

## Evolution, Sex and Religion

by Gerd Eisenbeiß, Bonn, February 26, 2016

It has always been interesting to me as a peculiar element in religious systems, that their morality standards give such a high importance to sex. Hardly any area of human life is regulated and restricted by the threat of punishment, such as sexuality, especially that of women.

Much has been written there about. Where the emancipation of women has advanced, much of the archaic laws of the Old Testament was thrown overboard. Where the old "holy" books and customs still dominate, no much change happened. Whereas very slow developments in the Indian and Chinese culture can be observed, fundamentalist currents especially in the Islamic world are facing backward, but also in Christian societies of the United States or Africa.

I've always thought that religions and their priests suppressed sexuality by preference, because so man can't help becoming sinful and as sinner can be controlled better. Now it seems to me a better theory that the rules of society with respect to sexuality could be older than the religions - meaning that suppression of the particularly female sexuality has biological and evolutionary roots. Religions "only" integrated this sex-fixation and - due to their high importance for the ruling system – put restriction of sex willingly in the centre of their morality rules.

The transmission of genes is a key element of evolution. Man is heir to this development strategy; and he is still part of this process. He may feel culturally exempt from biological evolution strategies, but he is not. As first religious ideas came up, man may have lived in hordes. Hunting was the economic basis of the nutrition, hunting was a matter for the male man, he was physically superior to the woman. This resulted in almost all cases to patriarchal systems within the Groups.

Long before the advent of religious systems it must have been a central mission in life of primitive men to find the right partner to reproduce and to spread his genes, like his animal ancestors did. He is likely to have created the first rules to organize sexuality in such a way as to prevented dispute and violence within the group.

With religion came the idea of gods who watch over the human race and the world and controlling everything. Whatever rules the horde, the tribe had developed, it

has been linked to the alleged will of the gods in order to be sacred and inviolable.

Wherever the idea of gods came from, its function was always the same: they according to the shamans, priests etc had commanded the rules and rituals, according to which the people had to live. These gods had to be honoured and worshipped. Their rule gave legitimacy to each human rule and law. In this order protection of property had to be embedded, respecting the ownership of wives and daughters as highly important (the latter as an object for bargaining and fasten coalitions through intermarriage).

Accordingly, it may have been of a greatest interest of men, to declare the rules of sexuality as an central element of divine will - in a way that their control of the female sexuality became a religious imperative.

So it is understandable that almost all religions have regulated the field of sexuality and reproduction according to male interests. Sexual regulations for the man mostly concerned only the condemnation of homosexuality and masturbation - two sexual practices that do not lead to the growth and strengthening of the tribe. All this can be found in the books of Moses or the Koran, but also in cultures without such "holy scriptures" as in Hindu India, the rarely religious China and Buddhist cultures – no wonder if these rules were created before the development of religions.

In my view, also the demand of religious fundamentalists to have many children and the praxis of polygamy point to the biological roots in prehistorical times. The universality of sexual fixation of all religions can be considered as evidence that this central element of the social order existed before the formation of the religious systems, because it is a key element of the Evolution.

The ownership of wives and daughters was very closely tied together with the ownership of material things - perhaps because this property of land and cattle should be passed on to their own children, not to cuckoo children foisted by a woman impregnated by another man. Significantly the original 10th commandment of Moses summarizes wife, cattle, servants etc in a protected property concept together.

A study recently reported by Michael McCullough in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* showed how central the rules on sexuality are within the religious morality. It was

found that strictly religious people comply to sexual morality much more accurately than to other obligations and prohibitions among the numerous religious imperatives such as honesty and the grace of charity. McCullough even **suspects that religion is mainly about sex.**

Much of the pre-religious rules that religions have included afterwards, has become encrusted, independent of its original value. The popes, priests and imams will continue to defend it, because they had declared it as God's or a prophet's command. Now, they don't find a way out of their ideological self-incarceration. They don't dare and even they don't want to come out, because they would have to acknowledge errors and would destroy the aura of the clergy, to know exactly God's will and law.

For billions of people, especially women, who as a result remain deprived of a substantial part of the free life, it is of no importance why the clerics of all religions want to control their sexual freedom and why they are so obsessed with the idea that sex is the gateway of Satan.