

It is commonly believed that people who regularly enjoy sensual or erotic anal stimulation inevitably run a greater risk of developing medical problems. The belief is that one must choose — *either* anal pleasure *or* anal health. For many, the strength of this conviction has been intensified even further by the AIDS crisis.

Anal

Health SECOND EDITION

Pleasure

However, in spite of AIDS, it is still possible to enjoy anal stimulation in a self-affirming and healthful way. To do so requires challenging the anal taboo, a deeply-ingrained, unquestioned prohibition against becoming intimately familiar with the anal area and its erotic potential.

In this book, the reader will discover that there is no inherent conflict between anal pleasure and anal health. On the contrary, a person who wishes to expand his/her capacity for enjoying anal stimulation is advised to take virtually the same steps as the person who desires optimum anal health. This is because maximum anal pleasure and anal health both require:

- the development of awareness of the anal area and its functioning
- the elimination of pain from one's anal experiences
- the reduction of anal muscular tension
- the replacement of negative feelings toward the anus and rectum with positive attitudes

Dr. Morin's research has also shown that these goals are not particularly difficult for most people to attain when they are given adequate information, a sequence of simple recommendations and a little encouragement — all of which can be found in *Anal Pleasure and Health*. Also by Jack Morin, Ph.D.

Men Loving Themselves: Images of Male Self-Sexuality (Down There Press)



easure SECOND EDITION a guide for men and women Jack Morin, Ph.D. illustrations by Jen-Ann Kirchmeier Tom Till

> YES PRESS San Francisco, California

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# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

It has been more than four years since the first edition of *Anal Pleasure and Health* was published — plenty of time to observe public reaction to the first book on this hidden subject. The biggest surprise to me is the intensity, pervasiveness and persistence of the "anal taboo." The first dramatic evidence of this came when the bindery took one look at the book and promptly shipped it back to the printer, unbound. And the bindery that eventually took the job now refuses this second edition. Then came the unwillingness of some important review media to publish reviews and the refusal of the vast majority of bookstores to have anything to do with such a book.

One bookstore in Texas, asked by a customer to order the book, couldn't even *hear* the correct title, so the order came in for *Ain't No Pleasure In Health*. Is is it a coincidence that this distortion is completely contradictory to the central idea behind the book?

Of course, even when the book is available in a bookstore, most people are too embarrassed to buy it openly or to be "caught" reading it in public.

Special Thanks to: Joani Blank Michael Burns Rachelle Goodfriend Ruth Gottstein Michael Graves Liz Hudgin Steve Mehalko Phillip Mitchell Tom Moon Don Polkinghorn Don Propstra Wendell Rickets As always, however, there's another side to the story. In spite of (partly *because* of) the anal taboo, there is a very strong current of curiosity about anal sexuality, and a hunger for accurate information. Overcoming many obstacles, thousands of men and women have found ways to obtain and read the book. As we were preparing the second edition, there had to be three additional printings to keep up with the demand. Among those who have read and used the book, the response has been almost totally positive.

This second edition has been completely re-edited to make it clearer and more accessible. A number of important citations have been added and material has been expanded in many areas. For example, this edition addresses more completely the concerns of "insertors" in anal intercourse. And responding to readers' requests, we've added an index to help you more easily locate specific information.

Appendix A on anal medical problems has been given special attention, including the addition of current information on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). AIDS was making its unwelcome appearance in the U.S. just after the first edition was published. Now it's even more crucial that those who wish to enjoy anal sex become wellinformed and sufficiently comfortable with the subject to discuss it openly with a partner. This is the best way to make health-promoting decisions about sexual behavior.

I'm recommending, as I always have, that anal intercourse be de-emphasized and more attention given to other, less risky forms of anal sensuality. In fact, until a vaccine becomes available that is effective against the AIDS virus, intercourse should be practiced selectively. And if there is any chance that either partner might have been exposed to the AIDS virus, a condom should always be used. The chapter on anal intercourse has been expanded to help readers face the challenges of AIDS in a self-affirming manner.

