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question



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It is widely recognized that Western society transitioned from a fairly repressed sexual culture to a greatly liberated one, with the social transformation known as the “sexual revolution of the 60s.

” Arguably this revolution was part of a broader sociopolitical revolt against longstanding conventions, and it was part of the countercultural movement of the 60s. However, Hayley Dixon differs from this notion in “Freedom from Sexual Diseases Sparked the Sexual Revolution of the 60s,” an article whose title states its thesis. Hayley argues that in the 1930s and 1940s, syphilis was much feared, but after the Second World War, society resorted to penicillin and drastically reduced syphilis infections. Now that the fear of sexual diseases had been eliminated, people felt free to engage in sex, and this was the true cause of the sexual revolution. Hayley acknowledges that most people attribute the sexual revolution to other factors: the arrival of the birth control pill and “a heady mix of sex, drugs and rock and roll” (para 1). Strangely, she does not give these factors any importance, but rather prefers the claim that the arrival of effective medications for AIDs has led to a rise in “risky sexual behaviors” by gay men. Thus, she implies that the people engage in more casual sex, or refrain from it, depending on the risk of disease.

Hence, she concludes, there will soon be another sexual disease, following upon syphilis and AIDS, and society needs “long sighted” and “pre-emptive measures” (para 5), which are not specified, but seem to mean morals that induce people to have less casual sex. It is evident that Hayley’s argument springs from some dubious assumptions. First, there is the assumption that people engage in sex more readily or less readily depending upon “

incentives" (Para 3), the main incentive being freedom from disease.

Second, she repeatedly uses the term "risky sexual behaviors" instead of "more promiscuous sex," and evidently assumes that "risky sexual behaviors" are identical with "more casual sex." This is strange, since many adults engage in casual sex, often as 'swingers,' with little risk of disease or pregnancies.

The question arises: Why does Hayley studiously ignore the cultural revolution of the 60s, which resulted in people questioning — and rejecting — longstanding beliefs about sexual engagement, monogamy, religious taboos against casual sex, and religion itself? Why does she ignore the pill, which liberates sex from the fear of unwanted births? Why this mysterious bias? Perhaps the two assumptions mentioned above point to a mindset, or philosophy, rooted in gloom, guilt and 'original sin.' In this mindset, fun and enjoyment are sinful. Thus, free sex is "risky sexual behavior," containing the risk of disease or unwanted births, delivered by God or Providence to stop this form of joy. People have within them the original sin of wanting free and fun sex, and are constrained only by the fear of disease.

But despite science and medicines, God or Providence will find yet another incurable disease, and the "holistic and long standing" (para 5) solution is to find a morality that makes people avoid the temptation of casual sex. Perhaps this interpretation of the article's bias is wrong. However, the sexual freedoms of today's West, begun in the 60s revolution, derive from more than immunity to disease. Society has examined all its conventions and assumptions, moral and sociopolitical, and the world has changed. Attitudes

to freer sex are the result of this broad mix, this wider revolution, and not a reaction to relief from diseases such as syphilis and AIDS.

Most people will take this view and reject the claim of this article. They will recall that when cultures form sexual mores, they think of more than “ risk,” as seen by the difference between the sexually free pre-missionary Polynesians and the prudish European Catholics — who both faced risk. Freedom from disease is important, but freedom from false assumptions and prison-like taboos is vital. References Dixon, H.

(2013, Feb 4). Freedom from Sexual Diseases Sparked the Sexual Revolution of the 60s.

The Telegraph. Retrieved from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/9847320/Freedom-from-sexual-diseases-sparked-the-sexual-revolution-of-the-60s.html>