

The Forbidden Fruit: Philosophical Reflections on Sex and Human Sexuality

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Prologue

“And God saw that it was good” (*Gen. 1:10, 13, 18, 21, 25*). This was the constantly recurring theme of the first days of the creative act of God. And in the last day, when God created man, and his final act was complete, “God saw all that He made, and indeed it was very good” (*Gen. 1:13*). It was the design of God to make all things work perfectly well. There was an order into the world that He has created.

However, Eve took hold of the forbidden fruit of the tree at the center of paradise and offered it to Adam, and upon eating it, their eyes were opened and realized that they were nude (*Gen. 3: 6-7*). The commentary on the New Jerusalem Bible states that the realization of Adam and Eve that they were nude signified the arousal of lust as the first manifestation of disorder introduced into the harmony of creation.¹ Was it the realization of the presence of the human genitalia that provided the way for sexuality to be recognized? Or was sexuality simply coming to its due time?

¹ *The New Jerusalem Bible*. 1985. New York: Doubleday. see note 3b, p. 21.

I. Sex and the Philosopher

For the most part of the history of Western Philosophy, sex seems to be an uninteresting topic. "It is only comparatively recently that it has come to engage any stronger and sustained interest among professional philosophers."² This lack of sustained interest can be traced to the metaphysical distinctions made by Plato and the Pythagoreans on what is material and non-material, on the distinction between body and soul, with the latter taking a front seat while the former can be left on the wayside. From that time onwards, the care of the soul has taken a prominent place, as if the body were not a part of the human self. Even the philosopher's life then consisted in refraining from bodily pleasures!

This view continued and quite possibly reinforced in the Middle Ages, when the philosophical views were backed by religious traditions that enshrined the priority of the soul over the body, and yet quite ironically also espoused the command to be fruitful and multiply. In this sense then, the context of the sexual act has been limited to the heterosexual genital intercourse within monogamous marriage.

Philosophers of the modern era, however, disdained marriage as if it were an obstacle to Reason. The standards that were set on a philosopher's life were even more stringent than that of the monastic ideal. Due to this, the philosophers did not fully discuss the implications of sexual activity and the corresponding moral issues that are connected with it. The Platonic dichotomy and the Socratic model of an unmarried gadfly still held sway. Although there may be exceptions, this has been the prevalent ideal.

Only in the middle of the last century did we see a surging of interest on sex and love. Arthur Schopenhauer's "Metaphysics of Sexual Love" marked the turning point, and his analysis bordered on the unconventional. He interpreted human sexual desire and love as the propensity of the blind will of the human species to propagate itself. It is like an autonomous and automatic desire to perpe-

² Igor Primoratz. 1999. *Ethics and Sex*. London and New York: Routledge, p. 3.

tuates oneself. Even the traditional view of marriage did not escape the attention of Schopenhauer, proposing polygamy instead of monogamy, as it benefits both men and women! For all its faults and bravado, Schopenhauer must still be credited for espousing a serious look on the subject of sex and love.

Driving the most recent analysis of sex and love are issues attached to politics and gender.³ The emergence of issues such as the contemporary feminist movement, which is a manifestation of the egalitarian currents of modern social and political thought, gives color to the discussions on sex and love. Meanwhile, issues on sexual perversion touches on the natural law tradition in moral theory, as developed in the writings of Aristotle and Aquinas. There are indeed ramifications of the changing configurations on the sexual scope. Traditional moralities and modalities are challenged.

II. The Goal of the Sexual Act

What exactly is the end or goal of the sexual act? What design does sex intend to fulfill? Intertwined with the end of the sexual act is of course its nature or the very act itself. Is sex based on something physical or metaphysical? These are the questions that philosophers have endeavored to answer all through these years. They all have reasons in proposing their answers. Which one though would be reasonable enough?

A. "Be Fertile and Multiply!"

The idea that sex is part of the procreative powers of man that can be exercised only in the context of monogamous marriage did stem from a biblical injunction found in Genesis 1:28.⁴ Although the Old Testament presents only a plain account of the biblical command of peopling the earth, Paul's theology in his epistles

³ Robert M. Stewart (ed.). 1995. *Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 3.