It is important that necessary behavioral changes be made without reverting to old, anti-anal attitudes. Unfortunately, it is abundantly clear that AIDS is intensifying the anal taboo. Nonetheless, AIDS need not ruin the sensual/sexual enjoyment of the anus, as many people think. Rather, this health crisis requires that we become even more conscious about all aspects of our sexuality. There is no better time to reject the silence, discomfort and misinformation perpetuated by the anal taboo. Now, more than ever, this is the best road to anal pleasure and health.

Jack Morin, Ph.D. October, 1985 San Francisco, California

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ANAL PLEASURE AND THE ANAL TABOO

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This book is unusual because it concerns a part of the body that very few people discuss openly: the anus. In fact, many, perhaps most, men and women are deeply alienated from this part of the body. For these people, the anus is a hidden, dirty, uncomfortable or numb area; it functions outside of their consciousness except, of course, when pain erupts. The anal area is either a source of too much sensation (pain) or none at all (numbness).

It's different when we are infants and small children. Then we take delight in all parts of the body. But something happens in the course of growing up; most of us learn to take much less delight in our bodies. We may mistrust or ignore our physical selves, perhaps viewing the mind or spirit as more important than and separate from our bodies. We are taught to view sensual play and self-exploration as immature and self-indulgent if not kept within strict limits.

This process of physical self-alienation is especially pronounced in the anal area, which often is the bodily symbol of all that is unclean and disgusting. It is understandably confusing that a part of the body that is supposed to be so unsavory is also extremely sensitive and potentially among the most enjoyable. Especially for children, the discovery that the anus is considered bad and repulsive must be confusing, because that idea directly contradicts their pleasurable experience.

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People learn to cope with this contradiction in a variety of ways. Some make only the concessions necessary to meet social standards of appropriateness, and go on enjoying anal sensations in every way they can. Such people will find the information and suggestions in this book helpful in reinforcing and enhancing anal pleasure. Others have accepted cultural attitudes and are emotionally and sensually separated from their anuses. Some of these men and women prefer *not* to become more familiar with this part of their bodies. They will probably have little interest in reading this book.

Another group of men and women are trying to overcome a long history of misinformation and negative attitudes. They are discovering—or at least beginning to consider the possibility—that they have been missing something to be found between the extremes of pain and numbness: pleasure. This book is primarily for these people. It is a practical guide, based on the experiences of dozens of men and women who have actively sought to rediscover the anal area as a positive part of themselves—a part to be known intimately and enjoyed.

Yet another group of people have much to gain from reading on, even though they have no particular interest in anal *pleasure*. These are the millions who live with annoying, often very painful, anal medical problems. Diseases like hemorrhoids, fissures (tears or scrapes) and constipation are among the most common medical problems in our society. And those who suffer from these conditions will find useful information and practical tools in this book, including suggestions for self-exploration that can lead to permanent relief. Once freed from anal problems, many people are delighted to discover that the same nerve endings that once transmitted pain are available for transmitting pleasure.

Anal pleasure means different things to different people. Usually it is a private experience. At the least, most men and women have occasionally experienced anal pleasure during bowel movements. Others may have noticed spontaneous pleasant sensations in the anal area in the course of walking, dancing, sitting or other activities. These sensations emanate mostly from nerve endings called proprioceptors, which transmit stimuli generated by muscles and organs within the body.

It is possible to provide oneself with pleasant external stimulation, as when wiping after a bowel movement, bathing or simply touching oneself for the pure pleasure of it. External anal stimulation is sometimes erotic, a part of deliberate self-pleasuring or masturbation. Self-stimulation may also be internal as when a finger or object, such as a vibrator or dildo, is inserted into the anal canal or rectum.

Anal pleasure can be shared as part of sensual or sexual play with a partner. This may involve stimulation only of the anal opening with fingers or mouth. Oral-anal stimulation is called analingus and the popular slang term is "rimming." In other instances, depending on personal preference and comfort, internal stimulation may be desired with a soft object or with another person's finger or penis. Rectal stimulation with a penis has been called by a variety of names such as anal coitus, sodomy, buggery or the slang expressions "butt fucking" or "ass fucking." In this book, the descriptive term *anal intercourse* will be used. The term *anal sex* will refer to *any* erotic anal play, not necessarily intercourse.

