

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)
Anti-Copyright



Free Love

Madeleine Vernet

Madeleine Vernet
Free Love
1907

Retrieved on 10th September 2021 from
forgottenanarchism.wordpress.com

usa.anarchistlibraries.net

1907

We have in ourselves an instinctive feeling which looks after us; the instinct of self-preservation. When we are no longer hungry, we stop eating, because we know the problems that might arise if we don't; when we are tired from walking, we have the common sense to rest; when tiredness burns our eyelids, we know full well we should be sleeping. In the same way, we will find a natural regulation to our sexual lives in sexual exertion itself.

Animals obey this feeling of self-preservation; why would humans be inferior to them? I wouldn't want to insult humanity by holding on to that last hypothesis.

No, the full development of a free individual could not be something immoral; What is truly immoral is to distort our understanding by distorting nature's fundamental truths; immorality is to prevent someone from living a healthy and strong life in the name of dogmas, laws, conventions contrary to the harmony and beauty of life.

mission of wives; it is the lie of a husband toward someone he has stopped loving.

But free love cannot be immoral, as it is a natural law; sexual desire cannot be immoral since it is a natural need of our physical existence.

If sexual need is immoral, we can then call hunger, sleep, in a word, every physiological phenomenon which rules the human body immoral.

If we consider our current habits, what source of immorality can we not uncover? Loveless marriages in which men buy a dowry and women buy a situation; adulteries from husbands and wives; rapes of all kinds; flesh trade, lies from our flesh and our brains, different contracts which give unknowing women to lechers and poor women to exploiters who speculate on their hunger.

If free love became the rule, there certainly couldn't be more immorality than already exists. Admitting that the situation would not change in depth, it would be at least more honest in its form.

But I am personally convinced that free love will be the moral emancipation of individuals, because it will free people from both sexes from physical constraints and servitudes. Why should we believe free individuals to be immoral? There is no immorality among free animals. They do not know any of the physical disorders which are the prerogative of humans, precisely because animals do not submit to any law apart from natural law.

What creates immorality is the forced lies of humans to other humans and to themselves; and free love, by freeing humans from lies, will precisely put an end to disorders and debauchery.

When people will be truly free, when they will be regenerated by a better education, they will find in themselves a natural balance of their physical and moral faculties and will become normal and healthy beings.

Contents

I.	5
II.	10
III.	13

The fact that a woman loved a man and had sex with him should grant him no privilege over this woman; no more than the fact of having sex should be, for this woman, a reason to have authority on her partner. They were free before they met, they loved each other freely, man and woman must find themselves free after their relation, once desire no longer attracts them to each other, and that love ceased uniting them.

To sum up this whole study, I would conclude thus:

- Love must be entirely free, no moral law must rule it or submit it in any way.
- No difference must be made between sexes concerning love.
- Finally, sexual relations must not create obligations, duties or rights between people.

III.

I know that, when they read it for the first time, my theory on love will seem completely immoral to many people. Some of them will see it as the consecration of debauchery, the apology of licentiousness, the excuse for all disorders.

But if they try to think and study the issue, they will agree that free love, far from being a source of immorality, will become a natural regulating body of morality.

First of all, what is immorality? To define it, we must once again get rid of the atavism which makes us consider as natural law what is only social conventions.

In my opinion, immorality is everything which constrains individuals with purely conventional rules, it is everything which hinders the development of human beings (...)

Immorality is prostitution – legal or otherwise; it is forced celibacy for women; it is selling the female body; it is the sub-

But the truth I just exposed leads to condemning monogamy. From a diversity of feelings stems a diversity of desires, and if we accept this diversity as an essentially natural law, we cannot support the injunction to monogamy. Monogamy is yet again a type of prostitution: prostitution of a man to a woman and of a woman to a man.

There can therefore be on this issue of people's sexual lives only one moral law for both sexes: the absolute freedom of love.

The union of the flesh, which cannot be ruled by a single rule, identical for every individual, which is subjected to no immutable determining law, must not consequently create duties or constitute rights, if we want to preserve the full freedom of love.

Isn't it most illogical to link the word 'duty' to the word 'love'? Do we not already sense there the whole irony of this sentence from morals books for children: "The first duty of a child is to love their parents." Do we not say, in everyday morals: "A mother must love her children. A wife must love her husband."

These words are absurd. Can love, of whatever order, ever be a duty? Is it not natural for a child to love the mother who raised them; for a woman to love the child who cost her some pain and suffering and who is a dear reminder of caresses received? Is it not natural also for a woman to love her chosen companion, the friend who made her his wife? If a child doesn't love their mother, if a mother doesn't love her children, if a woman doesn't love her companion, what can we do? Nothing. All the sanctions from the penal code, all the moral and religious declarations will not make love spark if it hasn't been born naturally.

Just as it cannot create duties, love cannot give birth to rights. A husband's rights on his wife, a wife's rights on her husband, are oppression and oppression is love. A slave cannot love their master; they can only fear them and try to please them.

I.