⁴ "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

advanced further the notion, even giving it a moral implication, which in the plain reading of the Old Testament did not seem to contain.

The injunction given in Genesis seems to draw from the natural superiority of man over the entire order of creation. Since man is made in the image and likeness of God, and the rest are not, then it is but fitting for man to rule the earth. The sexual function then in this case is not related to any moral imperative.

A crucial turn happens in 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 when Paul is explicit in approving that it is not good for man to touch a woman.⁵ Rather than giving in however to the temptation of immorality, Paul grudgingly accedes that each man and woman should have a partner. This would prevent man from falling into fire, which is, giving in to the wills and wiles of the evil one.

This Paulinian account is not only informed by the Platonic duality of the body and soul and the Pythagorean negative attitude towards the body, but also by the Stoic understanding of sexuality as one of the passions that is at loggerheads with reason. Making these views even more radical is the belief of Paul that the Second Coming was already imminent, thus propagation of the species would be unnecessary.

The legacy of Paul continued in the Middle Ages through the ideas of thinkers like Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. Augustine not only emphasized the procreative function of sex, but also

⁵ "Now in regard to the matters about which you wrote: 'It is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman,' but because of cases of immorality every man should have his own wife, and every woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his duty toward his wife, and likewise the wife toward her husband. A wife does not have authority over her own body, but rather her husband, and similarly a husband does not have authority over his own body, but rather his wife. Do not deprive each other, except perhaps by mutual consent for a time, to be free for prayer, but then return to one another, so that Satan may not tempt you through your lack of self-control. This I say by way of concession, however, not as a command. Indeed, I wish everyone to be as I am, but each has a particular gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. Now to the unmarried and to widows, I say: it is a good thing for them to remain as they are, as I do, but if they cannot exercise self-control they should marry, for it is better to marry than to be on fire."

attached man's sexuality to his fallen nature. The rebellion of man's flesh against reason is but a reflection of man's upheaval against the will of God.⁶ Since sexuality is against God, it is likewise considered as shameful, and the organs used in expressing one's sexuality are shameful parts.

Following the impetus of Augustine, Thomas Aquinas gave sexual activity its proper direction and scope by connecting it to the natural function or task of the sexual organs. For Aquinas, this function is clearly that of procreation, thus every sexual activity should be done only for procreative purposes. In identifying sexual activity with the function of the organs, the central element then becomes the emission of the semen by the male sexual organ. The emission of semen that is not geared towards procreation is contrary to nature.⁷ The best context in which this function of the organ can be fulfilled is that of monogamous marriage. This view of Aquinas leaves much to be desired, for by identifying the semen as the central element in the sexual activity, it also implies the natural superiority of man over woman, a view which also unfortunately resonates in the other writings of Aquinas.

The Catholic tradition picks up the view of these eminent theologians and further elaborated another function of the sexual act. According to *Humanae Vitae*, the love that is expressed by husband and wife in the sexual activity also denotes the "unitive" function. The once purely human act now carried with it a metaphysical connection, or better yet, a spiritual action between the partners.

This love is above all fully human, a compound of sense and spirit. It is not, then, merely a question of natural instinct or emotional drive. It is also, and above all, an act of the free will, whose trust is such that it is meant not only to survive the joys and sorrows of daily life, but also to grow, so that husband and wife become in a way one heart and one soul, and together attain their human fulfillment.⁸

⁶ Augustine of Hippo. 1966. *The City of God against the Pagans*. P. Levine (trans.). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, p. 353.

⁷ cf. *SCG* III, 122, 5.

⁸ *HV* 9.

Since the act is spiritual, it further strengthens the bond between husband and wife. Further, this view complements the prevailing tradition that marriage should be monogamous and valid *usque ad mortem*! This unitive dimension to the sexual act adds something more than what nature seems to have already provided.

B. Love's Climax?

The reason perhaps why many unwanted pregnancies do happen is the mere fact that the procreative end of the sexual activity is not really the one intended. For older people who no longer have the possibility of conception, the possibility of expressing their love through the sexual activity is still open, and remains as the more significant and emotional means. The more appealing reason why lovers go to bed is that they want to express fully their love for one another through the sexual activity. In this case, sex then becomes the climax of love.