Certainly this book will be of special interest to those who want to explore anal intercourse as something to be enjoyed. Others, because of sexual orientation or personal preference, may have little or no interest in anal intercourse. This book is of potential value for these people, too, because anal pleasure, with or without intercourse, can be a comfortable part of the sensual and sexual experience of any man or woman who wants it, regardless of sexual orientation.

# ANAL PLEASURE IN THE UNITED STATES

Very little is really known about how people experience anal pleasure. What is known focuses almost exclusively on anal intercourse. This is not surprising given the tendency in our culture to consider intercourse the only "real" sex and to label everything else "foreplay."

In their pioneering studies of human sexual behavior done in the forties, Alfred Kinsey (Kinsey et al., 1948; 1953) and his associates recognized the erotic potential of the anal area with regard to nerve distribution, proximity to the genitals, muscular relationship to other pelvic muscles and anal contractions during sexual activity. Of the men in their sample who had experienced homosexual sex play as preadolescents (which, incidentally, was reported more commonly than heterosexual play), 17% recalled trying anal intercourse. Kinsey also noted that anal erotic activity was sometimes reported as part of masturbation and adult heterosexual and homosexual encounters. In addition, he found that a few people could be brought to orgasm by anal stimulation alone. Kinsey concluded that the anus had erotic significance for about half of the population, although no specific sexual activities involving the anus were reported frequently enough to be included in his statistics. Kinsey felt that social prohibitions against anal sex probably resulted in considerable reticence among his subjects to discuss these behaviors.

In the early seventies, Morton Hunt and his associates analyzed questionnaires completed by over 2000 American men and women. Hunt was looking for changes in attitudes and behavior that might have occurred in the more than 30 years since the Kinsey studies. He reported a "remarkable" relaxation in attitudes toward anal intercourse. Well over half of the men and women surveyed *disagreed* with the statement: "Anal intercourse between men and women is wrong" (Hunt, 1974).

As for behavior, he found a substantial increase in anal sexual experimentation or, at least, a greater willingness to respond to questions about anal sexuality. He reported the following:

While we do not know how many people respond strongly to such (anal) stimulation or employ anal foreplay regularly, we did find that such techniques as fingering, kissing, and even tonguing of the anus have been used, at least experimentally, by anywhere from a sizable minority to a majority of younger Americans and by a small but measurable minority of older ones, and that about a quarter of the married couples under 35 use anal intercourse now and then (p. 36) . . . Well over half of the under-35 males and females in our sample have at least experimented with manual-anal foreplay at some time or another, and over a quarter have experienced oral-anal foreplay (p. 200).

This increasing openness to anal experimentation appears to be continuing, especially among younger sexual sophisticates. In the latest *Playboy* survey of 100,000 readers (80% predominantly heterosexual men), 47% of men and 61% of the women had tried anal intercourse. Thirteen percent of the married couples reported engaging in anal intercourse more than once a month. Sixty three percent had tried other forms of anal stimulation. For example, nearly 36% of the men and 39% of the women had experienced oral-anal contact (Peterson, 1983).

These findings refer to anal-erotic behavior between males and females. Just as some people might be surprised that so *many* heterosexuals appear to be experimenting with anal stimulation, others might be even more surprised to find that *so few* homosexual men use anal intercourse. Hunt reports:

Anal intercourse, commonly thought to be universal among homosexual males, has been experienced as insertor by only 20% of all males with any homosexual experience, and by 18% as insertee; and even in the currently active adult group, only about half had experienced it either actively or passively, or both, within the past year (p. 318).

That anal intercourse is not the major sexual activity of homosexual American males is supported by other studies in which sexual activities such as oral-genital stimulation and mutual masturbation were found to be practiced more frequently than anal intercourse (Bell and Weinberg, 1978; Henry, 1941). It is probably true that gay men who are open about their sexual orientation are far more likely to experiment with anal intercourse than those who are "in the closet."\* It also appears that younger gay men tend to experiment more sexually (Bell and Weinberg, 1978).

