

## Make Love, Not War: A Silly Solution?

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Our current government and many of our faith-based institutions preach a God directed morality that promotes abstinence until marriage over sexual expression and experimentation and seeks to curtail a woman's dominion over her body by their attempts to outlaw abortion.

On the surface, this anti-sex, "pro-life" stance seems reasonable. I don't know a single rational person who would disagree that our culture is narcissistic—obsessed with sex, physical appearance, and instant gratification. A quick run through the television dial on any given evening...think *Desperate Housewives*... provides all the proof necessary to make this case in a court of law.

But rather than imposing rigid moral commandments to try and return our culture back to God, perhaps what is needed is a serious public discussion of what God is and isn't and a frank and open dialogue about what might be at the root of our current obsessions. It is not true that the Religious Right are the only people concerned with moral issues. It isn't accurate to classify the "Blue States" as Godless and the "Red States" as pious. What is true is that our country is magnificently spiritually diverse and that not everyone shares the moralistic standards of those currently in power.

So, who or what is God?

For millennia we have categorized people based on their religion of birth or choice: Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, etc. But within every religion there is a spectrum of belief. On one end of the religious spectrum are the fundamentalists. Their God is the Father, the Creator and Moral Judge of the World, the last and final authority on right and wrong whose literal word is spelled out in the Bible, the Torah, the Koran. Fundamentalists live in a black and white world where God favors the people who accept religious dogma and punishes those who don't.

On the other end of the scale are the mystics or contemplatives of all religions who experience God as the mysterious essence of life, the underlying ground of being, a presence that exists both within and without that provides meaning, unity and connection. For these people, the Bible and holy books are symbolic documents, esoteric roadmaps to spiritual enlightenment and all people are children of God.

Between these two extremes many different ideas about God exist, and outside these boundaries there are a large number of ethical people—agnostics and atheists—who may not even believe in God at all, all of whose opinions are worthy of discussion and inclusion in the public debate.

So, just what is wrong with our culture?

Fundamentalists blame the current state of our culture on misguided liberals, feminists, lesbians and gays—those people who do not agree with their definite opinions of right and wrong or believe that a buttoned up, "just say no" approach to sex is the best way to honor God. Throughout history, mystics and contemplatives of all religions have deliberately separated themselves outside of culture to try and find God. Unlike fundamentalists, they usually don't blame those people who aren't like them for the state of the world because, frankly, they aren't that interested in the world. But many mystics choose celibacy as a way of overcoming their "lower natures" and like the fundamentalists, some view sex as less than a virtuous activity.

Interestingly, the prohibition on natural sexual interaction that both fundamentalists and many contemplatives espouse just might be at the root of our current sexual and moral cultural crisis. Sex scandals have hit both the Catholic Church and the Hare Krishnas. Priests, rabbis, gurus, and ministers, including several prominent Evangelicals, have been shown to conduct themselves in less than holy ways.

In his revolutionary book, *The Function of the Orgasm* (New York: Noonday Press/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 233-234, Wilhelm Reich writes: "There is ample evidence to support the contention that the cultural upheavals of the twentieth century are determined by mankind's struggle to reclaim the natural laws of sexuality." According to Reich, "The patriarchal, authoritarian era of human history has attempted to hold the asocial impulses in check by means of compulsive moralistic prohibitions. It is in this way that civilized man, if he can indeed be called civilized, developed a psychic structure consisting of three layers." These three layers consist of:

- 1) The surface level where wo/man "wears an artificial mask of self-control, compulsive insincere politeness, and pseudo-sociality. This mask conceals the second layer..."
- 2) The "Freudian unconscious in which sadism, avarice, lasciviousness, envy, perversions of all kind, etc., are held in check without, however, being deprived of the slightest amount of energy. This second layer is the artificial product of a sex-negating culture and is usually experienced consciously as a gaping inner emptiness and desolation."
- 3) The depth, wherein "natural sociality and sexuality, spontaneous joy in work, the capacity for love, exist and operate. This third and deepest layer, which represents the biological core of the human structure, is unconscious, and it is feared. It is at variance with every aspect of authoritarian education and control. At the same time, it is the only real hope man has of one day mastering social misery."

Wilhelm Reich died of a heart attack in a federal penitentiary on November 3, 1957. His crime? Discovering what he called "orgone" energy and trying to find ways to use it to free wo/man from the trap of authoritarian control with its senseless sexual restrictions. For Reich, Freud's libido was a real energy that was discharged during sexual orgasm. Reich's further scientific work proved to him that this energy was the primordial cosmic energy, the bioenergy or life energy that mystics have been trying to connect with for millennia. Reich may have discovered the Holy Grail that connects us to the cosmos, to our deepest core, and to each other—and just might heal our deep cultural issues. Rather than curtailing our natural sexuality, perhaps we should all try to open up about love, God, and sex. Make love, not war, might not be such a silly solution after all.