Sex is indeed a distinctly human experience. No amount of scientific explanation can fully account for the emotions involved in such activity. The movement from sexual arousal, to the feeling of sexual desire and finally to the event of the intercourse and experience of erotic love defies science. Only philosophical concepts and methods can perhaps explain such phenomena.

The unitive aspect of sex can be readily seen in the physical activity itself. The sexual desire felt during, or even before the actual intercourse, can be very consuming and overwhelming. What is more poignant than two persons as it were hoping to reach the depths of each other or trying to contain the immensity of one's being in one interlocking embrace? The desire indeed is one that seeks to unite not just physically with the beloved, but it is desire that goes beyond mere physicality. It is a desire that seeks spiritual union.

The two persons involved in the sexual activity are said to be in a "lovemaking" mode. So do the individuals really intend to conceive when they do the act, or is it that they are merely expressing to the utmost their love for one another?

On the other hand, there are those who undergo the sexual activity without any feeling of love at all. In fact, the desire felt before the actual activity may not even be directed to any particular person. And when the activity is done, it is not spiritual union that is the aim, but merely for satisfying one's desire. Or it would seem that the sheer excretion of semen for gratification's sake is the end. In this sense, one's partner is no longer a subject to behold, but an object to be used and abused. Seen the other way around, it can also be that the body is used merely for a utilitarian end. This is what happens when we take into account persons who engage in prostitution. A seemingly worse aspect of the sexual activity happens when the partner is no longer a person but a physical object, such as animals or sex toys and the like. Here the interpersonal touch of the sexual activity is lost.

There is then a possibility that not all sex involves love. Admittedly, when done in the context of love, sex becomes the fullest physical expression. But sex is still possible outside the context of love. There are basic differences between sexual love and loveless sex. Love tends towards permanence, while sexual desire is fleeting. Love is exclusive, while sexual desire seeks variety. The experiences and joys that accompany love are cumulative, while the pleasures of sex are repetitive. Love regards the other, while sexual desire only has the care for the self.⁹

Would love then be adequate as an explanation why man and woman undergo the rigors and pleasures of sex? It seems that there is more to sex than meets the eye!

C. Love in Any Language

Jean-Paul Sartre proposed the view that what is at work in sexual desires and love relations is a search and competition for freedom, recognition, and power. The other is seen as an object that requires obliteration or at least subjugation.

⁹ Primoratz, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

The notion of "ownership" by which love is so often explained, is not actually primary. Why should I want to appropriate the Other if it were not precisely that the Other makes me be? But this implies precisely a certain mode of appropriation: it is the Other's freedom as such that we want to get hold of.¹⁰

In this way, sex is seen as an act of conquest of one body over the other. The Other has the same project as the Self, and so it is the one with the stronger will that prevails. Sex is considered as a language that has subjugation as its end. It is a relation of power and freedom.

Building upon the arguments of Sartre, Robert Solomon opines that love is a body language by which we express a plethora of emotions: from gentleness and affection to anger and resentment; from superiority and dependence to domination and passivity; from mutual recognition to shame, jealousy and possessiveness. And these emotions are expressed more fully and even elegantly in the sexual activity. Sex is even more effective than verbal expression.¹¹ What cannot be fully expressed in words can be physically communicated through the sexual activity. Interestingly however for Solomon, love is not expressed in sexual activity. Consequently sex is not the best expression of love. For love must be distinguished from other feelings and emotions that are negative. Love and respect in this case are rare and delicate, and should not be confused with the more common emotions, which are usually negative.

If sex is a mere expression of the body, a type of language that conveys meaning through bodily touches and gyrations, then sex loses its moral import. Sex would be reduced to a vehicle just like any expression, verbal or otherwise. Morally, sex is neutral, since it is merely descriptive.

How about those sexual activities that no longer need a partner, like masturbation? Would communication still take place? Would it still operate like any language does or would it be like

¹⁰ Jean-Paul Sartre. 1995. "First Attitude Toward Others: Love, Language, Masochism" in *Philosophical Perspectives on Sex and Love*. Robert M. Stewart (ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 202.