\* For example, among over 1,000 gay-identified men who responded to a questionnaire by Spada (1979), 76% said they enjoyed anal intercourse (well over half as both giver and receiver). Yet anal sex was still not as frequently practiced as oral sex.

Two large surveys focusing on women's sexual behavior have included some interesting findings on anal sex. Responding to a questionnaire in *Redbook*(Tavris and Sadd, 1977) magazine, 43% of the women (most of them married) had tried anal intercourse at least once. Of these, about 40% described the experience as enjoyable, while 42% found it unpleasant and 7.5% found it "repulsive." Younger women were more likely to have tried anal intercourse. In a *Cosmopolitan*(Wolfe, 1980) questionnaire, 15% of the 106,000 female respondents — the magazine calls them "Cosmo girls" — said they "regularly" (not defined) had anal intercourse. No questions were asked in either study about other forms of anal stimulation.\*

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# **OTHER TIMES AND PLACES**

Information is even more scanty about the role of anal erotic behavior in other societies and throughout history. Just as data about anal eroticism among Americans center on anal intercourse, this tendency to ignore other forms of anal pleasure is even more pronounced in the data available from other cultures. Throughout the world, cultural attitudes toward anal intercourse have ranged from harshly negative — sometimes with death prescribed as punishment — to apparently very permissive. In other cultures, however, as in our own, a split often exists between proclaimed standards and the actual behavior of at least some members of that society.

A culture's level of acceptance of anal intercourse is closely related to its acceptance of male homosexuality. This connection is probably due to the fact that in most times and places, anal intercourse appears to be, or is at least presumed to be, the preferred form of sexual expression among homosexual men. \*\*

\* An interesting doctoral dissertation exploring anal eroticism among women was done by Barbara Mercer, R.N., Ph.D., at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco in 1983. The study is concerned with the relationship between a variety of anal sexual behaviors and fantasies, sexual orientation and attitudes.

\*\* The apparent differences between American gays and homosexuals in other times and places with regard to the importance of anal intercourse probably has several sources. First, in our culture there is a tendency increasing with education—for both heterosexuals and homosexuals to Historically, most attention has been given to the occurrence of anal intercourse in ancient Greece. It appears that many ancient Greeks, especially members of the upper classes, ascribed special significance to anal intercourse between men and boys. Often romantically praised for its unmatched purity, this form of anal eroticism was also thought to have educational value when practiced by teachers and their students. By receiving anal intercourse from his teacher, a young man's education was highly personalized, which many Greeks considered essential for learning, no matter what the subject. Then, too, the act of receiving intercourse was believed to impart wisdom and masculinity (Dawson, 1963).

Even though this type of encounter was unmistakably homosexual, involving two males, the young partner always the receiver of intercourse—was seen as soft, passive and not yet a man. There were also elements of dominance and submission involved in the encounter, with the receiver always in a submissive role. The ancient Greeks had a similar perspective on male-female sex. The man's role was to dominate, the woman's was to submit.

Oddly enough, at the same time that anal intercourse between men and boys received a fair degree of social approval, the ancient Greeks tended to be anti-homosexual. In some segments of society, homosexual expression among adult males was viewed as ''abnormal and impure'' (Marrou, 1956). As the young man grew up, developing appearance and characteristics considered more manly, he probably became less sought after by adult men. Most likely, as the youthful receiver of intercourse aged, he would begin taking a dominant role with other boys or with women. This type of arrangement was certainly not the only form of homosexuality in ancient Greece. But mainly, the ancient Greeks accepted both homosexuality and anal intercourse in the context of a large age discrepancy between the part-

be somewhat more experimental and less rigidly tied to intercourse. In addition, strongly negative attitudes toward the anal area no doubt divert many Americans—including gays—from the enjoyment of anal sex. Finally, anthropological and historical reporters have no doubt missed much of the subtle variety of homosexual behavior because of their own antigay biases and assumptions.  $\left\{ k \right\}$ 

ners, with the younger partner being viewed as sexually submissive.

