

## II — THE WRONG OF IT

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**I** AM requested to base my argument mainly upon the “health and happiness of the human race”. As regards health, there is much controversy. Probably the only generalization at present warranted is that some contraceptive methods are certainly injurious both to the nervous system and the tissues, while others have not yet proved notably harmful.

“Happiness” is a protean word. We do not all put the same meaning into “the happiness of the race”. Suppose we discard the term and substitute “welfare”.

Human welfare demands self-respect and mutual respect in married couples. Both are lowered by contraceptive practices. Conjugal intercourse is perverted from the noble function of cooperation with the Creator into an ignoble means of sensual gratification. Husbands and wives become mutual instruments of indulgence. The calculation and artifice involved in contraceptive devices can not but diminish conjugal reverence, and probably no normal husband or wife ever entered upon this way without moral shock, or continued on it without moral deterioration.

Advocates of birth control profess to aim at “quality rather than quantity”. But the practice is fatal to certain indispensable qualities. It prevails for the most part among families of the upper and middle classes, and it is adopted mainly for the purpose of satisfying a larger number of material wants and reducing hardship to a minimum. Yet all experience shows that capacity for sacrifice is a necessary condition of achievement. The power to do is conditioned upon the power to do without. Husbands and wives who ignore this law gradually and greatly diminish their own capacity for endurance and sustained effort and withhold adequate training in these capacities from their children. The one or two or three children of birth controlling parents are condemned to an environment which fosters selfishness, laziness, flabbiness of will, and mediocrity of intellect. They are inferior in most of the essentials of efficient character.

Referring to the “superior classes” who practise birth control

to secure an alleged better quality of offspring, Professor Warren S. Thompson said a few years ago:

"Nature's answer is clear. She says they are unfit. She shows clearly that she prefers the lower classes who live simply, who reproduce more or less instinctively, who do not think about the future of the race or of civilization, but who are carrying the burden of the future in the rearing of children. We may call these people brutish, we may say that they are intellectually inferior, we may hold that they have not risen above the level of instinctive reactions, we may believe that they carry the burden of the future only because they do not know how to avoid it, and because they do not yet feel it to be a burden; but they survive and the future belongs to them.

"People who wish to play so prominent a part in the affairs of their day that they do not find time for family and children, who are unwilling to partake in the struggles and hardships of the common lot, are doomed to extinction. Those who can make the combination of satisfying their ambition and raising a fair-sized family will survive, and though civilization may change under their guidance, I do not see why we should be exercised for fear that it will not be Anglo-Saxon, or Teutonic, or Gallic, as the case may be. If we do not have children it will not affect us or ours, that the present social order which we call Western Civilization will have perished. The people who do survive and carry on will probably develop a civilization which will suit them better than ours. If it is so organized that it has a place for the family and if it rests upon those virtues growing out of the intimacies of family and communal life, it will probably displace ours and survive much longer than ours has, and thereby prove its fitness."

In order to prevent a decline in numbers a group of human beings must produce an average of about three and three-fifths children per marriage. No birth control group averages as many as three and no such group ever will reach that average. That "superior" persons and classes will come in time to have larger families just to "fulfill their responsibilities to the race", is about as foolish and futile a hope as ever found lodgment in the human brain. The Sixth International Birth Control Conference, held in New York City in 1925, resolved "that persons whose progeny give promise of being of decided value to the community should

be encouraged to bear as large families, properly spaced, as they feasibly can." What kind of children would be of "decided value"? What is a "properly spaced" family? What is meant by "feasibly"? None of these fundamental questions was answered by the Conference. Indeed, it may well be doubted that the members of the Conference took the resolution seriously. They probably realized that no husband and wife who prefer luxuries to children will make sacrifices for the community, or the race, or posterity. No proposition in the field of social psychology is more nearly certain than this: when the use of contraceptives becomes general among all the classes of a nation, that nation will have committed itself to a continuous decline in population. I do not think this condition will promote the welfare or happiness of the race.

With their customary lack of comprehensive thinking, the advocates of birth control fail to consider this ultimate and inevitable outcome of their propaganda. Ignoring the pronounced decline in the rate of population increase throughout the Western world in the last forty years, they talk fatuously about the dangers of overpopulation. At the birth control conference mentioned above, Professor Fairchild declared that the world's population had doubled since the beginning of the nineteenth century and deplored the results of an equal rate of increase in the next century and a quarter. He shut his eyes to such facts as the restriction of immigration to the United States, the decline in the average number of children in middle class families in the Middle West from 5.4 in the last generation to 3.3 in the present generation, and the failure of all urban families to average as many as four children. In a word, he used only such figures as tended to support his thesis. Like all the other birth control advocates, he used a method that is flagrantly unscientific.

Equally unscientific is the argument frequently offered that the declining birth rate of the last forty years has been offset by a declining death rate. It is true that the death rate has declined, but this phenomenon has been due only slightly to the decrease in the birth rate. The vitally important facts are these: The death rate has not been lowered so fast as the birth rate. No low birth rate country shows so high a rate of net increase in population as it showed before the birth rate began to decline;

and the countries with fairly high birth rates are increasing faster in population than the countries with low birth rates. These facts are available to any one who takes the trouble to study the statistical sources. The advocates of birth control prefer to ignore them or to misrepresent them.