¹¹ cf. Primoratz, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

only an auto-communication? What about casual sex, would there be a kind of self-communication in such acts? Or is it merely an act of subjugation, albeit even for one night only? Sex is indeed communicative and personal, but there are more dimensions to it that cannot be captured by merely stating that sex is an expression of emotions.

D. Intense Pleasure

The previous points that were discussed purport that sex always acts for an end. It is directed towards something outside the act of sex itself. However, if we put aside the biological aspect and the romantic and expressive perspectives, what remains of sex? It would seem that we are missing the point here when we consider something extraneous to the sexual activity. Sex, is just as it is, plain sex after all!

If sex is discussed in relation to its biological consequence, then morality sets in. Anything that contravenes the natural biological effect of the act is seen as immoral. The combination of sex and love can be explosive at times. Would sexual attraction be considered love, or is it simply lust? Would that love and sex be clearly demarcated, then disastrous results in marriage would be easily avoided. However, that is not always the case. If sex were a means of communication, like any language, then the act becomes only an instrument in conveying one's emotions and by itself alone, it becomes devoid of meaning. Taken by itself, however, sex seems to have an intrinsic value.

Although it can communicate many things, sex can still communicate nothing in particular and yet can still remain to be good sex. This is of course the hedonistic viewpoint, that is, the act is done simply for the sake of pleasure. Here, the sexual desire felt by one towards another is simply a desire for the other's body and nothing else. And the ensuing sexual activity is one that satisfies this desire and nothing else. The pursuit of sex then becomes merely one that is directed towards pleasure. Sexual activity here does not only refer to the genital engagement, but also includes the actions leading to it: the act of kissing and fondling for instance in a sexual foreplay.

This view limits sex to the bodily and physical component of a person. But what about if one is attracted to the other's personality? The personality of the other may be the wick that leads to the fireworks, for from the hedonist viewpoint the intrinsic end for such attraction is the actual sexual contact.

It would seem however that the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake can be self-defeating. Pleasure is, for most of the time, achieved not in the direct pursuit of it, but rather in the course of doing things that we like, even without giving thought to the pleasure involved in the act of doing. But sexual desire seems to be different in the sense that it actually seeks the pleasure that sex can give.

The hedonist viewpoint presents sex in morally neutral terms. It has no moral import: whether positive or negative. Like all other pleasures, sexual pleasure is good; but it is not a good that is endowed with moral significance.

It would however be narrow if we identify pleasure simply as the intrinsic value of sex. For such identification escapes other facts involved in the sexual activity. For instance, prostitutes who ply their trade might experience no sexual pleasure at all. Or consider a woman who engages in a sexual activity just to conceive a child; in this sense, the pleasure that may be derived from engaging in sex is just secondary. Pleasure merely becomes a by product. Thus, it is not the be-all and end-all of the sexual act.

E. Recapitulation: Sex and its Ends

The original question is once again recalled. What is the end of sex? From the foregoing discussions, there are different views, some not necessarily contradicting one another. And yet we are still faced with the dilemma of coming up with a full explanation of the phenomenon of sex. Perhaps, since it is a human expression and experience, then it can be considered also like a mystery like the human being. Be as it may, there seems to be not one satisfactory explanation for the sexual activity and human sexuality. Thus, the best way seems to be a healthy combination of all the views expounded above. Sex is an expressive activity of love and

other emotions, one that gives pleasure, and yet still open to procreation.

III. *Coitus Interruptus*: Crimes Against Nature

Whether sex is pleasurable, or sex is procreative, or sex is the fullest expression of love, or sex is a means for communicating emotions; talking about sex is really a hot topic. And with the sexual activity comes also issues that are not only sizzling but also controversial. What makes these issues controversial of course are the moral implications that come with them. More than that, however, there are social issues that are connected and must be presented in the open so that we may have a better appreciation of them.

In the previous discussions, it seems to be a given that the players in the sexual activity are of the opposite sex. But this is hardly the case or norm these days. Homosexual relations abound. And even beyond issues of homosexuality, we have other issues that pertain to non-human beings. In fact, Aquinas identifies three acts as “crimes against nature.”