Of course, there is nothing unusual about a commitment to sex roles that are defined in terms of dominance and submission. Throughout much of the world, including our own society, this attitude prevails. For example, in Mediterranean cultures, acceptance or toleration of anal intercourse among males usually requires that one partner be viewed as "womanly" (usually a younger man or boy).\* Similarly, in Central and South America, men frequently have anal intercourse with other men, in spite of strong religious prohibitions. The "insertor" retains his heterosexual identity. The receiver is seen as homosexual and suffers a loss of social status. American men often express the same attitude—i.e., it is the receiver of anal intercourse who is *really* homosexual.

Some societies have developed a clearly-defined and accepted role which the French, and now all anthropologists, call the berdache. A transvestite of sorts, such a man would typically adopt the dress and mannerisms considered feminine in his culture. Some cultures have offered a similar opportunity for role-reversal for women, although not as frequently. The institution of the berdache, though not, of course, a matter simply of sexual preference, included the opportunity for a male to engage as a "passive" partner (e.g., to receive anal intercourse) with a minimum of social disapproval. Berdaches were especially common in societies that demanded tremendous aggressive abilities from men (hunting, fighting, etc.). Perhaps one function of the berdache was to provide a role for the many men who, emotionally or physically, could not or did not want to fulfill these obligations.

Other societies, while not having any specific role like the *berdache*, nonetheless had many men whose special function was to receive anal intercourse. In China, in contrast to current restrictive attitudes toward homosexuality and anal sexuality (Chinese officials now claim there is no homosexuality in their society), there was a long tradition of institutionalized homosexuality. This tradition included male prostitutes trained from a young age to receive anal intercourse. There are similar reports about Japan from the 17th to 19th centuries. In the revolution of 1868, Japan banned all homosexual acts along with other sexual variations.

Throughout the Middle East, homosexuality and anal intercourse have flourished, at least at certain times. From the Moslem world have come many reports of widespread homosexuality and male-male anal intercourse, in spite of vehement restrictions against both, restrictions which are as explicit in Islam as they are in Christianity. In Persia (Iran today) during the Middle Ages, heterosexuals were encouraged to engage in anal intercourse by theological codes designed to limit rampant population growth (Edwardes, 1965). Like Persia, Turkey and North Africa were centers of homosexual activity. As in China, male prostitutes existed throughout much of the Arab world and Moslem Asia.

Ford and Beach compiled anthropological data about more recent sexual behavior patterns in two hundred societies around the world (Ford and Beach, 1951). In 64% of these societies other than our own, some form of homosexuality among males is considered acceptable, at least for certain members of the community. Once again, anal intercourse is reported to be the preferred form of sexual expression. Among the Siwan of Africa, all men and boys engage in anal intercourse. Apparently both partners retain a masculine identity and neither partner loses status. Those who do not participate are considered peculiar. The Kiraki of New Guinea universally practice anal intercourse as a part of initiation rites. They believe-like the Ancient Greeks-that receiving intercourse from older men helps young men become strong. Similarly, among many Australian aborigines, anal intercourse is a custom between unmarried men and uninitiated boys. Among the Melanesians, homosexuality (with anal intercourse being the primary sexual activity), is condoned and openly discussed. Men do not even object to their sons receiving anal intercourse from their adult male friends, as long as their friends are kind and generous (Davenport, 1965).

<sup>\*</sup> Karlan (1971) contains a wealth of information about homosexuality and attitudes toward it—in other times and places. The information in this section, unless otherwise noted, comes from this source. Unfortunately, many of Karlan's conclusions are of limited value because of a pervasive anti-homosexual bias.

Very little is known about the role of anal intercourse in heterosexual relationships in other societies. Among the Manganians of the South Pacific, anal intercourse is frequently practiced during menstruation when vaginal intercourse is considered unclean (Marshall and Suggs, 1971). It may well be that investigators have not adequately inquired about anal sex in heterosexual encounters. If not, this may be due to the tendency of some investigators to view all forms of heterosexual sex, other than vaginal intercourse. as "foreplay" and therefore of secondary importance. Anthropological observation and reporting may also have been influenced by the common assumption, already noted, that anal intercourse is an activity engaged in only by homosexual men. In spite of its limitations, historical and crosscultural research on sexual behavior does provide a clear picture of the incredible diversity of human sexual expression.\*