Is it really necessary to try and prove that love can only be free, when artists paint it as a winged child, and poets, in their gay, fantastic or sad songs, depict it as capricious, fickle, changing, always looking for new horizons and new sensations?

...Love is a child of Bohemia!

And that is true. No-one can guarantee the stability of love. More than any other human feeling, it is changing and transient because it is not only an affection of the heart, but also a sensual desire and a physical need.

Let's not mistake love for marriage. Marriage is a social convention; love, a natural law. Marriage is a contract; love, a kiss. Marriage is a prison; love is self-development. Marriage is the prostitution of love.

In order to preserve its beauty and dignity, love must be free; and it can only be free if it obeys a single rule. There cannot be on this issue any material or moral considerations: two beings love each other, desire each other, tell each other so; they must have the absolute right to give themselves to one another, without the intervention of any reason foreign to their desires, just like they must have the most absolute right to leave each other when they no longer desire each other. And I am not saying "when they no longer love each other", but indeed when they no longer desire each other. These are two distinct things. We can stop desiring a woman but still love her; we can no longer wish to be her lover, but stay true to our friend.

This is too well-known a psychological fact for me to insist, but the aspect I would like to stress is how this issue applies to women.

Women's sexuality, it is commonly accepted, does not exist or is subordinated to the sexuality of the male – whether legal or not – companion she chose. She must live and feel through him, be passionate if he is, remain indifferent if he is cold.

To this day, man has considered sensual desire ruling him essentially, refusing to recognize women as beings morally and physically organized as he is.

This is the first issue I will address in this study on Free Love.

I said before that, to study the great natural laws seriously, it was necessary to go back to primitive sources and study nature in animal life. Among animals, females have their own sexual life; they have sexual needs, sexual desires which she satisfies, with the same freedom and frequency as males.

No-one will contest that the physiological rules which animals obey are the same as for humans. Why not then admitting for women the same physiological similitude with animals that we admit exists between men and animals? Why refuse women their own sexual lives? Why make love an exclusively male need?

To this day, self-proclaiming himself on this issue as on every other, man has answered: "Because women don't have needs; because she does not desire; because she doesn't suffer from the privation of carnal satisfactions." But what does he know, whether women have needs or not? Who better than women can judge and decide on this?

For my part, I still have in mind this sentence from a doctor: "Celibacy for women is just as monstrous as celibacy for priests. To condemn women to countenance is unfair, as it is to prevent the integral development of the female being." Therefore, as this doctor confesses, prolonged virginity of women cause a stop in their intellectual and physical evolution.

And, if there really are some women without needs, frigid women, without sensual desires, what does it prove? There are also men who are disinterested in sensuality. But they are not a majority; and, if I can claim so, it is not the majority of women either who are disinterested in love.

Nowadays, by the way, with the kind of education they get, women themselves can be a bad judge of their sensations and

Rationally, can two people contract any commitment when they are unable to know whether they will be able to fulfil it? Can we bond two elements when we don't know what affinity there is between them?

In legal marriage, someone is always fooled: the wife, and sometimes someone disappointed: the husband who doesn't find in his wife the woman he believed he could find. Yet, they are bound to one another.

And even marriage can be based on reciprocal love and still soon become a burden on both spouses. This means that love was only desire which possession extinguished. And if the spouses had given themselves to each other freely, before making it legal, the experiment would have proved them they were not made for living together, and it is likely they would have made it legal. This is proof of the need for free love.

From desire, love can bloom, but you can never be sure it will. When love becomes sensual after it has gone through the brain and heart, it has much better chances of lasting, but when it is based only on sexual desire, it is likely to be soon extinguished, if it doesn't reach the brain and heart while it lasts.

Finally, since I am doing an analytical study, I must go to the bottom of the truth, and say that sexual desire alone can unite two people for a very long time without ever engendering full love. A man and woman can have intimate relations without ever being pulled together by anything else than this sexual desire. Their feelings and ideas can be in complete disagreement while their flesh vibrates in harmony.

And this, I would like to point out, can in no way be compared to prostitution, since the feeling which brings together these people – although exclusively sensual – is sincere on both parts. There can only be prostitution where there is selling, constraint, ignorance or passivity. This is not the case since both lovers are attracted to each other by the same feeling, and that they feel pleasure and satisfaction in the relationship freely accepted by both of them.

rally linked to our sexual life? The only thing I wanted was to firmly ascertain the difference between desire and love.

II.

So, marriage, love, desire, are three different things:

- marriage is the chain which makes a man and a woman prisoners of one another.
- love is the full communion of both of them.
- desire is the fancy of two sensualities.

I leave marriage aside, as I oppose it, to go back to the issue of free love.

I said that love must be fully free, for women as well as for men. And I add more: love can only truly exist if it is free. Without absolute freedom, love becomes prostitution, whatever name we call it.

Selling our bodies for such and such a price, to a large number of clients, is not the only form of prostitution. Prostitution is not only for women, men also prostitute themselves. He prostitutes himself whenever, for any reason, he caresses someone without feeling desire.

