

IV.CASE FOR PATERNAL PRINCIPLE FROM THE PARENTAL STANCE

IV.0 Chapter goals and style

The goal is to establish a crucial phase in my case for the Paternal Principle from the character stance. This crucial phase is showing that the Paternal Principle is the correct formula for expressing the fundamental principle for male sexuality on mating. I do not try to cause readers to condemn sexual acts in conflict with the principle by describing sexual acts in ways likely to provoke a sense of offense.

I fantasized laying out a chain of deductively valid arguments whose beginning premises compelled the intellectual assent of all intelligent enough to understand them. The conclusion would be the Paternal Principle. That would be a proof of the Paternal Principle. Proving the Paternal Principle is a fantasy. I cannot find the intellectually compelling first principles for my stance or any alternative. I am satisfied if I lay out considerations that lead some to think that the Paternal Principle is well supported and others to think that the case deserves to be taken seriously. The whole book is laying out such considerations. A central segment of this chapter organizes them as an argument in the form of a monologue.

Let the very word “monologue” serve as a warning. “Monologue” suggests talking to establish a claim which in this case is the Paternal Principle. So, it may seem that the sole goal is to give words as justification for saying some other words. I do want to justify professing the Paternal Principle to guide conduct and policy. However, concern with **the** justifying **of** saying some words can mislead to thinking that I am trying to justify an inert principle of reason in the way in which Hume regarded principles of reason. As words the Paternal Principle is inert for guiding conduct. I want my words to accomplish more. There need to be sentiments to animate

the words. For me my words arise from as well as guide and structure my sentiments. I can only hope that my words both in this chapter and the whole book, are effective enough to start that process in others. That being said, I return to giving words.

The fantasy of a proof organizes my line of argument. After reminding ourselves of the intellectual legitimacy of moral judging, I make a case for the assumptions of the moral framework from which I argue. This moral framework comprises what I call the character stance and the parental stance. The case for the assumptions of these stances replaces laying down intellectually compelling beginning moral principles. I then turn to arguing for the Paternal Principle in this moral framework.

I imagine answering in a small class or seminar: Why do you say that men ought to govern their sex lives in accordance with the Paternal Principle? After giving what I hope is not a too “long-winded” answer I offer several sections of commentary on the style and phases of the argument.

When I give an argument I follow a “golden rule.” I give what I would like to get. What I like to get in an argument is honesty about assumptions, the status of claims made and an effort to avoid fallacies. I try to argue this way even if my line of thought becomes complicated and loses some persuasive power. Since some of the emphasis on logical points may not interest all readers this chapter has two parts. The first part is primarily the argument while the second part is commentary on the argument.

I want to emphasize that I do not argue for the Paternal Principle by alleging that violations of the Paternal Principle lead to personal and social damage. If our sexuality shows us that the way we should choose to be sexually active is in accord with the Paternal Principle, I am confident that violations will result in personal and social damage. However, since natural

systems conflict the damage inflicted by moral violations could be offset by benefits accruing from operations of natural systems conflicting with our moral system. This last sentence uses “harm” and “benefit” in the medical sense introduced in the second chapter on sexual trivialization. It also expresses deep skepticism about any harmony of nature.

Confessing that I imagine arguing in an academic setting reveals that, besides arguing for a moral principle, a goal of the argument is to give intellectual status to the principle in secular settings. It is an intelligent principle to profess. The main goal is not to convince a large segment of the world’s population of the correctness of Paternal Principle. Millions, if not billions, of people already give it at least “lip service.” Indeed if I am right about there being a moral dimension to sexual thinking and the Paternal Principle being one of the right moral sexual principles people should have come to justify and to accept the Paternal Principle in some of the various ways by which people reach conclusions. So it is not surprising that a philosopher’s complex argument yields what many people already accept by some simpler thinking which may be as intellectually respectable as the philosopher’s. It is also not surprising that many people do not accept the principle. After all, it is not provable.

This is not to say that I have a purely intellectual interest in the Paternal Principle. I want very much to unsettle the sexually progressive mindset which I believe dominates the opinion forming elites of Western Europe and the United States. I hope to unsettle a self-righteous confidence that “we now have it right about sexuality.” When reading the presentation of my argument, do an exercise which might cause a sense of conviction about the correctness of the Paternal Principle. Recall the second chapter characterization of medical harm. Imagine, or remember, in your life a medically harmless act clearly in violation of the principle about which you have some moral uneasiness. This could be a “one night stand,” masturbation or legal

homosexual act. Try diagnosing your sense of moral offense as a threatening feeling of lawlessness. Reflect that if this apparently trivial act is OK, then in principle there is no moral barrier to the most awful acts to which this powerful (demonic) force might lead me. Under certain circumstances any thing sexual is permitted. Permission of the trivial violation might not cause you to slide down a “slippery slope” to decadence but it breaks the moral barrier for doing so. The sections beginning with IV.1 deal with the preliminary topic of defending use of moral reasoning. The sections beginning with IV.2 outline the parental stance and justify talking of moral purposes in nature. The actual case for expressing the fundamental male sexual moral principle begins with the IV.3 sections.

Part One

IV.1 Intellectual respectability of moral judging

At the outset I confront my anxiety that we are somehow thinking in a second rate, if not illegitimate, fashion when we think morally. My logical positivist training burdens me with this suspicion. A positivist legacy and its roots pervade our Western culture. Popular sociology characterizes this widespread suspicion as acceptance of moral relativism.

IV.1.1 Features of moral sexual thinking

What is moral thinking? Recall the semantic features of moral rules we noted in the second chapter. With a moral judgment people think that what it requires overrides all other requirements, that humans can conform to it, that it is binding on all human beings, that it is positively valuable that behavior conforms to it, and that people deserve some punishment for failure to conform. Recall also that I added that persons are objectively changed by doing right or wrong. Being a person who made such a choice is now part of a description of who that person is. As we also noted in when discussing features of moral judging, thinking that it is positively

valuable that behavior conform to a norm is inseparable from a motive to follow the norm. Another feature of moral thinking, at least my moral thinking, is shared with thought of necessary truths. If I think of a moral norm obligating me as correct, I cannot think of anything which would remove the obligation. Its authority lies within thinking itself. For instance, I cannot think of anything which would make “recreational masturbation” morally permissible.

Now I cite a feature of moral thinking about sexuality which may be idiosyncratic. Thinking morally about sexuality is moral sexual thinking, viz. sexual thinking with the semantics of moral thinking. This facilitates my saying that our sexuality gives us sexual morality. Similarly, thinking morally about economic and governmental issues — thinking about justice — is economic and political thought with the semantics of moral thinking. Classification of thinking morally about sexuality as a type of sexual thinking depends, as noted below, on my case that sexuality is inalienable from our humanity or rationality. It elaborates what it means to say that sexuality is not morally neutral.

IV.1.1a Vindication of moral thinking

A bit of conceptual play shows that worrying about the legitimacy of moral thinking presupposes it. If I worry whether or not I am entitled to think normatively in a moral way, I am worried about whether I may, morally, use my intellect in such a way. Is this a way human intelligence may be used, let alone, ought to be used? However, by expressing this concern I am thinking morally. This might be like a Kantian transcendental deduction or justification of moral thinking. In any event it is a standard ploy in beginning philosophy courses for dismissing naïve expressions of ethical relativism.

