

# Morals

## Innocence lost several times



by Rich Hamack

With an average of 44 unmarried pregnancies here each year, and the possibility of birth control methods being sold in the dorms, it may seem that WSU is directly in step with the "new morality" of the 70s.

Yet to have a new morality, doesn't society first need to have an old one? Does history justify the permissiveness of the last decade being labeled as new?

It is overly obvious that since the dawn of man in some sleepy little cave, persons have been having sex, if only to preserve the race. It's the attitudes toward sex that have affected the behavior of persons since then.

Little is known about sexual attitudes in the period previous to Greek civilization, said Richard S. Williams, an assistant professor of history here who specializes in ancient cultures.

### Minoan women 1400 style

Williams said there is evidence of upper class women of the Minoan civilization around 1400 BC wearing dresses which expose the breasts, but this is based on just a few frescos which are controversial in their interpretation.

Much more is known about the morals of the Greeks, said Williams. He characterized the attitude of that ancient period as one of a "basic double-standard." He said men in ancient Greece were often expected to have

sex before and outside of marriage. Prostitution was also accepted, and even condoned as part of religious ceremonies. The goddess of love Aphrodite was evidence of this.

Prostitution was often used by women to buy their way out of slavery, said Williams. He gave the examples of Aspasia, a fifth century prostitute

known as well for her mental as her physical powers.

Aspasia bought her way free of slavery and set up a high-class prostitution business in Athens. Her clients included persons such as Socrates, who used to discuss matters of philosophy with her, and Pericles, who was to lead Greece in its golden period.

Greeks were also fond of symposia, said Williams, which were then much different from what we would call symposia today. A symposium today, said Williams to a Greek history class last semester, conjures up boring images of scholars expounding their latest discoveries. In Greece, said Williams, a symposium was generally an all out drunken orgy.

While prostitution was legal for slave women, Williams said, it was an illegal activity for women who were citizens. He also said women's virginity was carefully watched until they were married, which was usually at a very young age.

The Greeks were also credited with the invention of homosexuality. For

reaping more and more wealth and power.

This attitude, Malyon said, allowed many persons to harbor rebellion against the church and often against what the church stands for — rites, ceremonies, and morality.

### Renaissance reaction

Malyon said the Renaissance, beginning in the 14th century, was merely the society's reaction to a church which had been denying individuality of its members. Consequently, he said the Renaissance was a period of re-discovery of the individual, of rational thought and of a morality less girded by the church.

In that light, Malyon said, the world had a "new morality" in the Renaissance.

George A. Frykman, a professor of history here, characterized the Victorian age as one in which appearances were kept up, "but the morality was not always as good as it appeared on the surface." He said this period helped in America's developing a prudish attitude of not talking about sex.

Williams characterized the difference between the medieval and the Victorian ages by saying in medieval times "more people were talking about it (sex) and less were doing it, while in the Victorian age more people were doing it and less were talking about it."

### Permissiveness of the '70s

Frykman said the permissiveness of the 70s may partially have been caused as a reaction to the suppression of sexual ideas in the Victorian age.

Several periods in American history were "loose and free," said Frykman. He noted the disparity within seaport towns of early America — towering white churches in the center of town, and houses of prostitution and gambling near the waterfront. Early Boston was especially like this, he said.

The American frontier was also morally loose, he said, and gave the example of California in the 1850s, during the gold rush.

Modern America, he said, saw a loss of innocence in the 20s with flappers, speakeasies, the jazz age and open revolt against the prohibition.

In more recent times, he said, the current trends in eliminating sexual taboos are due largely to a change in relationships. He noted the increase in the divorce rate and the increase of couples living together out of wedlock and said the morality of the American people was bound to change, due to the sheer abundance of non-traditional relationships.

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example, the Greeks inhabited the isle of Lesbos, where a female poet named Sappho ran a school for upper class girls. Sappho also wrote of sexual relations between women.

Roman morals were much the same as Greek morals, said Williams. In a Roman history class this semester, Williams explained this was largely due to the Romans' "philhellenism," or love of things Greek.

This attitude caused the Romans to adopt many Greek ideas and morals en masse, and integrate them into their society. The Romans had one significant difference in their morals, though, Williams said.

Whereas divorce was difficult to get in Greece, said Williams, it was free and easy in the late Roman Republic, and largely for political reasons.

The ease of getting a divorce, he said, led to the freeing of standards for society as a whole. In this climate a number of "sexually notorious" women emerged, unprecedented in history.

### Teachings of Christ

The morality of the day was not to last unfettered too much longer though. Christ lived in this period. His teachings were to provide new moral standards for the Roman world, which consisted of most of the Mediterranean, and good pieces of Africa, Asia and Europe.

Williams said the church was not to have a definite effect on society's morals until about 400 AD and thereafter build gradually.

The emphasis on agriculture in the medieval period generally kept people stable until about 1300 AD, said Harland Malyon, a history instructor at Tacoma Community College. During this period, he said, the church gradually gained wealth and power while peasants got poorer.

Malyon said the attitude of the church, as viewed by the peasants, was one of hypocrisy — the church expounding the virtues of being non-materialistic while simultaneously

