sexual prostitution are alike in so far as they allow an animal some advantage that it would otherwise be denied. For example, if a weaker animal secures food and a stronger one comes to take it away from him, the weaker animal immediately presents himself sexually, no matter whether his sex be the same or different. If he thus diverts the dominant animal's attention, he can swallow his food.⁶ In such cases it is by means of his sex reactions that a monkey obtains advantages to which he is not entitled by his position in the scale of dominance.

These facts are mentioned for the purpose of bringing out the basic principle in prostitution—namely, the use of sexual stimulation in a sys-

³ Zuckerman, *op. cit.* especially chaps. iii, iv, vi, viii, ix.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 152. Zuckerman repeatedly uses the term prostitution to describe this behavior, as do others.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 312-314. The generalized picture given in these few paragraphs of course does not apply in detail to all genera of infra-human primates, nor does it do full justice to Zuckerman's qualifications.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 240-242.

tem of dominance to attain non-sexual ends. They are not mentioned for the purpose of drawing an analogy between animal and human society or speculating as to the origin of human institutions. Zuckerman himself has adequately warned us against this error.⁷ Yet "the socio-sexual activities of sub-human primates are much further removed from those of the lower mammal than from those of man."⁸ Among both man and the apes the same physiological and sociological factors appear to be present, at least to the degree that among both can be found the fundamental trait of prostitution.

III

We cannot, however, define human prostitution simply as the use of sexual responses for an ulterior purpose. This would include a great portion of all social behavior, especially that of women. It would include marriage, for example, wherein women trade their sexual favors for an economic and social status supplied by men.⁹ It would include the employment of pretty girls in stores, cafes, charity drives, advertisements. It would include all the feminine arts that women use in pursuing ends that require men as intermediaries, arts that permeate daily life, and, while not generally involving actual intercourse, contain and utilize erotic stimulation.

But looking at the subject in this way reveals one thing. The basic element in what we actually call prostitution—the employment of sex for non-sexual ends within a competitive-authoritative system—characterizes not simply prostitution itself but all of our institutions in which sex is involved, notably courtship and wedlock. Prostitution therefore resembles, from one point of view, behavior found in our most respectable institutions. It is one end of a long sequence or gradation of essentially similar phenomena that stretches at the other end to such approved patterns as engagement and marriage. What, then, is the difference between prostitution and these other institutions involving sex?

The difference rests at bottom upon the functional relation between society and sexual institutions. It is through these institutions that erotic gratification is made dependent on, and subservient to, certain co-operative performances inherently necessary to societal continuity. The sexual institutions are distinguished by the fact that though they all provide gratification, they do not all tie it to the same social functions.¹⁰ This explains why they are differently evaluated in the eyes of the mores.

⁷ *Ibid.*, chap. ii. It is worth noting that while Westermarck and his followers have used the anecdotal literature on anthropoid life to bolster their theory of universal monogamy in human society, it is just as logical to argue from the scientific literature on the same subject that prostitution is equally rooted in primate nature and hence equally universal in human life.

⁸ Zuckerman, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

⁹ She also contributes other services, though these are sometimes difficult to see in our middle-class society.

¹⁰ Any institution appeals to *several* motives and performs *several* functions. Strictly speaking, therefore, there are no purely sexual institutions. Wedlock is not simply sexual, not simply

The institutional control of sex follows three correlative lines. First, it permits, encourages, or forces various degrees of sexual intimacy within specific customary relations, such as courtship, concubinage, and marriage. Second, to bolster this positive control, it discourages sexual intimacy in all other situations, e.g., when the persons are not potential mates or when they are already mated to other persons.¹¹ Finally, in what is really a peculiar category of the negative rules, it absolutely prohibits sexual relations in certain specified situations. This last form of control refers almost exclusively to incest taboos, which reinforce the first-named (positive) control by banishing the disruptive forces of sexual competition from the family group.

These lines of control are present no matter what the specific kind of institutional system. There may be monogamy, polygyny, or concubinage; wife exchange or religious prostitution; premarital chastity or unchastity. The important point is not the particular kind of concrete institution, but the fact that without the positive and negative norms there could be no institutions at all. Since social functions can be performed only through institutional patterns, the controls are indispensable to the continuance of a given social system.

Of the numerous functions which sexual institutions subserve, the most vital relate to the physical and social reproduction of the next generation. If we ask, then, which sexual institutions in a society receive the greatest support from law and mores, we must point to those which facilitate the task of procreating and socializing the young. It follows that sanctioned sexual relations are generally those within these (or auxiliary) institutions, while unsanctioned relations are those outside them.