IV.1.1b Primacy of moral thinking

Indeed evaluative thinking, including moral evaluation, has authority in human rationality over factual or logical thinking. Human rationality is self-critical. We ask ourselves whether or not we are thinking correctly. This is moral thinking because we are trying to reach a correct judgment on whether we are thinking as we ought. This is a moral “ought” because we are not merely concerned with whether or not the thinking gets interesting and useful natural science which supports reliable engineering. We are asking whether we ought to be thinking in these ways and whether we are doing so in the way we ought. Just because the answer is a resounding “Yes!” does not drown out the legitimate moral question raised.

I am thinking morally throughout the writing of this chapter. I am not bracketing off moral judgments and attitudes in an effort to found a few basic moral principles on allegedly more reliable non-moral judgments of fact and logic.

IV.1.1c Legitimacy & truth

The preceding arguments justifying moral thinking show that we are using our intelligence legitimately by thinking morally. The following is a justified principle: Reasoning cannot be used to show that moral reasoning as a whole is not reasonable. What has not been shown is that moral reasoning, let alone all reasoning, ever represents what is apart from our reasoning as it is apart from reasoning. We have to return to this deep skeptical challenge in the discussion of amoralism in the chapter on nihilism. In the meantime we can be confident that moral thinking can be as rational as any thinking.

IV.2 Normative framework & assumptions

Consider now specific moral assumptions about humanity as an end-in-itself, purposes in nature and character. These are fragments from the shattered fantasy of a proof. Nonetheless, I make them and use them in what I call a rhetorical argument.

IV.2.1 Humanity and sexuality as an ends in themselves

This section elaborates on the critique of Hume in the previous chapter. That section dismissed the Humean thesis separating passions from reasoning and denigrating reason as the slave of our passions.

Humanity is that *sapiens* when humans are classified as *homo sapiens*.

Our humanity is our capacity to reason and to choose in accordance with our reasoning. Our ability to choose ends and means to survive in our environments are obvious exercises of human reasoning. Reasoning also includes determining what is the case, what ought to be, our choosing to act and to be in accordance with our reasoning and the reflective ability to evaluate how we reason and choose in accordance with our reasoning. Although humans can be aware of their reasoning, people do not need to be conscious of their reasoning. As we move along avoiding obstacles we are reasoning without being conscious of any thinking about avoiding obstacles. Similarly, people can be critically evaluating their reasoning without being explicitly conscious of doing so.

Kant's 1784 *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals* made our culture aware of "Humanity is an end in-itself." With my definition of "humanity," I should also say that reasoning is an end-in-itself. That is not so familiar. What do I mean and how is it relevant to sexual morality? *This is a bi-partite moral assumption.* To say that humanity is an end-in-itself is to say first that there is a way humanity ought to be. Humanity is not morally neutral. Secondly, it says that humanity itself specifies the way it ought to be. Nothing which humanity is for the sake of specifies how humanity ought to be. Humanity is morally autonomous. The argument of the previous two chapters that sexuality is an inalienable component of humanity now yields that sexuality is not morally neutral and sexuality can specify how it ought to be. The argument for

inalienability was crucial for avoiding a division fallacy by concluding that sexuality is not morally neutral and gives itself moral rules simply because it is a component of humanity.

How ought humanity be? How ought our capacities to reason and to choose be? The answer attributes functions and purposes to natural systems which are not individual organisms.

IV.2.2 Functions and impersonal purposes as a moral function

Of course, we attribute purposes to organisms; especially human beings. Obviously each of us has various purposes. When we have a purpose there is something we intend to get.

Usually, we have a desire for what we intend to get and beliefs that certain actions will help us get it. So personal purposes require that what has the purpose has mental states of intending, desiring and believing. The impersonal purposes discussed in this section do not require that what has the purpose is even capable of having mental states. For instance we can talk of the purpose of economic activity. We can talk of both the personal purposes of individuals in buying and selling as well as the purpose of buying and selling process. The **practice** of buying and selling neither thinks nor feels. The impersonal use of “purpose” applied to buying and selling is a moral use. To say, for instance, that the purpose of buying and selling is that people cooperate in production of goods and services for the material benefit of all is to say that this is what ought to be the outcome of buying and selling. Those who impede this purpose by lying or producing shoddy goods do moral wrong by preventing what ought to be.

In the moral framework I am calling the character stance, judgments of impersonal purposes are very broad but very important. They specify the crucial goals that ought to be pursued. There is still need for much moral reasoning to determine what we ought to do to bring about and not impede these ends which ought to be pursued.

This moral use of the notion of impersonal purpose is connected in at least three ways with a teleological outlook towards nature which attributes functions to natural systems. First, talking about systems such as the lungs having the function of aerating the blood supports the legitimacy of saying that a system which has no mental states can do something *for the sake of* something else. Second, the fact that X functions to bring about Y satisfies a logically necessary condition for a moral judgment that the purpose of X is Y by showing that what is said ought to be can be. “*ought*” implies “*can*.” Purposive goal seeking is possible because there is movement towards a goal in functionality. Third, the fact of functionality probably plays a *causal* role in forming beliefs that there is a purpose. People observe that there is a function, and that often it is the most important function and judge morally that this function is the purpose.

What is not done in this framework is specify various features of a function which entitle us to transform a factual claim about functions into a moral judgment about purpose. Since I am not speculating about the origins of morality, I am not even offering a conjecture on whether people thought amorally, or functionally, about ends, before thinking morally about ends.

In this framework “purpose” is a better term than “good.” The label “good” indicates that what is labeled is both desired and desirable. As a moral term the label “purpose” indicates that the end ought to be pursued. Some may acquire a taste for it; but that is not required for it to be that which we ought to seek. For those who use terms from moral theory this framework is deontological. There is a *telos* or goal. But the goal is obligatory regardless of our inclinations. Nonetheless, these purposes or obligatory ends are compatible with what some have called the first principle of natural law: Do good and avoid evil. This first principle tells us to promote what is good and never choose directly to inhibit what is good. Similarly there is an understanding that these purposes ought to be promoted and we ought never choose directly to inhibit them.

This is not Kantian exegesis although I have been strongly influenced by Kant's notion of ends which are the same time duties.¹ With the notion of ends as duties we can appreciate life as a duty. Life is inalienable from our humanity. As inalienable from humanity a function of living is to do our duty. So living can be given the moral purpose of doing our duty. From this perspective life is primarily a duty; not a good. Here we have a foundation for condemnation of suicide to avoid pain and suffering. While on this topic of functions and purposes, let me emphasize that this framework does not attribute either a function or a purpose to evolution.

IV.2.3 The purpose of humanity, sexuality and the meaning of life

In this section, I answer the question "What is the meaning of life?" with a moral judgment about the purpose of humanity.

