

# ON THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SEXES

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The numerous letters I have received from a number of different sources about The Kreutzer Sonata and its "Afterword" have shown that not only I but a large number of thinking people are conscious of the necessity for a change of view in the relations between the sexes. Their voices are unheard and unnoticed only because they are drowned out by the roar of the crowd of those people who, yielding to their passions, defend with obstinacy and zeal, the habitual order of things. Among the letters I have received was the following of the 7th of October 1890 with the enclosure of the pamphlet entitled "Diana," which is mentioned in it. Here is this letter:

7 Oct. 1890

"We have had the pleasure of transmitting to you by mail a copy of a small book entitled 'Diana, a Psycho Physiological Essay on Sexual Relations for Married Men and Women,' which we hope will reach you safely.

"Since the circulation, in America, of your work the 'Kreutzer Sonata,' many, so many, persons have said 'Diana carries out, explains and makes practicable Count Tolstoi's theories.'" We therefore take the liberty of sending you a copy, that you may judge for yourself.

"Praying for the fulfilment of your heart's dearest wish, we are, dear sir, Sincerely yours  
Burnz & Co."<sup>2</sup>

Earlier I received a letter and pamphlet from France from Angèle Françoise. Madame Angèle informed me in this letter about the existence of two societies having the goal of the encouragement of purity in sexual life: one in England and the other in France, the *Société d'amour pur*. In the article Madame Angèle had expressed thoughts similar to those in the article "Diana", only less clearly and definitely and with a shade of mysticism.

The thoughts expressed in the brochure "Diana", although also having fundamentally not a Christian but rather pagan, Platonic world view, are so new and interesting, and so obviously show the foolishness of the established dissipation in the life of bachelors and married men in our society, that I wanted to share these thoughts with readers.

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<sup>1</sup>Translated and annotated by Robert Edwards. A translation of «Об отношениях между полами», *Полное собрание сочинений Л. Н. Толстого*, 27: 286-290. Originally published in *Неделя* 43: 1368-1370, 7 October 1890. Nathan Haskell Dole translated this material as What "Diana" Teaches." (sic) using the "simplified spelling" system advocated by Burnz. Dole's translation along with Henry Martyn Parkhurst's *Why I Wrote "Diana"* were published as inserts to Parkhurst's third edition of *Diana: A Psycho-Physiological Essay on Sexual Relations for Married Men and Women* (New York: Burnz and Co.). Earlier editions were published in 1882, 1885, and 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Dole omits a closing line from Burnz' letter translated by Tolstoy into Russian: «Мы будем рады, если вы почтите нас извещением о получении брошюры». ("We would be glad if you would honor us with notification of your reception of the pamphlet.")

The basic idea of the pamphlet set in the words of the epigraph "And the Twain Shall be One Flesh": is the following:

The difference between men and women exists not only in the physiological regard but also in other, moral properties, in the male in so-called masculinity, in the female in femininity. The attraction between the sexes is based not only on a striving towards physical union, but also towards a mutual attraction, the opposing properties which each sex exerts on each other: femininity on the male and masculinity on the female. One sex attempts to fulfill itself through the other, and the attraction between the sexes produces an identical striving towards spiritual, as well as physical union.

A yearning for physical and spiritual union are two manifestations of one and the same source of attraction, which are found in such dependence upon each other that satisfaction of one kind of yearning always weakens the other. However much the yearning toward spiritual relation is satisfied, that much weakened or entirely destroyed is the yearning toward the physical; and conversely, the satisfaction of physical yearning weakens or destroys the spiritual. And this is why the attraction between the sexes is not only a physical yearning which produces children, but is an attraction of the different sexes to one another, capable of taking the form of the most spiritual union of thought only, or the most animal union, producing children, and of all the most varying stages between one and the other. The question about on which of these stages the coming together of the different sexes will settle, is determined by what sort of relation those uniting themselves reckon to be good, proper, and therefore desirable at a given time, or perpetually-- (The striking custom of courting in Little Russia in which for arranged marriages the young men spend the night with their fiancées for years without violating their virginity serves as remarkable illustration of how a stage in the relations between the sexes can be subjugated to a conception of what is considered to be good, proper and desirable).

A given stage will provide full satisfaction for different persons who are uniting, which those persons consider to be good, proper and desirable, and also depends on their personal view. But independently from this, *per se*, objectively, for everybody one stage of relation should give more satisfaction than any another. What sort of relation will give most satisfaction, *per se*, for everyone, independently from the personal view of those who are being united together: that which approaches the spiritual or that which approaches the physical? The answer to this question is clear and unmistakable, although it runs counter to all accustomed thought in our society, and consists in the fact that the closer the form of the relation is to the extreme physical boundary the more desire is enkindled, and the less satisfaction is received; the closer to the opposite extreme, the spiritual boundary, the less new desires are evoked, the fuller the satisfaction. The closer to the former, the more destructive for the life force; the closer to the latter, to the spiritual, then the calmer, the happier and the more powerful the general condition.