Marriage and its subsidiary patterns constitute the chief cultural arrangement through which erotic expression is held to reproduction. It is accordingly the most respectable sexual institution, with the others diminishing in respectability as they stand further away from wedlock. Even the secondary forms of erotic behavior—flirtation, coquetry, petting, etc.—have their legitimate and their illegitimate settings. Their legitimate aspects may be subsumed under courtship, leading to marriage; but if indulged in for themselves, with no intention of matrimony, they are devoid of the primary function and tend to be disapproved. If practised by persons married to others, they are inimical to reproductive relations already established and are more seriously condemned. If practised by close relatives within the primary family, they represent a threat to the very

procreative, not simply economic. It is all three. This linking of the sexual impulse to other things is not haphazard, but shows a high degree of structural and functional articulation, demonstrable on two different but interdependent levels: the life organization of persons, and the institutional organization of society. Sex, like other elements in human nature, is drawn into the integration, and is thus controlled.

¹¹ For the emotional attitudes maintaining these norms see K. Davis, "Jealousy and Sexual Property," *Social Forces*, 14, March 1936, 395-405.

structure of the reproductive institution itself, and are stringently tabooed. These attitudes are much more rigid with regard to actual intercourse, not solely because coitus is the essence of the sexual but because it has come to symbolize the *gemeinschaft* type of relation present in the family. With this in mind we can add that when coitus is practised for money its social function is indeterminate, secondary, and extrinsic. The buyer clearly has pleasure and not reproduction in mind. The seller may use the money for any purpose. Hence unless the money is earmarked for some legitimate end (such as the support of a family, a church, or a state), the sexual relation between the buyer and seller is illegitimate, ephemeral, and condemned. It is pure commercial prostitution.

Of course many sexual institutions besides courtship and marriage receive, in various cultures and to varying degrees, the sanction of society. These generally range themselves between marriage and commercial prostitution in the scale of social approval. They include concubinage, wife exchange, and forms of sanctified prostitution.¹² Religious prostitution, for example, not only differs from wedlock, but also from commercial prostitution; the money that passes is earmarked for the maintenance of the church, the woman is a religious ministrant, and the act of intercourse is sacred.¹³ Similar considerations apply to that type of prostitution in which the girl obtains a dowry for her subsequent marriage. Whenever the money earned by prostitution is spent for a sanctified purpose, prostitution is in higher esteem than when it is purely commercial. If, for instance, prostitution receives more approval in Japan than in America, it is significant that in the former country most of the *joro* enter the life because their family needs money; their conduct thereby subserves the most sacred of all Japanese sentiments—filial piety.¹⁴ The regulation of prostitution by governments and churches in such a way that at least some of the proceeds go towards their maintenance is control of sex behavior at a second remove. By earmarking a part of the money, the bought intercourse is made to serve a social function; but *this function is not intrinsically related to coitus in the same way as the procreative function of the family.*

In commercial prostitution both parties use sex for an end not socially functional, the one for pleasure, the other for money. To tie intercourse to sheer physical pleasure is to divorce it both from reproduction and from

¹² Concubinage evidently stands part way between prostitution and marriage. It resembles marriage in that it is relatively permanent, partly reproductive, and implies a *gemeinschaft* bond; but it resembles prostitution in that the woman more definitely and exclusively exists for the sexual pleasure of the master, and her social position is inferior to that of the wife. E. Westermarck, *History of Human Marriage*, 5th ed., N. Y., Allerton Book Co., 1922; D. Kulp, *Country Life in South China*, Columbia Univ. Press, 1925, chap. vi; Pearl Buck's novel, *The Good Earth*. Wife exchange differs from marriage in that its social function appears to be, not propagation, but the cementing of solidarity within a group. W. Bogoras, *The Chukchee*, *Amer. Mus. of Nat. Hist. Memoirs*, 7, 602-607.