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#### WHAT IS NOT KNOWN

This brief overview represents virtually all that is known about anal sexuality in the United States, and also indicates the limited scope of research into other times and societies. Although this information is interesting, perhaps even provocative, when we compare it with the depth and detail of materials available about other sensual/sexual behaviors, especially in studies of Americans, it is clear that we are faced with a striking "information gap." For example, we know next to nothing about people's feelings toward anal pleasure. We do not know how many people want to enjoy anal intercourse but find it painful or uncomfortable. Neither do we know how many think about trying it but are afraid or embarrassed. We also don't know how many people explore their own anuses during masturbation or how many want their anuses touched but are afraid to ask. Many, no doubt, do not want to "go all the way" to anal intercourse and feel that a request for anal touching would be misconstrued as an invitation for intercourse. Among

couples who try anal erotic stimulation, we don't know if they actually discuss their fantasies, desires and fears or if they just act in the heat of passion, never to talk about the experience openly with one another. Finally, we don't know how many people receive little or no conscious sensation from the anal area.

By far the greatest block to gathering accurate information about anal pleasure is the deeply ingrained idea that verbal communication about such things is not polite or appropriate. It is one thing to fill out an anonymous questionnaire about anal sex, but quite another to discuss it openly with a friend or lover. Many people complain that if they do try to discuss anal pleasure, their comments or requests are seen as funny no matter how they are intended. The same phenomenon occurs in groups when anal pleasure is mentioned—an unusual amount of nervous laughter. This is not to say that the anus cannot be a subject for humor. But when any subject retains the aura of the forbidden (as the anus seems to in spite of the "sexual revolution") people have trouble making that subject the focus of authentic humor without a certain amount of nervousness being triggered simultaneously. With all these factors working against frank discussion of anal pleasure, the man or woman who wishes to feel better about this part of the body will probably have to confront strong external and internal forces saying, in effect, "Don't feel good about that part of your body!"

The pressures against anal enjoyment are complex. Looking at the law provides only a partial clue. Legal codes in our country address only one form of anal pleasure—anal intercourse. Strong sanctions have been imposed against anal intercourse since the days of the colonies, when harsh penalties (including some executions) were enforced for anal intercourse, especially when practiced by two men.\* Most states still have "sodomy laws" on the books which strongly condemn anal intercourse, as well as a variety of other commonly practiced sexual activities, often referred to as "crimes against nature." These laws have been only

\* For a comprehensive look at the history of America's attitudes toward and punishments of gays and their sexual behavior, see Katz (1976).

<sup>\*</sup> For a fascinating and entertaining selection of poetic expression about anal intercourse for other times and places, see Walker (1977).

sporadically enforced. Today, enforcement is rare, although there is strong pressure to keep the laws on the books as deterrents or as statements of moral principle, even though they have little or no influence on people's actual behavior. It is doubtful that negative attitudes toward the anal area and anal pleasure—especially reluctance to talk about it are being maintained any longer by the law.

Ethical values and moral principles are still potent behavior shapers. In spite of the free-wheeling attitudes about sexual experimentation advocated by today's sexual liberationists, people still look to some moral code or ethical system to guide their behavior. The current trend, which may or may not continue, is increasingly to allow individual interpretation and preference. It is quite legitimate for a person to decide not to participate in certain sexual behaviors or situations on the basis of an internal or external sense of "rightness" or "wrongness." Usually, however, ethical or moral value systems do not themselves deter open discussion. Nor do they turn faces red with embarrassment or cause nervous laughter. These reactions reflect the force of taboo.

#### THE ANAL TABOO

In this era of sexual exploration, attitudes toward the anus and anal pleasure are still, to a large extent, governed by the processes of taboo. Taboo is a form of psycho-social control more potent than even the most rigid moral code. Modern societies are in the habit of believing that the scientific method has eradicated taboos and that only "primitive" peoples are still affected by them.