The author considers the union of man and woman "in one flesh" in the form of an indissoluble monogamous marriage necessary for the condition of the higher development of man. Marriage, therefore, in the opinion of the author, constitutes a natural and desirable condition for all persons having attained maturity, and is not necessarily a physical union, but may be a spiritual one as well. Considering conditions

and temperament, but chiefly on the basis of that which those being united consider to be proper, good, and desirable, for some marriage will become a more spiritual relation, for others, a more physical one. But the more the relation approaches a spiritual stage the more fully satisfying it will be.

Since the author recognizes that those same sexual aspirations could lead to a spiritual union-- the capacity to love, and to the physical-- reproduction, the bearing of children, and that one activity passes to another in dependence on consciousness, naturally, he not only does not recognize the impossibility of abstinence, but considers it to be the natural and necessary condition of a rational sexual hygiene, both within marriage and outside it.

The whole article is furnished with a rich assortment of examples and illustrations about the topic under discussion, with physiological data about the processes of sexual relations, their influences on the organism and possibility of the consciously directing them by one or another path-- by the capacity to love or fruitfulness (resulting in the bearing of children). In confirmation of his thought the author cites Herbert Spencer's words: "If any law," says Spencer, "works to the advantage of the human race, then human nature infallibly submits to it, since obedience to it becomes a pleasure to a man." And thus we ought not, says the author, place too much emphasis on the established customs and conditions which now surround us, but rather should look at what human beings should and might become in a forthcoming bright future.

The essence of all the author states is expounded in this way. The basic theory of "Diana" is that the relations between the sexes has two functions: one of reproduction and the other fostering a capacity to love; and that sexual force, if not used only with the conscious desire to have children, should always be directed toward the path of fostering love. The manifestation which this power assumes depends upon reason and habit, in consequence of which the gradual administration of reason in harmony with the principles laid forth here, and the gradual education of habits will deliver people from many of their passions and give them satisfaction in their sexual aspirations.

At the end of the book is included Eliza Burnz' remarkable "Letter to Parents and Teachers."<sup>3</sup> This letter, despite the fact that it treat subjects which are considered to be indecent (naming, as it is impossible to do this otherwise, things by their names), may have such a beneficial influence on an unfortunate youth, suffering from excesses and erroneous behavior, that the dissemination of this letter among grown men wasting their best forces and their own good, and most especially, among unfortunate boys perishing only from ignorance in families, gymnasiums, and in especially in military schools and closed institutions, would be a genuine good deed.

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<sup>3</sup>The letter follows this article.

A PRIVATE LETTER  
TO PARENTS, FYZICIANS, AND PRINCIPALS OF SCHOOLS

ELIZA BURNZ<sup>4</sup>

I take the liberty of ofering for your consideration sum views on the Spermatic Secretion, which, so far as I know, hav not been hitherto entertained, either by fyzicians or the public generally.

It is customary for fziologists and writers on the sexual organs and functions to asume that the spermatic secretion is analogous to the bile, pancreatic juice, saliva and uther secretions which are esential to human life, and which, when once formd, must be uzed and expeld from the system. The logical deduction from this theory is, that to ensure the perfect helth of every man and boy who has atained the age of fourteen or thereabout, he must expel this secretion at regular or irregular periods, either by inter-communication with one of the uther sex or by masturbation, unless the secretion passes away by the bladder or by involuntary action during sleep. A further deduction is, that there exists a natural necessity for unrestricted intercommunication between the sexes, or since, since society wil not sanction that, the establishment of houzes of prostitution. Now the moral nature and finer sensibilities of both men and wimen protest against such a concluzion, and therefore the truth of the theory which gives rize to it, is to be douted. For myself, I consider that to this theory, so generally beleaved, is due a large part of that sexual imorality which turns the heven of the afections into a hel of the passions, and is destroying at once the vitality and happiness of our race.

"As a man thinketh so is he." This is classic truth. If a boy obtains the impression, from books or from companions older than himself, that at the age of fourteen or fifteen the spermatic secretion is necessarily formd and acumulated, and that, too, without his knowledge, volition, or power of prevention; and that in order to keep his helth he must in sum way periodically throw off that secretion, his actions wil imediately begin to corespond with his beleef.

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<sup>4</sup>Annotated by Robert Edwards. Written by Eliza B. Burnz and anonymously appended to Henry Martyn Parkhurst's book, *Diana: A Psycho-Fyziological Essay on Sexual Relations for Married Men and Women*, third edition, revised and enlarged, (New York: Burnz & Company, 1885, pp. 51-55. "The Private Letter," like *Diana*, was written in the modified spelling system advocated and promoted by Burnz. Tolstoy refers to Burnz' letter in his «Об отношениях между полами».

In the 1895 edition, there also is a translation by Nathan Haskell Dole of "What 'Diana' Teaches" by Count Tolstoi, (from *Неделя «Об отношениях между полами»*, *Неделя* 43: 1368-1370, 28 October 1890.

Also enclosed with *Diana* is Parkhurst's 10 page pamphlet "Why I Wrote 'Diana'" in which he explains why "Diana" was originally published anonymously and why he later ventured to make his authorship publicly known.