I think of myself as articulating a moral outlook held by many people in the past and present. I have acquired this outlook from many sources, parental training, schools, books, including Kant's, etc. I never consciously invented it. Even now as I try to articulate it I have a sense of trying to present it correctly. This is a "moral world" in which I live but never made. Nonetheless, it is a serious philosophical error to make claims about what is believed by many without sociological research which I have not done.

However, the main goal of articulating this outlook is not to report what other people believe or even what I believe. The goal is to characterize the outlook so that it is recognized as the correct moral outlook. *The articulation is primarily an argument for the view characterized.* Moral assumptions characterize this outlook. So, my argument is for these moral assumptions.

I have had problems in choosing a suitable term for these fundamental moral principles in a moral framework. I chose "assumption" because it is easy to regard an assumption as a principle, perhaps implicit, which has always been there in the outlook. At least it does not have

to be traced to some conscious choice of an individual or group. Terms such as “decide,” “conclude” or “postulate” suggest that the principle was introduced by some particular act at a time and place. I have no evidence for such social legislation.

How ought our humanity be? Humanity does, amongst other things, function to have people reason, choose and try to act as they ought to. This is moral normative control. Other functions of humanity are preserving life, making agreements with others, developing skills, cooperating with others, pursuing truth, beauty and happiness along with food, shelter, power, property, reputation, etc. These other things are pursued because we have inclinations for them. However, moral normative control includes all of these other things by functioning to control inclinations for them. So it is not implausible to have assumed that this moral executive control is basically what humanity is and to assume a purpose for it. This deserves emphasis.

The purpose of humanity is to have people become the kind of people who control inclination satisfactions crucial for living a human life by norms to attain the purpose of those inclinations without detracting from what makes those satisfactions human.

To be applied this general assumption of morality as the purpose of humanity requires making a case that certain inclinations are crucial and then articulating an assumption assigning a purpose to them. So, if the previous two chapters against sexual alienation have made a case that sexual inclinations are crucial for living a human life, then a partial application is as follows. This also deserves emphasis.

The purpose of the moral normative control system for sexuality is to have people become people who control sexual inclinations by moral norms to attain the purpose of sexuality while not detracting from the humanity of human sexuality. The humanity of sexuality requires it to be self-inhibited by principle and then serious, romantic and voluptuous.

The application is completed by assuming a purpose for sexuality. Below assuming reproduction as the purpose of sexuality, which incidentally keeps it serious, is presented as the parental stance.

IV.2.4 Character stance and the purpose of humanity

The character stance presented here is my construction but it obviously reflects ideas available in our culture. The point of classing it as my invention is to save digression into cultural history and exegesis of texts. According to a social historian, Warren Susman,² character stances were dominant in the nineteenth century and undoubtedly better expressed. Warren outlines a transition from a culture of character to a culture of personality. I do not care whether or not a character stance is now quaint. My concern is to show that it is the best secular antidote to nihilism.

You take a character stance if you accept the purpose of humanity as your highest purpose in your natural life. How do you do this? You make your purpose in life to have a good will. A person of good will chooses what is right because it is right.

It is obvious that I am expressing Kantian influence. Again I want to emphasize that this is not exegesis of what Kant means by a good will as the highest good in his *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*. I want to avoid any disputes about correct interpretations of Kant.

You may hope that your good will leads to something else in your natural life such as natural goods, happiness or honor. You may hope that it leads to something beyond natural life such as a heaven or the approval of God. For it to be your highest purpose, though, you have to accept it regardless of whether or not such hopes are realized. You have to accept being the right kind of person for its own sake.

Why require choosing what is right because it is right? Would not simply choosing what is right guarantee that you are moving towards being the right kind of person? No. You do not move towards a goal if you have not chosen to pursue that goal. A pedestrian who happens to hear the starting gun of an on-street one-mile road race, and in panic runs faster than all of the entrants in the race and first crosses the finish line a mile down the street never ran in the race; let alone won the race. This is not a totally weird example. Back in the eighties, they had one mile races down Park Ave. in NYC. I ran a few down High St. in Columbus, Ohio.

The very important point for this book is that having the goal of being the right kind of person is the antidote for nihilism. Simply being the right kind of person is not an antidote for nihilism.

IV.2.4a Parental stance and the purpose of sexuality

If you hold that our sexuality is inalienable from our humanity and make a certain assumption about purpose of sexuality, you hold a special character stance which I call the parental stance. The transformation in question moves from recognizing that a function of sexuality is to have a man and woman monogamously bond for reproductive mating, care of off-spring and life-long mutual support to acceptance that this is the purpose of sexuality. This additional specification of a purpose for sexuality adds detail to the purpose of humanity. Now being the right kind of person sexually is required, and quite a bit has been specified about what is involved in being the right kind of sexual person. Here the important point is that the argument for the Paternal Principle will be given with a background of an assumption of the parental stance that the right way to be sexual is to aim at being good parents. If actually being parents is not possible or no longer probable the purpose of marital sexuality is to live a sexual life supportive of monagamous marriage and compatible with having and caring for off-spring. In

fact there are, but in principle there are no, limits on the obligation to be parents for the sexually active.

IV.2.4b Characters stances and the questions of morality

Moral questions from a character stance ask both what we ought to do and how we ought to be with the emphasis on how we ought to be. We aim to act right for the sake of being right. With respect to our capacities over which we have some moral normative control we ask: What principle telling us which acts we ought to choose with respect to this capacity also tells us how this capacity ought to be in us. This two part question distinguishes a character stance approach from its main alternatives. For these alternatives moral thinking focuses primarily on determining what we ought to do. What we ought to do is determined independently of considerations of what we ought to be.

The preceding distinction between moral theories requires much clarification and defense. The appeal, or challenge, of a sexual morality based on the character stance might stimulate such philosophical work.

IV.2.5 Justification of the framework

I hope much of the articulated framework is justified by agreeing with readers' moral beliefs as well as by what I write while articulating and developing it. Its ultimate justification is by pragmatic defense as outlined in my eleventh chapter.

IV.3 Argument for the Paternal Principle in the preceding framework

I now begin an imagined presentation in a seminar type setting. Think of this as an uninterrupted monologue down to the section titled "*What the Paternal Principle tells us*" I begin by announcing that I am answering the question: Why do I say that men ought to govern their sex lives in accordance with the Paternal Principle?

IV.3.1 Conversational use of the moral framework

Human sexuality is that vast variety of ways in which men and women court to select mates, mate for reproduction and bond for mutual support in rearing children. The main function of human sexuality, is to have males and females court for mate selection, mate for conception and bond for care of off-spring and cooperation of the sexes. Would not a zoologist from “outer space” attribute that function to human sexuality? For human sexuality the main function is its purpose. The several psycho-physical systems for attaining this purpose are activities of being human, viz., humanity. These systems produce strong drives whose lack of satisfaction is highly stressful. Operation of these systems brings emotional and physical pleasures which are characteristics of being human. Pursuit of these pleasures and satisfaction of these drives leads to frustration of the purpose of sexuality as well as other aspects of humanity. Human nature, like all of nature, is a system of conflicting systems.

Throughout when I speak of orgasms I refer to male orgasms.