Aquinas has a very searing view of masturbation, homosexuality and bestiality: they are worse than adultery, incest, and rape.¹² While the latter are violations of moral and legal rules established by persons, and injure other persons; they are however in accord with the natural manner of sexual intercourse. Masturbation, acts of homosexuality and bestiality are sins contrary to nature. Since the very order of nature is violated here, it follows that they are injuries done to God, the Author of nature. Thereby masturbation, along with homosexuality and bestiality are the gravest of all.

A. *Masturbation: All By Myself*

From the viewpoint of sex as the fullest expression of love, masturbation is considered an aberration, for it deviates from the proper objective of sexual desire on the beloved. Since masturbation

¹² cf. *ST* II-II, 154, 12.

is an act done by a single individual, it destroys the principle of interpersonal encounter, and in the end becomes a selfish act.

From the point of view of sex as language, masturbation is like a monologue act. It can be likened to a person talking to himself. Thus, it becomes also a disability, that is, the inability to express or a refusal to say what one wants.

Masturbation may be consistent with the hedonist viewpoint of seeking pleasure for its own sake. Masturbation is pleasurable even if it is only a "substitute for the real thing." But it does reduce sexual attraction to an act of narcissism. Taken in this sense, masturbation renders sex almost inutile. If pleasure can be had with one's own self, then why complicated matters by grabbing a partner?

Given the following premises, including that of Aquinas's scathing analysis, would masturbation be considered a deviant activity? But masturbation is much too elementary, general and a frequent type of sexual behavior to be considered as a deviancy. Indeed, more than the intense orgasm that can be derived from masturbation, there are psychological factors behind it.

Even Catholic morality, while considering masturbation as containing ontic evil because it closes both the personal union aspect and the procreative aspect of physical sexual expression, should accede that masturbation might stem from emotional and physical pressures that build up inside the person, such as that the culpability of the person becomes lessened but not totally eradicated.¹³

This approach though does not agree with the present magisterial formulations on masturbation, which sees all venereal pleasure outside marriage as objectively grave moral evil. The concept of an ontic evil, when applied to masturbation, offers a more philosophical and even theological way of approaching the problems that occur mostly but not limited to adolescents. Thus

¹³ Philip Keane. 1980. *Sexual Morality: A Catholic Perspective*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., pp. 65-66.

the approach to the confessional becomes not only human, that is trying to understand the psychological dynamics that play within the person's emotional framework, but also humane, that is, it becomes not disparaging but understanding and kind.

B. Homosexuality: Desire for the Same

The term homosexuality is derived from the Greek word *homos* meaning "the same" and the Latin word *sexus* meaning "sex." Thus, it literally means the same sex or the same sexuality. Its more common meaning is that it is an erotic or genital or sexual attraction toward persons of one's own sex.

Before the twentieth century, Western philosophy for most part tended to ignore the subject of homosexual acts. There are brief remarks about it, mostly condemning the homosexual act simply because it is unnatural. Plato would instance remark that homosexual acts should be prohibited because they are not natural, as can be seen from the fact that animals do not commit them.¹⁴ In the same vein as Aquinas, Kant also adduces to homosexuality as one of the crimes against the flesh¹⁵ for it is contrary to the end of humanity, which is, in respect to sexuality, the preservation of the species without debasing the person.¹⁶

The traditional condemnation of the homosexual acts echoes the Biblical tradition. Homosexual activities are condemnable since they are non-procreative, and therefore unnatural and immoral. In the Old Testament, homosexual acts are condemned as abominations,¹⁷ while in the New Testament, Paul considers them to be unnatural.¹⁸

¹⁴ cf. *Laws* 836c.

¹⁵ Much like the view of Aquinas, Kant identifies the other crimes of the flesh to be masturbation and zoophilia.

¹⁶ Immanuel Kant. 1930. *Lectures on Ethics*. L. Infield (trans.). London: Methuen. p. 170.

¹⁷ cf. Leviticus 18:22; 20.

¹⁸ cf. Romans 1:26-27; I Corinthians 6:9-10; I Timothy 1:9-10.

