

# CHAPTER 4

*Sexualizing Psychology, Politicizing Sex*

## Major Premise:

Sigmund Freud made sexual desire central to human identity, while Wilhelm Reich combined Marxism and Freudian psychology to make sexual “liberation” the focus of politics.

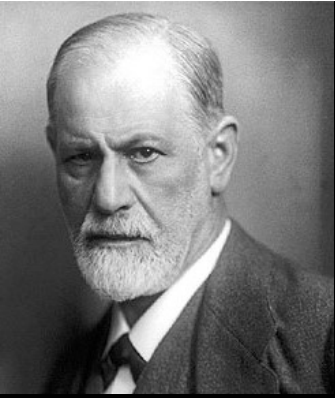
## STRANGE NEW WORLD

HOW THINKERS  
AND ACTIVISTS  
REDEFINED IDENTITY  
AND SPARKED THE  
SEXUAL REVOLUTION

CARL R.  
TRUEMAN

FOREWORD BY  
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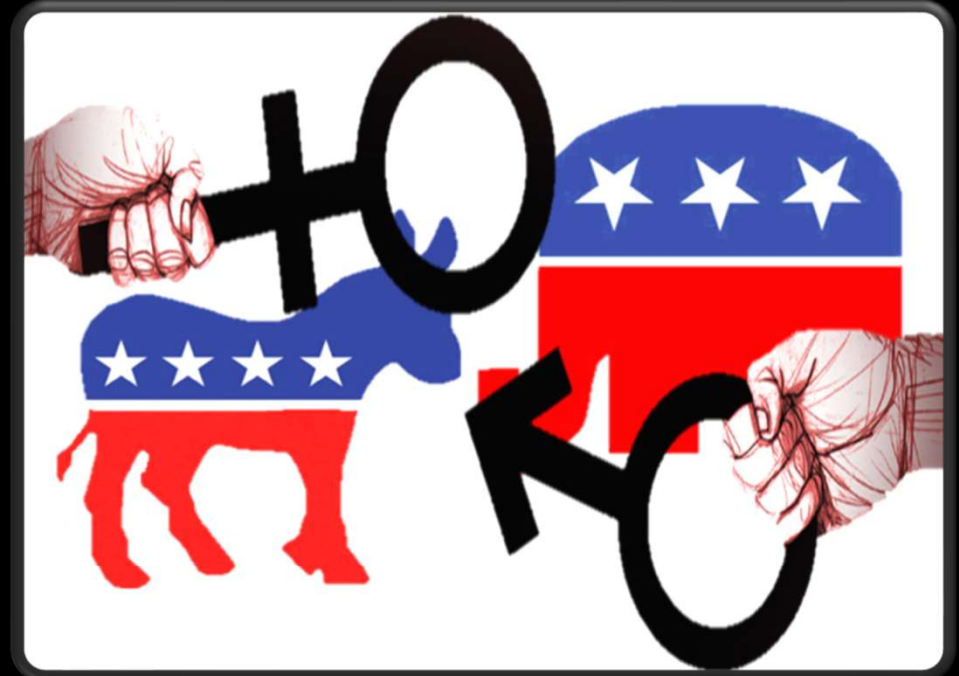
***Sigmund Freud*** (1856 – 1939)  
Austrian neurologist & founder of  
psychoanalysis

For Freud sexual pleasure is “foundational to human happiness” (p. 72); so much so that Freud said that man “*should make general erotism the central point of his life*” (p. 73). Freud believed that “human beings are in a ... sense fundamentally defined by our sexual desires” (p. 74), even as infants.