Human sexuality has restrictions. Nature provides restrictions by having us be self-restricting animals. Restriction of sexuality is one of the psycho-physical systems for attaining the purpose of sexuality. The existential lessons from the preceding two chapters are that we are to restrict sexuality without alienating it from our humanity. We alienate sexuality from our humanity by trivialization and demonization. With respect to pursuit of orgasms, trivializing sexuality is having an attitude that the purpose of orgasms in human life is pleasure. Demonizing pursuit of orgasms is having an attitude that the purpose of orgasms in human life is to sate an almost overpowering need rising up in us. This alienation is overcome by having an attitude that the main purpose of orgasms in human life is dispersal of sperm for reproduction of human beings.

Nature, or evolution, has equipped human sexuality with normative control mechanisms, which we usually call “free will.” As a psycho-physiological system free will has a function. We humans have from nature a capacity to control aspects of our sexual activity and development by thoughts of what ought to be done, what ought not be done, how we ought to be and ways we ought not be. This is a capacity of human intelligence. Other animals may have such systems of “free will.” But nothing is lost from the importance of rule control in humans if we share it with other animal species. So, I shall make no comparisons of humans with other species.

Male pursuit of orgasms, which brings about sperm dispersal, is the sexual inclination in serious need of rule restriction. Of course, courting and bonding requires restrictions. But pursuit of orgasms frequently interferes with courting and bonding. A major goal of this kind of rule is to harness male sexuality so that male sexuality functions to keep men in unions whereby they participate in the creation of children and care for them and their mother.

IV.3.1a Modified Kantianism brought into the conversation

I elaborate a modified Kantianism for establishing general rules in the next chapter. Whether or not it is a legitimate Kantianism is irrelevant to the strength of the argument.

The basic correct rule for controlling this inclination would restrict it to promotion of the purpose of sexuality. A basic rule guides and restricts formulation of other rules on the topic.

Reconsider the Paternal Principle.

A male may intentionally attain a sexual climax only in sexual intercourse with a consenting woman to whom he is bound by a life-long monogamous socially recognized union for procreation, i.e., marriage. In addition he should(1). intend to cooperate with his spouse to protect and promote the lifelong natural development of any conception resulting from this

intercourse and (2) strive to appreciate with his spouse the natural value of their sexual satisfactions and cooperate with her to enhance those satisfactions.

If nature had “hard wired” male humans to act, with an sense of free choice, in accordance with the Paternal Principle there would be no problems from men in the exercise of their sexuality and much of the sexual pleasure pursued by both men and women would be attained. Male sexuality would do its job without any conflict with sexual inclinations. This does not mean that men would not consciously seek sexual intercourse. They would simply do so at the right time, right place, right way and with the right women because that is exactly what they want to do. The principle finds a “safe haven” for sperm dispersal. A very important male character trait is trying to live in accordance with the Paternal Principle. So frequently we hear reports of some prominent man who is in trouble because of his sexual conduct. Almost invariably we can say that if he had acted in accordance with the Paternal Principle, there would have been no problems.

Talk of virtues and traits brings out that the Paternal Principle is primarily a principle on how we ought to be. It tells men how they ought to be sexually by telling us what we ought to do with respect to an essential feature of sexuality.

IV.3.1b Personal path to the reasoning behind the Paternal Principle

As a young boy, around 11 or 12, I became aware of how troublesome male sexuality is. I am not talking merely of personal sexual temptations. There were reports of crimes of passion, rapes and little girls' mutilated bodies being thrown beneath bridges. As a newspaper boy I would read these reports daily before I delivered my route. (In those days the infidelities, etc., of leading men were not well reported.) I developed a lifelong shame of male sexuality. I never thought of women causing sexual problems. As I began to learn the “facts of life” which for me

was the basic physiology and psychology of sex, I became convinced that if sexuality operated as it should sexuality would lead men and women to find appropriate partners, bond, mate and live together as much as they could. (Military separations were well remembered and more were expected.) In effect, it would operate in accordance with the Paternal Principle. My thought was: Why didn't God make us men that way? My answer, undoubtedly taught to me, was that God left that task to us as one of the many requirements we had to meet "to save our souls." In passing, note that I was not assuming some Divine Command theory of morality holding that Divine Commands create the moral laws. I was assuming that there was a right way of men to behave sexually and was wondering why God, who knew the right way, did not create us to follow the right way naturely.

My question about God raises another facet of the problem of evil which I do not explore in this secular exposition. However the question "Why God did not create us that way?" led to my "top down" Kantian, and secular, way of justifying moral principles. Try to live in accordance with principles that state the natural law God would have created us to follow in an area if God had not granted us free will. From a religious perspective the question could be: How would males' sexual nature be if it were not a fallen sexual nature.

St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas³ propose that before the Fall human sexuality would be in accordance with the Paternal Principle. I read John Paul II's repeated focus, in his Theology of the Body⁴, on Adam gazing at Eve in a state of innocence at the Beginning as a struggle to make a similar proposal.

IV.3.1c Paternal Principle vs. Zero grazing principle

There are indefinitely many specifically male sexual restraint principles besides the Paternal Principle. I assess only one as an alternative to the Paternal Principle.

To appreciate the simplicity of the Paternal Principle, compare it with the Zero grazing principle Helen Epstein proposes for Ugandan men.

Try to stick to one partner, but if you have to keep your long-term mistresses and concubines and extra wives, at least avoid short-term casual encounters with bar girls and prostitutes. Also, you mustn't casually seduce and exploit young women, who may be susceptible to your charms and wealth.

Helen Epstein, *New York Review of Books*

If we had the chance to change nature so that male sexuality accomplished its purpose without problems, would it be smart to change nature only in such a complex and limited way to accommodate male wayward inclinations? The simplicity of the Paternal Principle is intellectually satisfying.

IV3.2 On marriage

Let me close with two comments excusing myself from examination of monogamy. Since both men and women are involved in marriage, I cannot say much of value about it here when my approach is so explicitly from the male point of view.

IV.3.2a Life-long monogamy in a unit for conception and nurture,

Life-long monogamy is the simplest rule for accomplishing the purpose of male/female bonding after mating for the purpose of conceiving and supporting what is conceived. Commitment to a life-long monogamous marriage is a commitment to holding sexual intercourse open to conception and care of off-spring because it is commitment to the morally proper privileges and obligations of mating for conception. Commitment to such a marriage is commitment to the proper pairing for conception and care of off-spring even if natural factors indicate that conception is highly improbable. Do not forget that the male is frequently fertile

until death! Life-long fidelity prevents extra-marital conceptions for which he may not provide. As noted above, life-long monogamy provides a safe haven for sperm dispersal. A pre-marital intention never to allow conception and to stop any conception from developing prevents there being a morally valid monogamous marriage.

Considerations of good order and justice may also be introduced to support monogamy. Marital rules go beyond sexual morality (Kant argues for life-long monogamy in his *Theory of Justice*; ⁵ not in his *Theory of Virtue*. I adapt Kant's defense of monogamy.) Men of all ages constantly competing for the most attractive females is not conducive to good order. Women with child bearing and age lose competitive advantage with continual courting for new mates. For this book, though, the main emphasis is on developing a virtue of proper male sexual character for personal control of male pursuit of orgasms under assumption of at least a public ideal of life-long monogamy for male-female bonding. Marriage is so important and so troublesome. It has been terribly misused for economic and political goals. Long delays for financial and educational reasons make pre-marital abstinence seem only an ideal. Regrettably, marriage is frequently poorly planned because of personal caprice.