¹³ G. May, "Prostitution," *Ency. of Soc. Sci.*; Westermarck, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 219 *et seq.*

¹⁴ A. M. Bacon, *Japanese Girls and Women*, Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1902, pp. 175-178; D. C. McMurtrie, "Prostitution in Japan," *New York Med. Jour.*, Feb. 8, 1913.

the sentimental primary type of relation which it symbolizes. To tie it to money, the most impersonal and atomistic type of reward possible, with no stipulation as to the use of this medium, does the same thing. Pure prostitution is promiscuous, impersonal. The sexual response of the prostitute does not hinge upon the personality of the other party, but upon the reward. The response of the customer likewise does not depend upon the particular identity of the prostitute, but upon the bodily gratification. On both sides the relationship is merely a means to a private end, a contractual rather than a personal association.

These features sharply distinguish prostitution from the procreative sexual institutions. Within a group organized for bearing and rearing children bonds tend to arise that are cemented by the condition of relative permanence and the sentiment of personal feeling, for the task requires long, close, and sympathetic association. Prostitution, in which the seller takes any buyer at the price, necessarily represents an opposite kind of erotic association. It is distinguished by the elements of hire, promiscuity, and emotional indifference—all of which are incompatible with primary or *gemeinschaft* association.

The sexual appetite, like every other, is tied to socially necessary functions. The function it most logically and naturally relates to is procreation. The nature of procreation and socialization is such that their performance requires institutionalized primary-group living. Hence the family receives the highest estimation of all sexual institutions in society, the others receiving lower esteem as they are remoter from its *gemeinschaft* character and reproductive purpose. Commercial prostitution stands at the lowest extreme; it shares with other sexual institutions a basic feature, namely the employment of sex for an ulterior end in a system of differential advantages, but it differs from them in being mercenary, promiscuous, and emotionally indifferent. From *both* these facts, however, it derives its remarkable vitality.

IV

Since prostitution is a contractual relation in which services are traded (usually in terms of an exchange medium) and sex is placed in an economic context,¹⁵ it is strange that modern writers have made so much of the fact that the "social evil" has economic causes.¹⁶ One might as well say, with equal perspicacity, that retail merchandising has economic causes. Prostitution embraces an economic relation, and is naturally connected with the entire system of economic forces. But to jump from this truism to the conclusion that prostitution can be abolished by eliminating its economic causes is erroneous. Economic causes seldom act alone, and hence their removal is seldom a panacea.

¹⁵ Yet no economist has written a treatise on it in the same way that economists write treatises on banking and the coal industry. See L. Robbins, *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science* (rev. ed., 1935), 28.

¹⁶ *Encyclopaedia Sexualis*, article on "Prostitution," p. 667.

The causal ramifications of commercial coitus extend beyond the economic sphere. At least three separable but related problems must be recognized: (1) the causes of the existence of prostitution; (2) the causes of the *rate* or *amount* of prostitution; and (3) the causes of *any particular individual's entrance into, or patronage of*, prostitution. The existence of prostitution seems related both to the physiological nature of man and to the inherent character of society, both of which include more than the sheer economic element. These basic factors, constantly operative, account for the ubiquity of prostitution, but not for the variations in its rate. This second problem must be dealt with in terms of the specific institutional configuration existing at the time, in which economic factors are highly but not exclusively important. Finally, any particular person's connection with prostitution is a result of his or her own unique life-history, into which an infinite variety of strands, some economic and some not economic, are woven. The factors in (1) and (2) are operative in the individual's life, but are never sufficient in themselves to explain his or her behavior.

These issues are generally confused by those who believe that by removing alleged economic causes one can abolish prostitution. Let us follow their arguments further, considering first the removal of economic causes within the capitalist system, and second the removal of them in a non-capitalist system.

1. A frequent proposal for abolition under capitalism is that the salaries of working girls be raised. This proposal, which ignores the demand side, assumes that girls enter prostitution through economic necessity—a paradoxical assumption, for if it is true it indicates that prostitution must have other than economic causes and remedies, while if it is untrue this particular proposal is fallacious.

Why should a girl enter prostitution *only* through economic necessity? Is the occupation so arduous? On the contrary, we often speak as if harlots "would rather prostitute themselves than work."¹⁷ It is even true that some women enjoy the intercourse they sell. From a purely economic point of view prostitution comes perilously near the situation of getting something for nothing. The woman may suffer no loss at all, yet receive a generous reward, resembling the artist who, though paid for his work, loves it so well that he would paint anyway. Purely from the angle of economic return, the hard question is not why so many women become prostitutes, but why so few of them do. The harlot's return is not primarily a reward for abstinence, labor, or rent. It is primarily a reward for loss of social standing. She loses social esteem because our moral system condemns the commercialization of intercourse. If, then, she refuses to enter the profession until forced by sheer want, the basic cause of her hesitation is not economic but moral. Only when the moral condition is assumed, do wages

¹⁷ W. L. George's novel, *Bed of Roses*, vividly contrasts the hard life of the working girl with the easy life of the prostitute.

or economic want take on any importance. Prostitution, therefore, is not purely a matter of economic factors alone.

