

lengths to render her as sexually responsive as possible, it is at first sight strange that she should also be equipped with what amounts to an anti-copulatory device. But the situation is not as contradictory as it may appear. By making the first copulation attempt difficult and even painful, the hymen ensures that it will not be indulged in lightly. Clearly, during the adolescent phase, there is going to be a period of sexual experimentation, of 'playing the field' in search of a suitable partner. Young males at this time will have no good reason for stopping short of full copulation. If a pair-bond does not form they have not committed themselves in any way and can move on until they find a suitable mate. But if young females were to go so far without pair-formation, they might very well find themselves pregnant and heading straight towards a parental situation with no partner to accompany them. By putting a partial brake on this trend in the female, the hymen demands that she shall have already developed a deep emotional involvement before taking the final step, an involvement strong enough to take the initial physical discomfort in its stride.

A word must be added here on the question of monogamy and polygamy. The development of the pair-bond, which has occurred in the species as a whole, will naturally favour monogamy, but it does not absolutely demand it. If the violent hunting life results in adult males becoming scarcer than females, there will be a tendency for some of the surviving males to form pair-bonds with more than one female. This will then make it possible to increase the breeding rate without setting up dangerous tensions by creating 'spare' females. If the pair-formation process became so totally exclusive that it prevented this, it would be inefficient. This would not be an easy development, however, because of the possessiveness of the females concerned and the dangers of provoking serious sexual rivalries between them. Also working against it would be the basic economic pressures of maintaining the larger family group with all its offspring. A small degree of polygamy could exist, but it would be severely limited. It is interesting that although it still occurs in a number of minor cultures