



Human Sexuality in Frances (Fanny) Wright (1795–1852)

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Underlying Frances Wright's philosophy of human sexuality is her belief in the power of human reasoning which makes clear that passion is "inherent in our nature." So, instead of "shrouding our bodies, wants, desires" etc. "in mystery," we should engage in inquiry, "the only true test of their virtue or vice." Knowledge of human sexuality, then, begins in teaching the nature of reasoning and the nature of feelings. In her philosophy, inherent in human nature are freedom and equality. On this premise that as human beings women and men are free and equal; however, women were dealt unfairly under English Common Law and in patriarchal organized religions. Both subordinated women. Thus, women, given their lack of freedom and equality have been prevented from education and thus from inquiry into human sexuality.

Wright's own inquiry led her to theorize that marriage should be a free moral choice rather than a legal obligation, and so "free and voluntary affection" should be allowed to exist inside and outside marriage. Since women must be in control of their own bodies, they should have access to birth control. Contrary to this concept of human nature; however, prejudice against women was commonly practiced as well as prejudice against interracial marriage and illegitimate children. Prejudice happened from lack of knowledge both of human nature and of the other. Mystery remained from lack of education, lack of experience of the other, and lack of shared human experience. It is only in joining "together" i.e. men and women and all races, that "human improvement" can take place. A part of the principle of "human improvement" is the understanding of human sexually and living morally as determined by reason and sympathy, education and experience.

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