We have taken for granted that in the face of moral condemnation, only starvation wages can drive girls into prostitution. Actually this is only partly true. But even if it were, the proposal to eliminate prostitution by raising wages would not work. In a competitive system as soon as the salaries of working girls are increased, the supply of prostitutes diminishes. The resulting scarcity increases the effective demand, in the form of price, which rises as the supply diminishes. (The demand rests upon a constant imperative need, not always conveniently satisfiable by substitutes.) With the rise in price, working girls even with good salaries will be tempted into the profession. Moreover, it will be possible for more women to live on the proceeds of prostitution alone—without performing arduous labor in store or restaurant. The net result will be as much prostitution as before, and in terms of actual money invested and changing hands, there may be more.¹⁸ The facts seem to bear out these theoretical propositions, for apparently prostitution does not increase greatly with low wages for women nor decrease with high, although other factors, such as the correlation between men's wages and women's wages, must be considered in working out the relationship.¹⁹

Finally, this proposal does not touch the demand for prostitution. To touch demand requires more than economic changes; for even less than the woman who sells herself, is the man who buys guided by economic motives. His motivation, as we shall see later, springs from bio-social forces for which the economic are simply instrumental.

2. In her book, *Red Virtue*, Ella Winter has a chapter entitled "Ending Prostitution," at the head of which stands a quotation from a Soviet physician: "Soviet life does not permit of prostitution." Widely accepted and frequently repeated, this belief is taken for granted as one of the main values of a communist as against a capitalist system.

There can be little doubt, I think, that in Soviet cities prostitution has diminished in the last few years, but there can be grave doubt that it has been ended or that the diminution has resulted solely from the abolition of private property. Not only did prostitution exist before capitalism arose, but capitalist countries themselves have frequently tried to stop private ownership of prostitutes for purposes of profit. They have consistently

¹⁸ Another difficulty is that the wages of prostitution are already far above the wages of ordinary women's work. "No practicable rise in the rate of wages paid to women in ordinary industries can possibly compete with the wages which fairly attractive women of quite ordinary ability can earn by prostitution" (Ellis, *op.cit.*, p. 263). The discrepancy between the wages of ordinary work and the wages of prostitution results from the fact, as indicated above, that the latter is morally tabooed. This increases the wage differential until there is every economic incentive for entering.

¹⁹ The wages of one class cannot be arbitrarily raised without affecting those of all other earners. Under competition women's wages could scarcely be raised without also raising men's. Men would then have more to spend on prostitution. A. Deprés, *La prostitution en France* (1883), concluded that as wealth and prosperity increased, so did prostitution.

legislated against third parties—pimps, real estate owners, bookers—only to find that none of these measures succeed.²⁰ In short, capitalism, like communism, has tried in the case of prostitution to negate the basic capitalistic principle.

Doubtless it is harder to eliminate the business aspect of prostitution (organized syndicates operated by third parties) in a capitalist system where business prevails anyway, than it is in a communist system where all business is frowned upon. In the latter, profit-making organizations possess high visibility, are easily hunted down. But this does not mean that unorganized prostitution, in which seller, manager, and worker are all rolled into the same person, cannot thrive.

Payment for prostitution need not be in terms of money. It may be in terms of privilege, power, food, clothing, almost any form of exchangeable value. These exchangeable commodities (and some medium of exchange) must exist in any complex society, no matter what the system of political control, because the specialized producers must mutually exchange their surpluses. At the same time there is, in any society, a system of privilege, authority, and dominance. Some have rights, belongings, and talents that others lack. Soviet Russia may have abolished the capitalistic alignment of classes, but it has not abolished social class; the class principle is inherent in the nature of social organization.²¹ In the Soviet system, as in any other social structure, there lies the eternal possibility and the eternal incentive to trade sexual favor for non-sexual advantage. This becomes clearer after analyzing the demand side of prostitution.

