



Perversions and Purposes in Human Sexuality

"The deep-seated sex instinct moves men and women to embrace great sacrifices, such as are required in marriage and procreation, for the fulfillment of this remarkable human drive."



Many of us have probably heard single women talking among themselves about men, where one of them ends up saying, "That guy, he's just a pervert – he's only interested in sex." When women detect that a man's focus has become the pursuit of pleasure, and that unbridled sex has become an end in itself, they tend instinctively to back away. Women often intuitively understand that sex can't be reduced to mere pleasure without hurting both individuals involved, and negating other important goods, like love, family, children, and marriage.

It becomes a "perversion" when we attempt to redirect sex into something of our own specifications, refocusing it into a form of worldly pleasure-seeking and self-satisfaction. Sigmund Freud, whom no one could accuse of prudery, recognized the basic features of a perversion in the sexual realm when he declared,

"The common characteristic of all perversions... is that they have abandoned reproduction as their aim. We term sexual activity perverse when it has renounced the aim of reproduction and follows the pursuit of pleasure as an independent goal."

No age has ever sought to abandon the reproductive aim of sexual activity as much as our own. This is particularly manifest as our society yields to the seductive siren call of contraception, broadly encouraging the separation of sexual intimacy from procreation.

A 2013 Gallup poll reported that 91 percent believed birth control to be morally acceptable. Professor Robert George of Princeton University has noted that marriage is increasingly coming to be understood as "an emotional union for the sake of adult satisfaction that is served by mutually agreeable sexual play." Without the self-sacrificing dimension of sex (involving the acceptance of new life), individuals are left in the position of amiably using one another.

If seeking sex while blocking the possibility of reproduction is a form of sexual perversion, perhaps it is unsurprising that other forms of inherently non-procreative sex, that is to say, other sexual perversions, are rapidly expanding alongside the practice of contraception. In recent times, we have witnessed an unparalleled countermending of the life-giving dimension of the sexual act through the acceptance of non-

Making Sense of Bioethics

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complementary forms of bodily union including homosexual and lesbian sex, oral sex, and anal sex. A very significant jump of 19 percent in approval over the past 12 years for “gay or lesbian relations” was highlighted in the same 2013 Gallup poll.

Culturally, sex is subtly changing into a casual encounter subject to one’s own manipulation and determination, with pleasure serving as its central engine and rationale. Put simply, it is degenerating into a new reality before our eyes, cut out of the whole cloth of perversion, with the promotion of sexual activity in ways that are powerfully at odds with its proper context and purpose.

Sex has a unique bonding or cementing power between a man and a woman, because the sexual instinct is clearly bound up with the whole emotional, affective and interpersonal life of man and woman. Given this fact, real interpersonal harms and significant possibilities for selfishness and exploitation arise whenever individuals choose to act on this instinct in a context apart from marriage.

Indeed, sex is never a reasonable choice in the absence of commitment, particularly a permanent commitment, between a man and a woman. This flows in part from the

fact that it brings new lives into the world, and those lives are vulnerable and dependent, necessitating a mother and a father who are committed to each other and to the children arising from their permanent union.

It is remarkable how much consternation it causes today to point out what has long been obvious, namely, that sex and marriage must be integrally connected, and that in the final analysis, marriage must remain the unique and exclusive setting for human sexual activity. Through matrimonial consent, man and woman deliver and accept the exclusive and perpetual bond that allows them to carry out acts apt in themselves for the procreation of offspring.

The obvious corollary is that sexual relations of any kind in a non-marital context will invariably be immoral, including forms of pre- and extra-marital sex and the use of pornography and masturbation.

Indeed, it is imperative today that we work to re-connect the gratification of the sexual urge with the beautiful sharing of life between man and woman in matrimony. The deep-seated sex instinct moves men and women to embrace great sacrifices, such as are required in marriage and

procreation, for the fulfillment of this remarkable human drive. We are challenged today, like never before, to step away courageously from sexual perversions in all their destructive and ever-expanding forms, and to return to an ordered vision of sexuality within marriage, directed to the authentic good of individuals and society.

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