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Among the countless problems that the liberal and social democratic press tends to churn out until they have become completely flat, one of the most popular is the "women's question," that is to say, the assessment of women's rights in the present state or in a future society. It cannot be denied that this problem is of enormous importance wherever people live together, and it cannot be denied either that it has been squashed under the pastry board of public opinion-making into a paltry patty of meager political demands.

Whenever women's rights are discussed publicly, one hears two parties screaming over each other. One shouts: women belong in public life like men, in college, in business, in parliament and in government! — the other yells: no! women still belong today, as always, at the stove, in the knitting socks, in front of the washtub and in the marital bed! It is quite natural that this second party, with its war cry of orthodox philistinism, finds the approval of most women. Tidying up, cleaning, managing the household and being supported by the man in return is a woman's traditional job, it is nice and convenient. Why shake up the old custom? — But the fact that the party of those who see the ideal state of society as being that women should be on an equal footing with men in the battle

of earning a living, in discussion and in public, that this party also has a large following of women, and is now led by women, is quite unnatural.

Anyone with eyes in their head can see that the participation of women in working life — as workers, accountants, lawyers, etc. — is based on the need of our social conditions, and anyone who has a feeling for the human dignity to which women are entitled must wish for conditions that guarantee them the freedom to be and do what their nature demands.

The subject I wish to discuss has been touched upon several times in these papers, and the request has been made to express opinions that differ from those expressed there in the "Socialist". I am following this request. For a number of ideas contained in the article "Tarnowska" (No. 7) by gl. are by no means my convictions, and it would seem highly questionable to me if the tendencies expressed there were to be understood as confessions of socialism.

On the contrary, I would like to strongly emphasize what was said in No. 16 in the article "Preliminary remarks on neo-Malthusianism": "Socialism … has as little to do with matters of pleasure as with the temporary requirements of need; it recommends palliatives neither in legislation, in the marriage bed, nor in the camp of free love." In fact, it cannot possibly be the task of socialism to take a puritanical sexual moral stand in relation to matters of pleasure.

These matters are of a thoroughly personal nature, depend on the temperament and feelings of the individual, and cannot be described as reprehensible and ugly, or sick and decadent. The fact that the functions of sexual intercourse are connected with feelings of pleasure in no way justifies the attempt to limit all human sexual activity to the purpose of procreation. Anyone who wants this must logically demand abstinence from all infertile women. However, I believe that in assessing this very difficult and very delicate question we should not forget that the exchange of physical feelings of pleasure between people is the strongest and most intimate

May they be able to give birth to as many as their motherly hearts desire; may they be able to lead a life that enables them to increase the number of strong, healthy, intelligent and cheerful children; and may they have their children from whatever father or fathers they want! … Then we will be able to speak of women's freedom and women's rights!

expression of love. But love is also present and should be allowed to express itself even where a weak constitution or other compelling reasons do not recommend the procreation of children. The movement that strives for socialism today would have good reason not to interfere in this difficult matter for the time being. We should be careful, as long as we live in the present society, which is completely unhealthy in all its institutions and judgments, to try to judge what, under strong and healthy socialist conditions, would be described as a sign of decay in the most intimate private life of individuals and what would be described as a strong characteristic.

Most of all, we should be careful not to censure those in our ranks in their affairs of love and pleasure — these are things in which people are most sensitive and most modest, for good and clean reasons.

Monogamous marriage has been fervently advocated here, and it cannot be denied that in many cases it really does deserve to be regarded as a beautiful institution and the basis of human culture, namely when the marriage is based on mutual love and intimacy that is not disturbed by sudden events and accidents. But it would be very bold to claim that man — man and woman — are monogamous and that therefore the happy fulfillment of marriage is a moral requirement for man. There are individuals in both sexes whose sexual desire is concentrated on one person and those who prefer variety. It is a completely arbitrary requirement that states make, mainly for reasons of inheritance law, but which has nothing whatsoever to do with socialism, that people who have entered into close relations with one another must remain "faithful" to one another. Whether socialism will one day be based on marriage and families is a question that we will hardly be able to decide today, a question that has already been seriously doubted by convinced socialists, not only of our own day. At least the appeal to the past is misplaced here.

For there has hardly ever been a time when marriage was really and as an institution a voluntary structure. In ancient times,

men almost everywhere had the right to have several wives, and up to our own day the woman is the disenfranchised party in this structure and the man has absolute dominion in the house. Completely repulsive regulations have survived to the present day, and the most outrageous are precisely those that, under the pretext of the sanctity of marriage and the family, rob the mother of the right over her children — and not only the right over her children, but the children themselves are awarded to the man when the spouses no longer want to stay together and the woman is recognized as the "guilty" party. As surely as it is true that all love is free, it is just as surely true that freedom in love is still a struggle to achieve, especially for women.

Thus, "free love" is a woman's right that should be claimed rather than those miserable political rights whose insignificance one could have been convinced of by the exercise of them by men. Education to independence in one's own affairs, control over one's own body unhindered by the moral intrigues of society, freedom from public control of virginity, unconditional recognition of the human in woman — these are women's rights that we socialists could also campaign for with great zeal, without having to worry about the intensity of carnal desire that could be brought about by increased freedom for women.

Eduard von Hartmann found the good phrase: "The question of women is a question of virginity." In fact, the careful protection of virginity until long after girls reach maturity is the wicked means used by men to make women subservient to their desires as meat. The deflowering of women has acquired the meaning of moral devaluation, so that women are only willing to serve one man throughout their lives — and in the capacity of wife. Anyone who wants to connect sexual matters with those of cleanliness should, in my opinion, not ignore these sad circumstances.

The article "Tarnowska" was a vehement critic of the attempt to abolish fatherhood in the organization of love and family life. It was claimed that the circles demanding this "are ruled by degenerate, unbridled and uprooted women" and they were accused of wanting to "establish mother right, in other words, the filthy, uncultured and undignified filth". Personally, I consider mother-right to be a sacred matter for humanity, and in response to the sentence quoted I will just quote a few words that (long before the publication of Bachofen's theoretical work on "mother-right"), namely in 1820, Rahel von Varnhagen, Goethe's fine, clever, extremely sensitive friend, wrote in her diary: "Children should only have mothers and bear their names; and the mother the wealth and power of the family: that is how nature arranges it; we only have to make them more moral… Nature is terrible in that a woman can be abused and can produce a human being against her will and desire. This great insult must be made good by human institutions and facilities, and shows how much the child belongs to the woman. Jesus only had one mother. All children should be constituted with an ideal father, all mothers should be held as innocent and honored as Mary."

Does the woman who feels this way really deserve to be called a degenerate, unfettered and uprooted woman? It seems to me that this is a real clue as to where women lack rights and where men who want to help the other sex to gain freedom rights should start.

To avoid any misunderstandings: I have as little to do with the demands of the neo-Malthusians as those who agree with me. Preventing births is only important within capitalist society. Anyone who wants nothing more than to enable women to live a tolerable life under the existing conditions will have to consider whether a restriction on the number of children is advisable in very many cases where the possibility of feeding is limited (for reasons of humanity alone, one must protest loudly against the prohibition of abortion and the horrific penalties that threaten its violation). But all of these things have absolutely nothing to do with socialism, absolutely nothing to do with the liberation of women. On the contrary: giving birth to children is the sacred and natural calling of women.