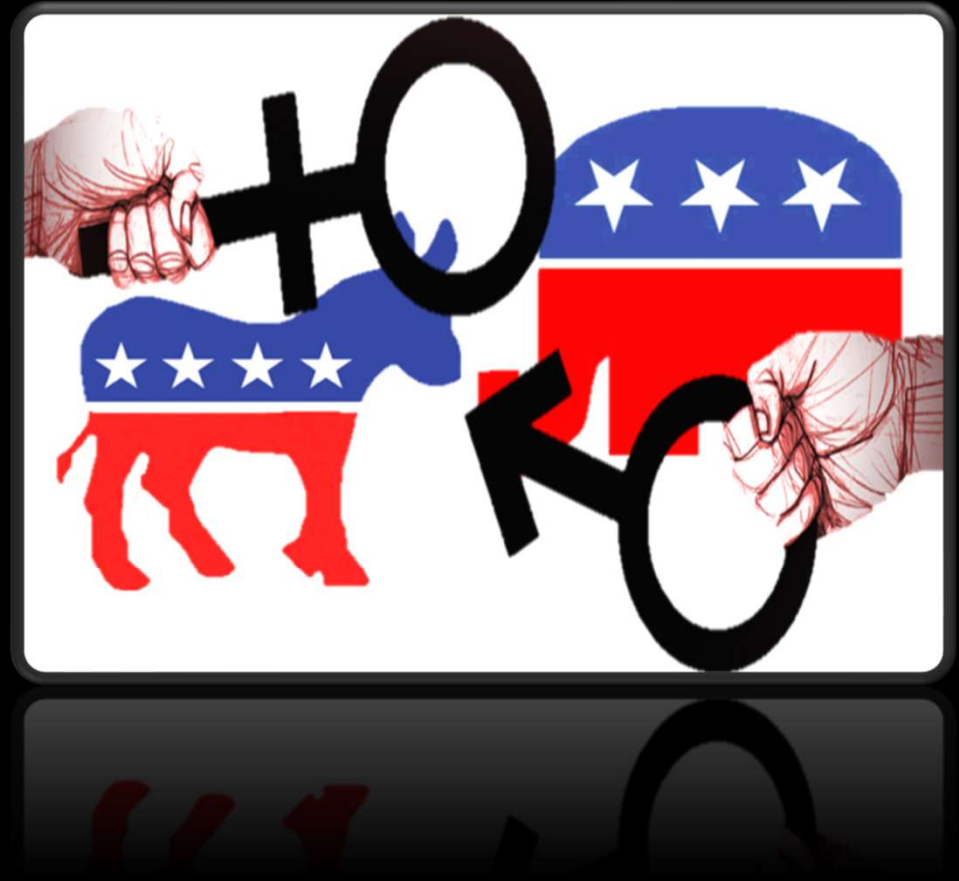
Freud's psychoanalytic theories, such as the "Oedipus Complex" and his dream analysis, have been largely discarded. But his views on sex have become part of the "social imaginary."



Freud argued that morality is constructed to restrain unbridled sexuality to “make human social life possible” (p. 76). It is the “tension . . . between human desire & the needs of civilization that is the point at which sex enters the political consciousness” (p. 78).



If we are defined to a large extent by our sexual desire or orientation, “then sex must be political because rules governing sexual behavior are rules that govern what is and is not considered by society to be legitimate as an identity” (p. 79).





***Wilhelm Reich* (1897 – 1957)**  
Austrian doctor and psychoanalyst

Reich was a follower and associate of Freud. He was also a Marxist . Reich melded Marx's critique of traditional morality as class oppression with Freud's emphasis on sexual fulfillment as the highest good of human happiness. Reich coined the term "sexual revolution" to emphasize that political liberation meant sexual liberation.

Unlike Freud, who believed that the “dark inner world of violent sexual desire” (p. 80) must be controlled to ensure the security of civilization, Reich believed in the attainment of a sexual utopia through “the dismantling of the sexual codes on which the bourgeois family is built” (p. 82). He thus makes sex a “pressing political issue” (p. 83) and “places the modern notion of the self—that of the psychologized individual—at the center of the political struggle” (p. 86)

# *Implications for Contemporary Society & Politics*

The former call for “tolerance” of sexual “minorities” has morphed into a demand for “*recognition*”. This “*recognition*” of, e.g., gay or transgender identities means that society does not merely allow such an identity, “but actively affirms, supports, & encourages it” (p. 87) & sanctions or punishes those who refuse to do so.



## Discussion Questions

1. Do you think Dr. Trueman's explanation for how sex became political is convincing? Why or why not?
2. While "psychologizing" identity, sexuality, and Christianity are problems, what place might there be for psychology in the Church and Christian life?
3. What do you think defines morality for most people (Americans) today?
4. How do we as individual believers and as the Church deal with the cultural demand for recognition of sexually-based identities?