

**THE SACRED SERPENT--SPECULATIONS ON
SPECULA**

BY

DR. ROBERT H. GORE

JULY, 2000

THE SACRED SERPENT--SPECULATIONS ON SPECULA I.

THE FOLLOWING COLUMN CONTAINS MATERIAL ADULT IN NATURE AND IS RATED PG-8. READER DISCRETION IS ADVISED.

The idle (if not always idyllic) summer doldrums have come fast upon us here in southwestern Florida. With the tourists and seasonal residents now returned to climes more amenable to their constitutions, those of us chained by our appreciation for lower peninsular summertime doldrums have time for idle speculation. And so our thoughts turn lightly to specula--pun intended.

First, let's get the word right. In English usage a speculum (Latin, n. neuter; plural = specula) is defined by Webster as "a tubular instrument inserted into a body passage for inspection or medication." However, the word in Latin originally meant "a mirror made of polished material." In fact, the root of the word, [spec-] itself forms the basis for a multitude of other "looking" words, ranging from species to spectator, spectrum, speculator, and fully a dozen more derivatives. Specula also meant a look-out or watchtower. Yet another (medical) derivative is specillum, which meant a probe or surgical instrument. All of these words have come into English in one form or another, but not always retaining their original Latin meaning. All may be used in polite company, particularly among cognoscenti like ourselves.

Remaining, for the nonce, erudite and sticking with the Latin, let's consider another word, this one compound: gaudie (or gaudium) which means "joy, sensual pleasure, enjoyment; and mihi, which as anyone who took high school Latin knows, means "to me." Not often seen or heard today, the compound word was purportedly created (and espoused) by the eminent Victorian sexologist and psychologist Havelock Ellis. The term was used to describe any of a number of artificial objects that might be used by women (or men) to provide personal sexual gratification, either alone or with others. Ellis provided case histories mainly of female patients (his practice included nuns, spinsters, divorced women, prisoners, and others of a "neurasthenic nature"), who used objects ranging from broom handles, to shoes, to various vegetables and fruits, to small marble or metal balls (called Ben-wa in Japanese) for self-gratification.

Let us now delve a little more deeply into the framework of our upcoming theme by considering another word, not obscene but also not often used in polite company: to wit, dildo. The derivation of this word, a descriptor, is uncertain but its etymological relationships are similar to gaudemini. It refers to any artificial or natural object, but particularly those penile in shape, used for personal or interpersonal sexual gratification. The distinctions between the two are not clear cut and often become further blurred by the users.