V

When outlawed, prostitution falls into one peculiar category of crime—a type exceedingly hard to deal with—in which one of the willful parties is the ordinary law-abiding citizen. This kind of crime, of which bootlegging is the archetype, is supported by the money and behavior of a sizeable portion of the citizenry, because in it the citizen receives a service. Though the service is illegitimate, the citizen cannot be held guilty, for it is both impossible and inadvisable to punish half the populace for a crime. Each citizen participates in vital institutional relationships—family, business, church, and state. To disrupt all of these by throwing him in jail for a mere vice would be, on a large scale, to disrupt society.²² But the

²⁰ See M. L. Ernst's chapter in *The Sex Life of the Unmarried Adult*, ed. by Ira S. Wile, Vanguard Press, 1934, especially, pp. 230-231. Also, Flexner, *op. cit.*, chap. iv.

²¹ By social class is meant the differential sharing of the values (educational, artistic, recreational, political as well as economic) of the community by different segments of the population. The Party in Russia forms one class, enjoying privileges and responsibilities not shared by the rest of the people. The same is true of the skilled as against the unskilled workers.

²² "The professional prostitute being a social outcast may be periodically punished without disturbing the usual course of society; no one misses her while she is serving out her turn—no one, at least, about whom society has any concern. The man, however, is something more than partner in an immoral act: he discharges important social and business relations . . . He cannot be imprisoned without deranging society." . . . Flexner, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

eagerness of otherwise decent citizens to receive the illicit service attests powerful forces behind the demand element.

On the one hand, the demand is the result of a simple biological appetite. When all other sources of gratification fail, due to defects of person or circumstance, prostitution can be relied upon to furnish relief. None of the exacting requirements of sex attraction and courtship are necessary. All that is needed is the cash, and this can be obtained in a thousand ways. Prostitution is the most malleable, the most uninvolved form of physical release.

But in addition to the sheer desire for sexual satisfaction, there is the desire for satisfaction in a particular (often an unsanctioned) way.

The common and ignorant assumption that prostitution exists to satisfy the gross sensuality of the young unmarried man, and that if he is taught to bridle gross sexual impulse or induced to marry early the prostitute must be idle, is altogether incorrect . . . The prostitute is something more than a channel to drain off superfluous sexual energy, and her attraction by no means ceases when men are married, for a large number of men who visit prostitutes, if not the majority, are married. And alike whether they are married or unmarried the motive is not one of uncomplicated lust.²³

The craving for variety, for perverse gratification, for mysterious and provocative surroundings, for intercourse free from entangling cares and civilized pretense, all play their part.

Prostitution, again by its very nature, is aptly suited to satisfy this second side of demand. The family, an institution of status rather than contract, limits the variety, amount, and nature of a person's satisfactions. But since with the prostitute the person is paying for the privilege, he is in a position to demand almost anything he wants. The sole limitation on his satisfactions is not morality or convention, but his ability to pay the price. This is an advantage which commercial recreation generally has over kinds handled by other institutional channels.

There is no reason to believe that a change in the economic system will eliminate either side of demand. In any system the effective demand as expressed by price will vary with current economic and moral forces, but the underlying desire both for sheer gratification and for gratification in particular ways will remain impregnable.

VI

We can imagine a social system in which the motive for prostitution would be completely absent, but we cannot imagine that the system could ever come to pass. It would be a regime of absolute sexual freedom, wherein intercourse were practised solely for the pleasure of it, by both parties. This would entail at least two conditions: *First*, there could be no institutional control of sexual expression. Marriage, with its concomitants of engagement, jealousy, divorce, and legitimacy, could not exist. Such an

²³ Ellis, *op. cit.*, pp. 295-296. The author describes in detail the various motives involved.

institution builds upon and limits the sexual urge, making sex expression contingent upon non-sexual factors, and thereby paving the way for intercourse against one's physical inclination. *Second*, all sexual desire would have to be mutually complementary. One person could not be erotically attracted to a non-responsive person, because such a situation would inevitably involve frustration and give a motive for using force, fraud, authority, or money to induce the unwilling person to co-operate.