Consider my comments on marriage with caution. More reliable comments require far more study of the empirical facts than I can ever do. I do not know enough from personal experience or social science to discuss bonding arrangements such as harems, concubines or mistresses. For men, they are all in conflict with the Paternal Principle.

IV3.2b Marital sex

Without imagining details of how they do it, we should encourage married couples to have an intensely enjoyable sexual life. Voluptuousness, which is a human characteristic, should

be characteristic of marital sex. Marital voluptuousness needs to be pursued since the conditions of family life may make it rare.

There may be need to develop notions of moral act, moral character and a fundamental principle for the bonded couple as an emergent moral agent. As a saying goes they form “one flesh.” My sentiment, for what it is worth, is that marriage forms a “veil of privacy and privilege” around the mating activity of a married couple. By virtue of being with each other in the institution for conception and care of children, their sexual activity meets at least necessary conditions for being beyond moral challenge by others. Outsiders should try not even to think about details of the sex lives of other married people; or any people for that matter. Medical and clinical considerations, of course, override this sentiment. It is with reluctance that I will return to an examination of contraception. Should a married couple practicing so-called artificial birth control level make moral judgments against themselves for such a practice?

Here ends my imaginary presentation of the argument. I turn to an imagined question requesting elaboration on what the principle tells us.

IV.4 What the Paternal Principle tells us

The Paternal Principle expresses the thought of what is wrong with many sexual acts and practices of men. To be effective the thought needs to be infused with a sense of the wrongness of the acts and practices. My argument has been for the thought. Individuals must supply their sense of wrongness. Of course, I am trying to guide development of that sense. Throughout the whole book I am trying to foster a sense that the sense of wrongness about sexual acts properly thought to be wrong is a sense of being under the control of a lawless (demonic) force.

When justified from the character stance, the Paternal Principle has features which may not be obvious from the statement of it. First note that: Saying that an act is wrong does not say

that the act produces any harm beyond the moral harm derivable from it being contrary to the principle. In fact, though, the wrong act may produce much other harm which we previously labeled “medical harm.”

IV.4.1 Paternal Principle emphasizes ‘ought to be’ over ‘ought to do’

As argued above, if male sexuality causes problems, it is easy to think of the Paternal Principle as a rule for solving the big problems. The principle, though, as defended from a character stance tells men more than how they should not act. The principle serves as the fundamental guideline on how men are to be sexually. It tells men how to be by telling them to have maxims compatible with the Paternal Principle and build strength of will to follow such maxims. The principle, then, does not say only: Have no extra-marital orgasms! It orders men to become the kind of man who has a maxim not to satisfy inclinations for these extra-marital orgasms. Men are not forbidden to have these inclinations because multiple factors beyond our control produce them.

Intertwining of "ought to do" with "ought to be" compounds each violation. One violation conflicts with what we ought to do while a second conflicts with how we ought to be. This “double jeopardy” is significant in applications.

IV.4.2 In principle wrong vs. intrinsically wrong

Morally wrong sexual acts violating the Paternal Principle are in principle wrong because the acts are forbidden by a principle. This is an important point even if it is a verbal point. The significance of the term “in principle wrong” is that these acts stay wrong independently of any pleasures or pains which would be produced by their performance or any other extenuating circumstance. They stay wrong because they are in violation of a fundamental principle. Acts said to be wrong because they are intrinsically disordered are also wrong independently of any

pleasure or pains produced by them or any other extenuating circumstances. The term “intrinsically disordered act” is used to denote acts whose wrongness is recognized from its failure to fulfill its natural normative function. For instance, to class a masturbation as intrinsically disordered is to say that its wrongness stems from its being contrary to the purpose of ejaculation. To class masturbation as wrong in principle is to say that its wrongness stems from its being contrary to the Paternal Principle which is based on the purpose of sexuality. I do not, though, use the notion of intrinsically disordered. This is mainly because I am unable to convince myself of a general principle that locates wrongness of activity in frustration of natural functions. I needed a moral judgment transforming a natural function into a moral purpose.

I could give a sense to intrinsically immoral (disordered) sexual act. As discussed below, the act is more than *prima facie* wrong. The act is intrinsically evil because it is intrinsically a sexual act and the principle by which the act is condemned is in sexuality. For instance, masturbation is intrinsically evil because the principle by which it is judged evil is in sexuality. It is determined to be evil on the basis of what it is intrinsically. But it is a general principle of sexual morality, not some features of the act apart from the principle, which makes the act is evil.

IV.4.3 *Prima facie* wrong vs. in principle wrong and intrinsically wrong,

The notions of *prima facie* right and wrong refer to some basic simple rules which tell us that certain acts are right or wrong in a situation if only the rule applies to the situation.⁶ Consider the commonly used example of a situation where an agent of a dictator is pursuing an innocent man. You have seen the man sneak into your house. The agent comes to your door to ask whether or not you have seen him. “Do not lie” specifies an act which is *prima facie* wrong if a situation is so simple that the only issue is telling or not telling the truth. However, if the situation is complex, which is almost always the case, then not lying has to be balanced with

other rules. In our situation another *prima facie* rule “Protect the innocent” applies. Here the right act would be determined by weighing the conflicting *prima facie* rules to determine what, all things considered, we ought to do. If protecting the innocent dominates, then the lying is not wrong. However, if such lying is *in principle* wrong, the lie remains as an act you ought not have done.

In such an example, Kant would say that the lying stands as a wrong you have done. A Kantian notion of an act condemned by a categorical imperative corresponds to what I call *in principle* wrong (see Kant’s “On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy⁷,”). I am not defending Kant’s view on lying here since I think Kant has shown only a categorical condemnation of deceit in the making of contracts. What I do accept from Kant is the notion of an act whose wrongness is irremovable. The banal “Do not lie” states only a *prima facie* duty. However, “Do not bear false witness against your neighbor” is a categorical imperative and nothing overrides the moral wrongness of such perjury.

Accusations of intrinsically disordered and in principle wrong are both stronger than accusations of *prima facie* wrong. An act which is *prima facie* wrong would be wrong in circumstances in which performance of the act is the only significant circumstance. However, circumstances may show that performance of the act is not wrong. For instance, if someone held that masturbation is *prima facie* wrong that person may be persuaded that it is not wrong for a man who masturbates every morning before going to work so that he will be less tempted to sexually harass women in his workplace. However, more discretion is allowable in making judgments of in principle wrong than in making judgments of intrinsically disordered.

There may be cases in which an act which seems to be *prima facie* condemned by the principle might not in fact be covered by the principle. Principles are more **open** to interpretation

than descriptions of acts are open to good faith alternative descriptions. For instance, masturbation by a husband for *in vitro* fertilization may be interpreted as open to conception. Describing the masturbation as “collection of semen” to avoid using “masturbation” is not a faithful description. Daily life might pose a need for some routine such as the *prima facie* right/wrong vs. right/wrong all things considered routine. Basic principles such as the Paternal Principle set limits on what can be judged right all things considered.