Not only is legal marriage prostitution when it is an act speculation of one partner on another, but it is always a form of prostitution since the virgin doesn't know what she's doing when she marries. As for marital duty, it is nothing other than prostitution again. Prostitution is being submissive to a husband; prostitution is resignation and passivity. Prostitution is also a free union, when it passes from love to habit. Prostitution is every relation between sexes outside of desire and love.

One of the reasons why love must be absolutely free is precisely this similarity between desire and love I mentioned earlier when asking people not to confuse both terms.

desires. They don't analyse their internal lives, and often suffer without knowing why.

The exuberantly healthy virgin whose boiling blood burn her cheeks and redden her lips might not even know it is her virginity which makes her nervous, disquieted, dreamy. She might not even know that it is the need for love which makes her cry or laugh without reason; but the fact she doesn't know how to define it doesn't make it less true that it is this natural law of love which is attacking her.

Brutally, what she ignores, marriage will teach her; marriage to which she went blindly, only because she evoked two cuddling arms in which to find a refuge. Then, when at least she "knows", when, initiated into sexual life, her flesh has become consciously vibrant, she will realise she is linked to a man who she might not even love any more. And, according to her temper, she will go towards her lover and resign herself to conjugal duty.

And if she resigns herself, if she accepts the duty without love, even if she confessed to others and to herself that she has no desires, that she has no lustful needs, she would simply be fooling others and herself. Sexual needs will have existed in her, but, for a lack of the conditions to its development, it will have atrophied and fallen asleep. If this same woman had lived freely; if, leaving the companion who did not meet her desires, she had gone to the one who would have made her fully live her life as a lover, it is most likely that she would have never become a cold woman.

In our current customs, it is much easier for a man to judge whether he is frigid or not. Free to express his desires, he will be able to make an informed judgement for or against sensuality – after having known the embrace of different women. But women – condemned only ever to know one man – cannot actually know if what she did not experience in this man's arms, she wouldn't have felt in another's.

Consequently, we cannot say exactly what women are from a sensual point of view. However, if we refer to animal life, we will see that the anomaly of non-sensuality rarely presents itself in females. It never happens in wild species, and, if it happens in domesticated species, it is because domestication has deformed them. We can actually observe that female dogs, deprived of sexual satisfaction, fades away and shortens her lifespan a fourth.

No doubt if women lived normally, if they hadn't been also deformed by physical and moral constraints, no doubt the number of frigid women would be much restricted. However, even if there were only 50% of truly sensual women, I think these 50% are allowed a full life, and it is simply unfair to condemn them to the mutilation of part of themselves for the simple reason that there are 50% others fully content with their fate.

Absolute freedom in love – for women as well as men – is nothing but elementary justice. This does not force the frigid to become passionate, but this will allow the passionate no longer to suffer in the captivity of social and conventional laws.

I said earlier that we should not confuse love and marriage. Well, before leaving the issue of physiology, I will go further and say we shouldn't confuse love and desire.

Love is the complete communion of two brains, two hearts, two sensualities. Desire is nothing more than the fancy of two skins shivering from the same voluptuousness. Nothing is as fleeting and unstable as desire, yet none of us are foreign to it. If every woman is honest to herself, they will confess that they have already sometimes thrown themselves at men they've only met for a few hours – or even a short moment – and whose feelings and whose name they didn't know. But only a touch, a glance, the sound of a voice even, was enough to spark desire; and, whether we like it or not, the woman who felt such a desire went with this previously unknown man whom she will have forgotten the day after.

We cannot better master our sexual desire than the pangs of hunger. Both are inherent to our physicality: they are the result of two natural needs, just as legitimate as one another. And hunger is not mastered, it is quenched.

And I insist further on the difference between love and desire, because we are always inclined to confuse them, or assimilate them to each other, and this confusion often leads to sad and grievous results.

“The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” the Gospels say. Certainly, yes, the flesh is weak. What time does desire need to become an act? And is this act always made willingly and consciously? There are times when the notion of reality disappears, when nothing exists in us anymore other than the feeling of the moment.

Those who have lived in nature know it full well: when in springtime the sap flows back up to the branches, when the scents of life gush out all around – from the earth, the sun, wood, and plants – desire too runs under the skins and makes breasts shiver. And, in the heavy summer nights, in the hot and scented nights, who would deny that the need for voluptuousness is more intense? Passionate people who, on such a night, have been alone, know it well and they will tell you how much they suffered from their loneliness on such nights.

Since there are days and hours when sensuality is exacerbated in a way, it is not surprising in the least that “the flesh is weak”. You only need complicit chances to place two individuals of different sexes facing each other.

But this is not love, it is only desire. Desire which, sometimes, wears all the appearances of love, but which, once quenched, leaves the two lovers as perfect strangers to one another, like the hungry man leaves table without regret once his hunger is appeased.

Do not conclude from this last sentence that I condemn desire. Why would I condemn it since I just proved it was natu-