Following the lead of Paul, Augustine and Aquinas hammered down on the condemnation. Augustine says that the act violates the friendship between God and human because the homosexual act, which is lustful, pollutes this friendship.¹⁹ Aquinas, for his part, aside from the earlier condemnations in the *Summa Theologica*, compares homosexuality to the crime of homicide, for the act, through the inordinate emission of semen, precludes the generation of human nature.²⁰

Homosexuality, of course, is not only confided to the moral domain, but it also has wide ramifications in the political and social sphere. Michel Foucault argues that the term "homosexuality" was invented in the nineteenth century and that it differed significantly from categories of same-sex desires that had gone before. He also suggests that the birth of the modern notion of sexuality can be discerned in the kinds of surveillance practiced within seminaries, religious colleges and convents since the Counter-Reformation.²¹ The labeling of homosexual activity as unnatural thus becomes a political move, a move designed to perpetuate and maximize power to those who already possess it. Consequently, this results in marginalization of a rather productive part of society.

What then do we make of homosexuals? For the most part, the homosexual orientation has been attributed to psychological or environmental explanations. But such explanations are hardly satisfactory. There has been no definite and conclusive evidence as to the direct effects of these explanations to the homosexual orientation.

From the moral standpoint then, one can use the methodology of "objectively grave/subjectively not culpable." In this case, even if all homosexual acts remain to be objectively grave moral evil, the persons performing the homosexual acts, considering all the factors surrounding the case, are not morally guilty for their sexual acts. This is still in line with the Vatican Declaration issued

¹⁹ *Confessions* III, 8.

²⁰ *SCG* III, 122, 6.

²¹ Michel Foucault. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Colin Gordon (ed.). New York: Pantheon, pp. 107-108.

in 1975 entitled *Persona Humana*. The declaration insists on consideration to be given to homosexuals, treating them with understanding and with prudence in judging their culpability.²² This would then give a certain moral leeway to homosexuals who may exhibit the tendency to reform according to the Church standards. While the tone of this methodology may not still be fully tolerant, nevertheless it is less condemnatory.

A more radical approach to homosexuality, especially now that homosexual relationships and even gay marriages are in vogue, is to consider homosexual acts occurring in responsibility-seeking context as not evil in no way whatsoever. This may now appeal to the position of Foucault, who bats for mainstreaming not the pervert but simply the diverse. In this methodology, the tension however remains between dropping all notions of homosexual acts as intrinsically evil and the notion of procreation as a key element in the meaning of sexuality.

The methodology of "ontic evil" may also satisfy the morality of homosexual acts as in masturbation. "When the homosexual is not free to be otherwise or to be perfectly chaste is achieving responsible relationships and personal growth in his or her homosexual acts, these acts are ontically evil in what they lack, but not morally evil in the actual concrete totality in which they exist."²³ We are thus given here flexibility in accepting homosexuals in the mainstream of society but also in providing some sort of pastoral responsibility to them in the acts that they do.

C. Perversions and Deviations

In the same vein as that of Sartre's, Michel Foucault advances the view that the greatest support for the psychoanalytic project becoming a normative discipline is the notion that sexuality is the index of one's subjectivity, of one's true self. "The capacity of sexual desire to become the most revealing sign of our truest, deepest selves depends upon a long historical formation through

²² PH 8.

²³ Keane, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

which we were constituted as subjects in a special relation to truth and sex.”²⁴

There was a shift during the Middle Ages in which the issue of sexuality was linked with morality, whereas prior to this period, the Greeks and the Romans seemingly have no qualms about its practice. From the Modern Period onwards, the issue of sexuality was further linked to psychoanalysis. These movements, for Foucault, constitute the “medicalisation of sexuality..., as though it were an area of particular pathological fragility in human existence.”²⁵ It is then with disdain that sex is considered, or it should be ranged with the normative structures of the *confessional* Church and the *psychoanalytic* society. Those who do not conform to the norms are considered as immoral and deviants.