One of the most common arguments for birth control is that which stresses the welfare of the working classes. Let them keep their families small, restrict the labor supply, and force up wages. It is a delightfully simple remedy, but it is also superficial and unjust; for although the productive resources of the United States are ample to support all classes in reasonable comfort, the advocates of birth control would deprive the working people of the right to normal family life. In this they are continuing the neo-Malthusian tradition. John Kells Ingram tells us, in his *History of Political Economy*, that the middle classes of England assiduously preached the doctrine of birth control to the working classes in the early part of the nineteenth century. Thus they vainly sought to shift the guilt of industrial injustice from their own shoulders. Because they persisted in having large families, the working classes were responsible for their own poverty, — a very comforting doctrine for the exploiters, and the bourgeois advocates of birth control are preaching the same gospel to the toiling masses to-day. They care as little for social justice as they do for fundamental thinking or comprehensive views of social phenomena.

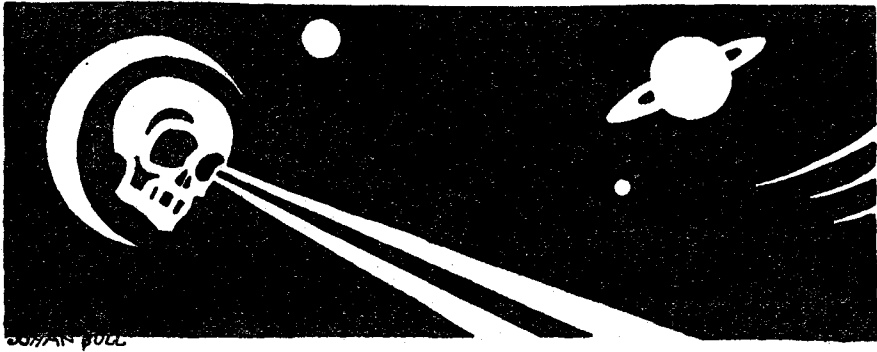
"The law of human progress, what is it but the moral law?" asked Henry George at the close of an eloquent chapter of *Progress and Poverty*. The moral law is the rule of direction and development written by the Creator into the human constitution. Concerning some of its precepts and many of its applications, men have differed. Against contraception the Catholic Church speaks without hesitation and with logical consistency. She stigmatizes it as a perversion of nature (not merely as "unnatural"), an abuse of function, a frustration of faculty. The faculty is so used that it can not attain its primary end. Neither age, nor time, nor any other circumstances of the persons, but the very *use* of the faculty produces this perverse result. The faculty is compelled to defeat itself. This is an inherent contradiction and makes the act intrinsically wrong. To be sure, this argument is metaphysical.

To be sure, it does not persuade those who identify morality with short-sighted utility. The proposition that frustrative use of the sex faculty is intrinsically immoral, can no more be proved than the proposition that two plus two equals four.

To those who can not or will not accept this proposition as self-evident, as intuitively true, I would suggest this question: Is it not confirmed and vindicated by the facts of experience? Contraceptive practices invariably increase the sum total of human selfishness, decrease the capacity to endure and to achieve, and cause a decline in numbers. While high-minded believers in birth control may desire it restricted to situations of physical and economic hardship and may denounce it as wrong when adopted for the sake of ease, all our observation of the phenomenon and all our knowledge of psychology compel the conclusion that this desire is vain and this denunciation futile. Once men and women reject the principle that contraception is bad in itself and always bad, once they adopt the opinion that it is good in the presence of hard circumstances, they claim the right to decide for themselves when the circumstances are sufficiently hard. This means that any couple will feel justified in practising birth control whenever it seems desirable for any reason that seems sufficient. And there exists no logical or convincing refutation.

Hence, the intrinsic principle is the only one that is comprehensive and effective. It covers every case and it is vindicated by results. The intuition upon which it rests seems to be the agency established by nature and nature's God for averting the individual and social evils which come upon every group that practises birth control. The intuition which pronounces the practice wrong tells men immediately what they can otherwise learn only by wide and disastrous experience.





## THE WAR AGAINST THE MOON

*A Fantasy on the Coming Power of the Press*

ANDRÉ MAUROIS

### Chapter CXVII

#### THE DICTATORS OF PUBLIC OPINION

*World Conditions in 1962.* By 1962 the last traces of the havoc wrought by the World War of 1947 had at length disappeared. New York, London, Paris, Berlin, and even Peking had been rebuilt. The birth rate had been such that, — in spite of world-wide casualties exceeding thirty millions of men and women in 1947, — the globe as a whole had almost regained the pre-War population level, when the World census of 1961 was taken. The industrial and financial crisis had quieted down, and once more the interest of mankind was turning to the arts and to sport. Every house had its wireless movie. The balloon match between Tokyo and Oxford in 1962 attracted to Moscow more than three million spectators, who came from every corner of the globe, and was the occasion of a World-wide Welcome Celebration, at once stirring and astounding.

*The Dictators of Public Opinion.* It must in fairness be admitted that this rapid recovery, this exceedingly prompt healing of the moral and material wounds of the War was in large measure the