

ised his sex life. The contemporary evidence appears to give much the same basic picture, once one has cleaned away the dark varnish of public moralising. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, it is the biological nature of the beast that has moulded the social structure of civilisation, rather than the other way around.

Yet, although the basic sexual system has been retained in a fairly primitive form (there has been no communalisation of sex to match the enlarged communities), many minor controls and restrictions have been introduced. These have become necessary because of the elaborate set of anatomical and physiological sexual signals and the heightened sexual responsiveness we have acquired during our evolution. But these were designed for use in a small, closely knit tribal unit, not in a vast metropolis. In the big city we are constantly intermixing with hundreds of stimulating (and stimulatable) strangers. This is something new, and it has to be dealt with.

In fact, the introduction of cultural restrictions must have begun much earlier, before there were strangers. Even in the simple tribal units it must have been necessary for members of a mated pair to curtail their sexual signalling in some way when they were moving about in public. If sexuality had to be heightened to keep the pair together, then steps must have been taken to damp it down when the pair were apart, to avoid the over-stimulation of third parties. In other pair-forming but communal species this is done largely by aggressive gestures, but in a co-operative species like ours, less belligerent methods would be favoured. This is where our enlarged brain can come to the rescue. Communication by speech obviously plays a vital role here ('My husband wouldn't like it'), as it does in so many facets of social contact, but more immediate measures are also needed.

The most obvious example is the hallowed and proverbial fig-leaf. Because of his vertical posture it is impossible for a naked ape to approach another member of his species without performing a genital display. Other primates, advancing on all fours, do not have this problem. If they wish to display their genitals they