This is not altogether true. While science has been instrumental in freeing us from many irrational ideas and fears, our culture, like all others, nonetheless still has its taboos. A taboo is a prohibition collectively shared by a society, with a force so strong that it is rarely questioned or even discussed. *It just is.* Every society has rules, laws or principles intended to guide or control behavior. These grow out of general systems of values shared by most members of the culture. Taboos are different. Sigmund Freud made this important distinction:

The taboo restrictions are different from religious or moral

prohibitions; they are differentiated from moral prohibitions by failing to be included in a system which declares abstinence in general to be necessary and gives reasons for this necessity. The taboo prohibitions lack all justification and are of unknown origin . . . (They) are taken as a matter of course by those under their dominance (Freud, 1913).

Taboos, then, have an all-encompassing quality—like the air we breathe—which makes them highly resistant to logic, scientific inquiry or even experience. Although taboos obviously do develop from within a culture, it is as if they are imposed from beyond it. For instance, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, the taboo against anal intercourse is seen as coming from God. In the Old Testament story, God completely destroys the city of Sodom, presumably as punishment for rampant sodomy among its people. Many scholars now believe that the punishment was for Sodom's violation of hospitality rules, and had little, if anything, to do with sex. The sodomy interpretation, however, is still the one generally accepted. Among believers, condemnation of anal sex is not based on any discernible principle except the desire to avoid the wrath of God.

Some taboos are readily taken for granted by virtually everyone in the culture with little or no ambivalence or emotional charge. The taboo against eating the meat of dogs or cats is of this type. We are socialized to feel that this would be distasteful and the issue never arises again. If, however, we were to find ourselves in a situation where no other food was available except a dog or cat, we would be thrown into deep ambivalence. Some people would probably come close to death before violating the taboo.

Other taboos tend to be accompanied by strong ambivalence and a high emotional charge. The incest taboo is the best example of this type. Because everyone at some time has sexual feelings toward their parents, and vice versa, the taboo against acting upon or even feeling these desires has even greater psychological significance. Early sexual feelings toward mother, father, sisters or brothers are almost certainly pleasurable. The feeling of pleasure versus the taboo throws the person into a state of ambivalence, until the ambivalence is itself repressed with varying degrees of success.

Both types of taboos have a chilling effect upon behavior and thought. However, taboos of the second type never really eliminate the behaviors and feelings they forbid. Instead, these desires go ''underground,'' both individually and collectively, where they take on a bigger-than-life, almost cosmic significance. In this way, a taboo gives the forbidden feeling or behavior an inflated significance. In turn, the ambivalence and guilt which a person feels are intensified even further.\* Freud pointed out that in Polynesian the root meaning of taboo is *both* sacred *and* forbidden or unclean. The opposite of taboo is simply ordinary, common or readily accessible.

All of this applies to the feelings of most people in our culture toward the anal area and anal pleasure. There is no other way to understand the frequent responses of rational men and women, even scientists, when asked straightforward questions about the anus and anal pleasure, especially anal sex. More often than not they are unwilling to discuss the subject in any detail or are repulsed by the very idea. Often the effects of the anal taboo are hidden under a few simple rational-sounding arguments (e.g., anal intercourse is medically dangerous), which fail to meet even minimal standards of logic or scientific investigation. If anal pleasure and eroticism were simply a bad idea, objections (whether moral, legal or physiological) could be discussed without embarrassment. In actuality, it seems that most people can more comfortably discuss murder and rape than anal pleasure.

Like the incest taboo, the anal taboo tends to be highly charged, though usually not as strong. This is true because the sensitivity of the anal area assures that beginning early in life virtually everyone will receive pleasurable sensations from the anus. To some degree, then, negative messages about the anus are bound to contradict actual experience. Because of the strength of the pleasurable sensations and

\* This was a central issue in the theoretical conflict between Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. Freud thought that strong incestuous desires were an inevitable psychic occurrence. Jung, on the other hand, thought that the incest taboo itself, in combination with guilt about sexual desires, intensified incestuous feelings. the strength of the negative messages, some degree of ambivalence is inevitable. For some, the discomfort of mixed feelings can be partially avoided by suppressing all thoughts and feelings related to anal pleasure. This is the most common reaction. Others are clearly interested *and* repulsed, fascinated *and* guilty about anal pleasure, especially anal eroticism.