IV.4.4 Value of in-principle wrong over *prima facie* wrong

An important use for notions of wrong regardless of circumstances or consequences is for character development. They are useful for keeping track of flaws in our character, a need for forgiveness and a need for atonement. A case could be made that brother/sister sexual intercourse is *prima facie* wrong. The description of the Julie/Mark innocent incest example might be evidence that under the circumstances and with its almost null consequences it was not wrong all things considered. However, if either or both should ever overcome their frivolous stance towards sexuality and adopt the parental stance they would recognize that they had done wrong and the wrongness indicated a weakness in their characters which needed repair. Also the sense of having done a wrong brings with it a sense of having to restore in some way what was damaged. This sense of a need to compensate might lead to a useless self-punishment. But it can also be a spur to making up for the wrong by greater correctness in other areas in which one has greater strength of will. For a habitual masturbator recognition of the wrongness of his acts is a constant reminder of the need to strive for greater strength of character. But in the meantime his sense of needing to compensate for his failures can stimulate him to greater compassion for others who fail in various ways as well as working harder at other virtues. It is “good for the soul” to have a sense of being a sinner.

Another way to look at this is to consider reviewing your performance in a sport or game in which you did OK. You still want to look back and uncover your mistakes. The mistakes did not go away simply because the outcome was OK.

PART II

] IV.5 Rhetorical status: strengths & limitations

Now I begin commenting on my imaginary seminar monologue. The comments are answers to further imagined questions. In conscious opposition to Plato, I classify my argument as rhetoric although I prefer “conversational” instead of “rhetorical.”

Readers who are not interested in easing anxieties over logical and philosophical issues may go to my seventh chapter, “*Living With The Paternal Principle & Sin*,” where sexuality is discussed by applying the Paternal Principle to character development. This Part also comments on metaphysical assumptions of the character stance. However, do not skip ahead without reading the last paragraph of this chapter.

IV.5.1 The case as ordinary language philosophizing

“What you get is what you read.” I have given the core of my argument. I am still under the influence of Wittgenstein’s *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* on which I wrote my dissertation and first book. A most memorable remark reads: “It is not something behind the proof that proves. It is the proof that proves.”⁸

What I have to offer in support of the Paternal Principle as the apt formula for basic male sexuality is what I presented in the sections above plus support throughout this book. I use the language of my ordinary conversations about current events, politics, religion, etc. I did not sketch a proof whose proper expression needs to be developed in a form suitable for publication in peer reviewed journals before being stored in the archives. Better English prose, not better

“logical form” would improve my argument. I did not offer a crude proof sketch for later elaboration in some pre-existing philosophical system or some new one to be created. I offered no more than can be gained by intelligent people conversing as “lay people.” People speak as lay people, in conversations in which they do not forget their expertise and training but do not speak as experts or authorities. What is actually said is all there is to produce persuasive power and show the reasonableness of what is said. Chapter eleven brings out that truth requires more than reasonableness.

IV.5.2 Rhetorical approach and moral conflicts

In a rhetorical approach you have a framework from which you argue. However, you do not have a clearly articulated theory. There is no book in which you can find the framework all laid out as a theory. This can be done for axiomatized versions of some parts of mathematics. Rhetorical moral frameworks are incomplete. Many assumptions for use in future conversations are simply not there. In using the framework in conversations to argue for a principle, you have to make working assumptions to have some common ground for conversation. These working assumptions can easily be mixed in with assumptions crucial for the framework. Such a mixture of assumptions can lead to inconsistencies whose source may be very difficult to locate and remove.

IV.5.2 A rhetorical approach and moral relativism

Being satisfied with establishing conviction by rhetoric does not entail moral relativism. If I convince myself of the correctness of a moral principle I think of it as binding on all people. If I find that I have not convinced all people, then I think that these unconvinced people are mistaken. For sexual morality I realize that I shall not convince everyone of the Paternal Principle. I may excuse them for their ignorance. There is nothing in the semantics of moral

thinking that requires harsh treatment for those who we think are morally wrong. Honesty requires only that we do not say that they are morally right. The judgment of immorality may be felt as a severe sanction in many cases.

IV.5.4 Various merits of rhetorical arguments

The merit of rhetorical arguments is that the aim is to bring oneself and others to think, act and be in accordance with the way things are. Truth is the way things are. (I am finally beginning to appreciate a Kierkegaardian notion of subjective truth⁹.) The aim is not to tell what is the case about what is and ought to be. Having the words telling what is the case is neither necessary nor sufficient for being in accordance with the way things are. Reminders about what I do not present elaborate on this merit as well as showing how some fallacies are avoided.

Being content with rhetorical status for my argument relieves me of the unpleasant task of quarrelling with those presenting alternative arguments for the Paternal Principle. I welcome their support. There is no unique correct rhetoric.

IV.5.4a No direct appeals to reason, good or moral intuitions

I do not direct attention to moral laws of nature or reason which I have perceived with some rational insight. I have had no such insights. Even if I had, my argument is not strengthened by professing to have. My use of my rationality is the reasoning expressed in the words I write. My argument is not strengthened by claims that it is based on principles of reason. Rationality is to be recognized in cogent reasoning.

Why have I not talked much about what is good? Your choosing something entails that you think it is good. Although you may think something is good but not choose it. I make rhetorical efforts to lead you to choose the parental stance and the Paternal Principle. I want to

end with you thinking it is good and, indeed, a good superior to all others if there is a conflict. It is impertinent to tell you at the beginning that you think it is good.

I deliberately used the second person “you” in the preceding paragraph to emphasize that rhetorical arguments are directed at people to persuade them. They are not written to lay out some objective truths about rationality or goodness. Nevertheless rhetorical arguments can properly persuade people of what is rational and good.

There are no claims about my moral intuitions nor anyone else’s. It is irrelevant to mention moral intuitions or convictions about what is right and good. The argument presupposes that people have thoughts and feelings about what is right and the one presenting the argument has them also. The point of the argument is to change or strengthen what the parties think and feel is right. Changes or stabilization of intuitions is what goes on in parties to a discussion; they are not topics of the discussion.

IV.5.4b No proof

As confessed at the beginning of this chapter, I have no ambition, because no hope, to present a result all reasonable people can use almost axiomatically in subsequent intellectual life. I aim to articulate a statement and persuade reasonable people to use it as a principle with which to reason in discussions how to control our sexual conduct and form our sexual character. Moral arguments have to be established again and again in conversations to provide persuasiveness and reasons for their conclusions.