Much of the discussion on what is perverted sex or who is a deviant hinges on the distinction between what is ‘natural’ and ‘unnatural.’ For Aquinas, the acts of masturbation, homosexuality and bestiality are singled out as crimes against nature simply because they are against the natural order of human copulation in terms of partner, organ or posture.²⁶

Obviously, a moral judgment is based on a metaphysical assumption. Thus, an act is deviant if it digresses from its intended end. Most commonly, we associate sex to procreation, and any act beyond this end is a deviation. However, what seems to be problematic is that the moral judgment here is based on the biological function of the sexual organs. The institutionalization of norms, as perceived by Foucault, would merely serve to reinforce the prevailing idea of what sex should be. As it were, it serves to add moral depravity to the already perverted act.

The crux of the matter is really on the interpretation of what is natural. Marquis de Sade, for instance, would propose a sexual morality that is devoid of any conceptions of God, i.e. marked by the

²⁴ Bernauer, James W. and Michael Mahon. 1994. “The ethics of Michel Foucault” in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*. Gary Gutting (ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 150.

²⁵ Foucault, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

²⁶ Mark Jordan. 2002. *The Ethics of Sex*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, p. 87.

absence of any religious connotation of sex, but not disregarding nature. In De Sade's moral philosophy, sexual perversion is not perversion at all, for such acts do not actually deviate from what is natural in man. There is nothing then that man does that is against his nature. When a man exhibits homosexual tendencies, that is simply what his nature intends him to be. Going against this would constitute what is unnatural. Nature is the yardstick of what is moral. "There can exist no evil in obedience to Nature's promptings."²⁷ In this sense then, perverted acts are merely sexual preferences that are unconventional but not exactly immoral. This view seems to be justified by psychological findings that there is sense of both masculinity and femininity in all human beings. It is perhaps our nature then to exhibit both? Or at times, one would surface over the other?

The questions whether a sexual act is perverted or not still begs some definite answers. But with the historicity of man, no definitive answer can be claimed. Philosophers would go on discussing what is natural. Religions would reinforce their views with dogmatic pronouncements backed by sacred texts. Societies would institutionalize psychiatric care for those who do not conform to the set standards. But man would continue to simply act according to his nature, even if the natural remains in the process of discovery.

D. Recapitulation: On Ontic Evil

Moral evil is always wrong, but this depends on a composite analysis of: a) the act itself; b) the intention of the agent and; c) the circumstances.

On the other hand, ontic evil refers to evil in the world that is not moral (thus, it is either pre-moral or physical). Ontic evil can be caused or allowed, but only for proportionate reason. Metaphysically speaking, no ontic evil is *ipso facto* a moral evil in all cases.

²⁷ Marquis de Sade. 1965. *The Complete Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings*. R. Seaver and A. Wainhouse (trans.). New York: Grove Press, p. 323.

Properly understood and carefully explained, the concept of “ontic evil” seems to hold a lot of promise, but it can also be open to a plethora of abuses. It must be always emphasized that ontic evil can be caused or allowed but only for proportionate reasons. These reasons must take into account the critical and crucial conditions of the person. Care must be exercised so that the proper and proportionate reasons can come out.

The concept of “ontic evil” may sometimes run contrary to what is definitive of the concept of the nature of man. This will result if we have a static concept of the nature of man. But the present conditions seem to suggest that the world is evolving, the matrix of relationships is no longer quite the same as before. The same concept also allows for a better understanding of the historicity and facticity of man, facts that are so often emphasized in our contemporary world. The ever-changing situations also affect man and his relations. Therefore, this dynamic nature of relationships and societal arrangements are taken into account. And the concept of ontic evil seems to give a more than satisfactory account of the morality of the act and the culpability of the agent.

Epilogue

Sex and sexuality are indeed complex subjects that they sometimes defy definitions and categorizations. There are standards set by society and code of belief enshrined by religion, and yet man, in all his humanity, would seemingly transgress all of these so that he could fully express his being human.

In our contemporary times, it would seem inappropriate and even inutile to impose one’s own understanding of what natural is. For such views can be challenged and may be proven to be unreasonable. What remains for us then is the abiding respect for the human person, even if our moral views would categorically demand that such persons be considered *anathema*. The human being is still a person that is worth all our love and attention.

After Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in paradise, they were banished forever by God, punished to ignominy and pain. But did not God send a Redeemer to emancipate us from the shackles of sin? We should not also look at the flesh as if it were a prison of the soul. When the Redeemer came, he came to save the entire person, body and soul! □