Charged by the excitement of the forbidden, a few people become anal enthusiasts, ascribing tremendous importance to anal sex. This can be a problem for those who feel that the more forbidden or ''naughty'' a sexual behavior or fantasy is, the more important it becomes, as a matter of principle, to do it. Such men and women often engage in anal sex as a symbol of open-mindedness, whether they actually like it or not. This is an example of how a taboo—and subsequent reactions to it—tend to exaggerate or distort the significance of the forbidden behaviors and feelings. Taboo behaviors and thoughts, whatever they happen to be, then assume a looming importance that both expresses and perpetuates the taboo.

In the context of taboo, clouded by the crossfire of conflicting extremes, it becomes very difficult clearly to recognize the forbidden object or behavior or to make a decision as to whether the forbidden object or behavior has anything of value to offer. The emotions generated by a violation of the taboo become the focus of attention. The behavior behind the taboo is likely to be all but ignored in the struggle.

# SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE ANAL TABOO

Taboos are not just psychological phenomena. They have social significance as well. The incest taboo, for example, functions to help reduce severe conflict among family members and between generations. The taboo against cating dog and cat meat functions to maintain the special feelings people wish to have about their pets. The functions of a taboo are not always clearly discernible. They become blurred as the taboo is passed from generation to generation. As a taboo becomes intricately woven into the collective psyche, its original significance may be lost. The

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anal taboo has never been systematically studied by social scientists. Nonetheless, it is possible to speculate about its social functions. Cross-cultural data about sexual mores and behavior strongly point to four likely functions.

First, negative attitudes toward the anal area appear to be universally tied to concerns about cleanliness. All societies encourage cleanliness, though ideas about what is required vary widely. Relatively few cultures are as compulsive about these matters as Americans tend to be. Yet the idea that cleanliness is necessary for spiritual purity (i.e., "next to godliness") is not unusual. Often, symbols of cleanliness, or dirtiness, serve as focal points of intense significance. Specific substances like certain foods, mud, urine, mucus, and feces trigger strong feelings of revulsion, thereby symbolizing the much broader concern about cleanliness. The anal taboo functions in this way. By becoming symbolic of all that is unclean, and fostering the emotion of disgust, the anus and feces serve to focus and intensify the value placed on being clean.

Second, the idea that an inherent conflict exists between the spirit and the body is prevalent. This notion is certainly strong in all Judeo-Christian societies. By intensifying negative emotions about one area of the body, the anal taboo expresses and perpetuates a more general mistrust of the body. It makes concrete the conflict between spirit and body, increases guilt, and thereby reinforces religious doctrine.

Third, almost all cultures associate receiving anal intercourse with femininity, probably because of its physiological similarity to vaginal intercourse. With few exceptions, a man who receives anal intercourse is viewed as less manly. Therefore, another possible function of the anal taboo is the maintenance of strict sex-role differentiation. Sexual receptivity—and all that it symbolizes—is expected of women and strongly discouraged in men. If anal pleasure is prohibited, then, the chances of men receiving anal intercourse decrease considerably.

Finally, acceptance of anal sexual behavior is virtually always correlated with acceptance of some forms of homosexuality. It therefore seems reasonable to conclude that another function of the anal taboo is to bolster sanctions against homosexual behavior, particularly among men.

From these perspectives, this time in history is ripe for challenging the anal taboo. Scientific advances in the study of health and disease make it more possible for decisions about cleanliness to be rational rather than emotional, although emotions still do and probably always will play an important part. The split between mind/body is being directly challenged in philosophy, psychology and even medicine. Similarly, the value of strict sex-role differentiation is being questioned by both women and men. At the same time, negative attitudes toward homosexuality are beginning slowly to change. For all these reasons, the functions the anal taboo once served may no longer hold such significance.

Those who wish to counter the long, complex effects of the anal taboo must focus on two central questions: One, what can the role of the anal area be in healthy, selfaffirming, sensual and sexual activity when freed from the stranglehold of taboo? Two, how can people go about freeing themselves from the taboo? This book is intended to help you investigate these questions and find your own answers.