IV.5.4c Avoiding “identity arguments” and *ad populum* fallacies

As presented neither my argument nor the Paternal Principle is a statement, either preliminary or final, of the reasoned position of some group such as a religious or ideological group. There is no conscious effort to persuade fallaciously by evoking a sense of identity. Let G

be a variable for “Group.” I make no appeal along the lines of: If you are a genuine G, then you reason as I do. For instance if G = supporters of the traditional family, I do not argue that you need to agree with me to be supporters of the traditional family. I argue that you should be supporters of the family as I understand it and agree with me. It is not important that it is traditional, although I think that I am making a case for the traditional family

In this sketch, and in subsequent developments, I speak with no authority. I speak for no one. When I use a phrase such as ‘parental stance’ I do not understand myself as the spokesperson for some “right thinking” group of people. Apparent references to groups such as: those who take the parental stance, Progressives, Romantics and Rationalists are references to conversational artifacts such as: the average American, leftists, conservatives, liberals made in unofficial political conversation. In these cases we are talking of imaginary groups. Talk of such imaginary groups is a very useful heuristic for articulating positions. Such talk permeates all discussions in this book.

What I call identity arguments are not the *ad populum* fallacy in critical thinking literature. As a fallacy identity arguments are relevance fallacy along the lines:
Gs believe that P is true, so P is true.

Ad populum as a fallacy is:

Many people believe that P is true, so P is true.

As a critical thinking exercise, I recommend detecting the frequency of identity appeals in public arguments.

I should add that in a rhetorical argument appeals to what many, or most people believe, are somewhat relevant as a reminder that the belief in question should be taken seriously as a

candidate for correctness. I do not use such *consensus genitum* arguments because I do not have empirical facts about what many, let alone most, people believe.

IV.6 Metaphysics of the character stance

The several theses about nature, morality and the purpose for human life which I have been trying to articulate and from which I have made a case above for the Paternal Principle I call the *character stance*. To invite critical examination of my case, I present several sections focusing on what I take to be crucial philosophical assumptions and features of this stance.

Before looking at philosophic theses of the character stance, it is important to re-state explicitly its fundamental moral principle. The fundamental moral principle is that we have an obligation to become the proper kind of person. This obligation to develop moral character is fulfilled by finding out and obeying the correct moral principles for the various areas of life under our moral control. Pursuit of this fundamental obligation is, so I claim, that which gives significance to our lives.

IV.6.1 Incompleteness

The character stance is far from a complete philosophy. I assume that there is free will in the way in which we assume it in everyday conversation about responsibility. I have no theory of how free will operates. Certainly claims about character formation presuppose a self which persists through change. I have no doctrine of the self. I am still rapidly reduced to silence by the conceptual problems of personal identity. All of the standard “problems of philosophy” I first encountered as an undergraduate many years ago can, for all that I have said, still be posed as open problems. To be sure I have set aside some philosophical problems by “brute force.” I have no problems about getting “ought” from “is” because I start with normative claims. I do not have problems about reason guiding conduct because I simply set aside deterministic theories about

causality between thoughts, feelings and actions. On occasions when I remember all of the unresolved philosophical problems underlying my stance, I get a panicky feeling similar to that when I was a small boy and would swim out into water over my head in which I could not touch bottom. I both hope, and fear, that readers feel similar anxiety.

IV.6.2 No assumption of causal determinism

Ordinary talk about freedom and responsibility may be compatible with deterministic metaphysics which hold that there are antecedent conditions for every choice such that given those conditions no choice except the one made could have occurred. However, learning the culture artifact of the “free will problem” requires sensing a conflict between the doctrine of determinism and talk of free will. Some, such as I, never really become reconciled with the alleged compatibility. Presenting in classes as persuasively as I could so-called soft-determinism arguments for the compatibility never persuaded me. So, I do not assume a deterministic metaphysics. My assumption of free will is coupled with an assumption that non-deterministic human neural and social processes have evolved for the operation of what I call normative control mechanisms. If nature operates under some strict determination, free will is an illusion and our illusions of morality do not matter. With determinism comes nihilism. So called “hard determinists” are nihilists. It would be illogical to assume determinism in a case against nihilism. I concede that the metaphysical conditions for nihilism may obtain. I argue, primarily in my nihilism chapter that we are entitled to believe that they do not. Of course, I could be wrong; but fallibility is the human condition.

Anecdotal evidence suggests to me that soft-determinism is kept theoretically viable by a two part tactic. It is correctly pointed out that the typical language of causality is compatible with language for distinguishing compelling causes from non-compelling causes. Secondly,

existential anxieties are dismissed as theoretically irrelevant and sustained only by immature sentimentality.

Only statistical laws for thoughts, feelings, choices

I make no assumptions about a dynamics for free choices in terms of cognitions and affections of a person choosing. I do not assume David Hume's moral psychology holding that thoughts are incapable of being the decisive causal factor of a choice. Given¹⁰ the personal and social reality of normative thinking we cannot simply dismiss thoughts of what ought to be as what is dominant in leading to a person's choice. In general to explain a choice we seek a teleological explanation in terms of what a person desires or a principle for acting which the person holds. There are choices for which there is no satisfactory explanation in terms of desires. Of course, people frequently choose what they desire. However, it is possible for a person to choose an undesired course of conduct because the desired course is thought to be wrong. There is no need to postulate some strong aversion to wrongness, or whatever, to explain the choice against doing what is thought wrong. For those who think that the scientific causal, deterministic or statistical, explanations of choices are neurophysiological, there is no reason for denying a possibility of a distinct type of physiological correlate for choices apparently determined by a thought of what ought to be as opposed to those motivated by a desire.

For those who use the term "folk psychology" the claim is that folk psychological laws are statistical and do not form a complete system.

IV.6.4 On possibility of weakness of will

Since this is a discussion of sexual morality we have to recognize the ever present possibility, and indeed high probability, of weakness of will. Weakness of will is a moral problem; not a conceptual problem. When we choose to do what we think we ought not to do, our

desires, incited by stimulation, lead unfortunately to a rapid change of mind. We have been seduced. Normative thoughts are genuine motives but not always very strong. I conjecture, in terms of early twenty first century popular scientific psychology, that it takes practice in resisting mild temptations and avoiding “occasions of sin” to lay down neural pathways for a strong will.

IV.6.5 Normative control and natural morality

The normative control system for sexuality is one of a several systems for controlling inclinations by thoughts of how we ought and ought not respond to inclinations. Some of these systems are for control of food intake, waste elimination, fear anger and truth telling. Focus on sexual free will illustrates significant features of these normative control systems. Normative control is natural, sometimes moral but mistaken.

Humans are animals with beliefs and desires. Since human sexuality involves planning and conscious control to implement plans, human sexuality is inseparable from thoughts on how to exercise it and control it. Just as guidelines on enhancing mating satisfactions are sexual thinking so is the Paternal Principle. When people have the capacity to think thoughts with the semantic features of moral rules, some sexual thoughts can be moral rules without being logically derived from any other thoughts. Let me emphasize that morality is natural because we think morally with the same kind of natural capacities with which we think about the weather.

IV.6.5a Sexual morality as reasoning of sexuality

Some sexual moral rules are formed in the course of thinking sexually. So categories of morally right and wrong, morally good and evil are categories used in thinking sexually. That normative thinking is as fundamental as factual thinking is one of my philosophical assumptions: Humans can think moral normative thoughts directly without basing them on anything else. This

is a strong assumption. I am encouraged by research¹¹ which suggests the foundations of moral thinking are innate. But my assumption goes beyond empirical evidence.