Neither of these conditions can in the nature of things come to pass. As we have seen, every society attempts to control, and for its own survival must control, the sexual impulse in the interest of social order, procreation, and socialization. Moreover, all men are not born handsome nor all women beautiful. Instead there is a perfect gradation from extremely attractive to extremely unattractive, with an unfavorable balance of the old and ugly. This being the case, the persons at the wrong end of the scale must, and inevitably will, use extraneous means to obtain gratification.²⁴

While neither the scale of attractiveness nor the institutionalization of sex are likely to disappear, it is possible that the *particular form of institutionalization* may change. The change may be in the direction of greater sex freedom. Such a change must inevitably affect prostitution, because the greater the proportion of free, mutually pleasurable intercourse, the lesser is the demand for prostitution. This, it seems, is the true explanation of the diminution of prostitution in Soviet Russia.²⁵

The conclusion that free intercourse for pleasure and friendship rather than for profit is the greatest enemy of prostitution emerges logically from our statement that a basic trait of prostitution is the use of sex for an ulterior purpose. Should one wish to abolish commercial coitus, one would have to eliminate this trait. This proposition however, is unacceptable to moralists, because, as we saw, the underlying trait of prostitution is also

²⁴ The question, why are women more frequently prostitutes than men (and why is male prostitution usually homosexual), leads to interesting conclusions. Men have authority and economic means in greater amount than women. They are, therefore, in a more favorable position to offer inducements, and this inequality characterizes not only prostitution but all relations in which sex is used for ulterior ends. But why the inequality? Women are perhaps physically weaker, and they are naturally connected more closely with procreation and socialization. The latter constitute their main functions. Hence women must depend upon sex for their social position much more than men do. A man who relies on sex for his status has at best an inferior station, while in many ways the very best that a woman can do is through use of her sexual charms.

Out of the female population there are relatively few who are young and pretty. These are in great demand by the *entire* male population, who use every inducement, sanctioned and otherwise. Most of the women are taken by the inducement of a definite social status—marriage. They are thereby withdrawn from competition. But the remainder are in a very favorable position so far as profiting by their attractiveness is concerned. They can, therefore, make much more if they enter an occupation in which their sexual appeal is the intrinsic quality desired. One such occupation is prostitution.

²⁵ Communist theory has generally condemned the private family. At the same time Russia emancipated women, making them less dependent upon their sexual qualities, more dependent upon their citizenship and productiveness. Both the incentive for them to settle in a permanent marital relation and the incentive to indulge in prostitution were therefore lessened.

a fundamental feature of reputable sexual institutions, and intercourse for sheer pleasure is as inimical to our sacred institutions as it is to the profane one of mercenary love. Though Lecky's suggestion that harlotry sustains the family is perhaps indefensible, it seems true that prostitution is not so great a danger to the family as complete liberty.

Where the family is strong, there tends to be a well-defined system of prostitution and the social regime is one of status. Women are either part of the family system, or they are definitely not a part of it. In the latter case they are prostitutes, members of a caste set apart. There are few intermediate groups, and there is little mobility. This enables the two opposite types of institutions to function side by side without confusion; they are each staffed by a different personnel, humanly as well as functionally distinct. But where familial controls are weak, the system of prostitution tends to be poorly defined. Not only is it more nearly permissible to satisfy one's desire outside the family, but also it is easier to find a respectable member of society willing to act as partner. This is why a decline of the family and a decline of prostitution are both associated with a rise of sex freedom. Women, released from close family supervision, are freer to seek gratification outside it. The more such women, the easier it is for men to find in intimate relations with them the satisfactions formerly supplied by harlots. This is why the unrestricted indulgence in sex for the fun of it by both sexes is the greatest enemy, not only of the family, but also of prostitution.

Not only in Soviet Russia has pleasurable sex freedom invaded and reduced prostitution, but also in America and England, where "amateur competition" is reputedly ruining the business of street-walkers and call girls.²⁶ This indicates that independently of communism or capitalism, due to factors more profound than mere economic organization, sex freedom can arise and, having arisen, can contribute to the decline of prostitution. Its rise seems correlated with the growth of individualization in an increasingly complex society where specialization, urbanism, and anonymity prevail—factors which are also inimical to reproductive institutions of the familial type.

But even if present trends continue, there is no likelihood that sex freedom will ever displace prostitution. Not only will there always be a set of reproductive institutions which place a check upon sexual liberty, a system of social dominance which gives a motive for selling sexual favors, and a scale of attractiveness which creates the need for buying these favors, but prostitution is, in the last analysis, economical. Enabling a small number of women to take care of the needs of a large number of men, it is the most convenient sexual outlet for an army, and for the legions of strangers, perverts, and physically repulsive in our midst. It performs a function, apparently, which no other institution fully performs.

²⁶ G. M. Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 168. "Prostitution," *Encyclopaedia Sexualis*, p. 665. J. K. Folsom, *The Family*, N. Y., Wiley, 1934, chap. xiii.