Note that I write “think directly” and not “perceive directly” because I am not separating sensing or intuiting from thinking. Since normative thinking is inseparable from concern about outcomes and is as fundamental as thinking what is the case, thinking or reasoning cannot be understood as fundamentally cool and indifferent about what happens.

IV.6.5b Natural concern of practical reasoning

The model of reasoning as concerned only with facts and logic is an extremely useful heuristic for avoiding strong emotions from confusing thinking. Nonetheless, a person can think directly of an act, witnessed or imagined: “That’s right” or “That’s wrong.” For instance, if a philosopher asks us to imagine a man making plans to set his foot aflame, we can say directly: “That’s stupid!” Also a person can think directly of a rule, once it is understood, that it requires what is right or fails to do so. We can think of the Paternal Principle as commanding what is right once we understand it in a context where we realize what a nuisance male sexuality is. Of course, what we think directly without inference is not something we must think the rest of our lives. As a child I thought directly that stars are very small and any disobedience to an adult was wrong. All judgments are worth a “second thought.” There are moral mistakes. Otherwise, I would not be writing this book.

IV.6.6 “Getting it right” and the character stance

We have evolved to have the capacity to be interested in getting correct factual and normative beliefs. There is a vast amount of anecdotal evidence for this assumption that people are interested in “getting it right.” People do desire to have correct beliefs about the facts simply because it is correct. Similarly once it is realized that rules can be mistaken people do want to

find out what rule on the matter, if any, is correct simply for having the correct rule. This desire for truth, if followed, affects how one lives. At least in the case of the pursuit of normative correctness more than a person's intellect is affected. To think a norm is correct is to think that it is overriding and valuable to follow. Such thoughts, unfortunately, do not guarantee following the rule but do guarantee "negative feedback" for not following it. Other anecdotal evidence, leads me to assume weakness of will as a fact. To me weakness of will is simply another case of system failure. Nature operates with a conflict of systems. So system failure is to be expected.

A review is in order. For what is the "anecdotal evidence" evidence? It shows something positive as well as something negative. It shows that a concern with "getting it right" is a possibility for human beings. Since some have it, all can. With this concern as a real possibility for people a stance that people ought to cultivate such a concern and an inclination to act on it is legitimate

Of course, other anecdotal evidence makes it abundantly clear that this desire for truth is not primary in many people's belief formation. Placing high priority on holding correct factual beliefs is not significantly different from holding correct norms for other areas. In all cases the problem lies in controlling inclinations by norms for attaining the goal of the inclination. The goal of the inclination for factual beliefs is to have correct factual beliefs. To be a proper truth finder we need to control temptations of gullibility and wishful thinking. So pursuit of correct factual beliefs will not be treated differently from pursuit of correct norms. With respect to facts and behavior we are ultimately talking of having and holding correct norms for dispositions and actions.

IV.6.6a Possibility of realism

It is worth emphasizing and slightly tempering what was already said in the preceding section. Both the capacity to think that something is right and that something is true are to think with a sense that what is right and what is true is discovered and not invented. To show that this realistic assumption is logically consistent, we can note that the following is fallacious reasoning for a type of idealism. *To think what is right requires our thinking. Hence, what is right requires our thinking.*

IV.6.6b Possibility of idealism, solipsism & nihilism

Realism expressed as follows requires an assumption. *There is a way things are independently of our thinking of them and some of our thoughts of what is and what ought to be are correct, or incorrect, depending upon the order and connection of the way things are.* This is my version of the Kantian “things in themselves.”

A logically consistent line of thought reveals that realism is not necessarily true. Opponents of realism remind us that we cannot think of an order apart from thinking without thinking of it. Berkeley concedes that this is his basic argument for idealism.

The relevant passage from Berkeley’s *Three Dialogues*¹² begins with:

“I am content to put the whole upon this issue If you can conceive it possible for any mixture or combination of qualities or any sensible object whatever, to exist without the mind, then I will grant it actually to be so.” The clinching argument given by, the proponent of idealism, Philonous is expressed in the question: “Is it not a great contradiction to talk of *conceiving* a thing which is *unconceived*?”

George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*

So we do not have a thought of this alleged thought independent realm being apart from thought. We have, at best, a sense of it being given apart from thought. So, I concede that there is

a consistent line of thought which leads to idealism and ultimately solipsism. But I do not concede that a realist stance is illegitimate if we have no model for the mind independent reality.

Solipsism is nihilistic and for me an existential error. I am suggesting antidotes for nihilism. I am not arguing that nihilism is impossible. I am making a case that we are justified in conducting our intellectual and practical lives so that we may legitimately come to believe that the real possibility of nihilism is not realized. Part of this realization is, amongst other things, coming to believe realism. Another realization is that nihilism may be correct. *However, this book is written to justify our conducting our lives so that we become totally convinced that nihilism is incorrect even if not necessarily incorrect.*

IV.6.7 Correctness of moral judgments

I propose that there are conditions by virtue of which some moral judgments are correct while others are incorrect. What shows moral judgments to be correct? The question can be taken ontologically or rhetorically. Ontologically the question asks for what in reality, if anything besides our thinking, shows that moral judgments are correct or incorrect. I have already provided a partial answer to the ontological version of the question by adopting realism. I elaborate a bit on that realism by suggesting that the reality which shows the correctness of moral judgments is the human nature which has evolved. I am not saying that it is the reports that people give about what they find about morality. I am saying that when we reason about how we ought to act by thinking about our natures there is something in what we think about which can show us that we are right. My ontological answer does not add anything to my argument. Elaboration of the realism as a naturalism becomes part of the rhetoric. One function of the ontological belief of realism is to encourage us with the prospect that the morality which we believe and practice puts us in the proper relationship with the way things are apart from our

wishes. Another function of the ontological realism is to remind those of us who are realists that we can always be wrong in our moral judgments. There is something to be wrong about. Chapter eleven elaborates on this paragraph.

IV.7 Review and the Character stance vs. nihilism

We can choose to make the pursuit of factual and moral correctness primary. Such a choice is to take the character stance. The character stance includes an assumption that normative control itself has a function. It is assumed that having free will in the various areas, such as sex and food intake, has a purpose. The assumption is made so that there is an answer to a concern about the point of following correct norms in satisfying inclinations in areas such as sex, fear responses and belief formation. The assumption that provides a satisfying answer is that the purpose of free will is to have and hold correct norms. This is a very plausible assumption because the purpose of free will for the various areas is to have correct norms for that area. However, to avoid a fallacy of composition by inferring there is a purpose for control in general because there is a function for control in areas X, Y, Z, an explicit assumption is made.

Repetition of some themes helps make explicit features of the character stance. The goal of our normative control system, i.e., free will, is to use reason correctly for guiding exercises of our inclinations. The *character stance* takes pursuit of the goal of our normative control system as the moral goal. In other words, the *character stance* takes using reason correctly for guiding exercises of our inclinations as the moral goal. Correct normative reasoning is inseparable from choosing what we reason to be obligatory. It is important to note that taking the character stance does not set happiness as the goal for human life. The goal of our inclinations may be happiness. The point of saying that the character stance takes using reason correctly as the moral goal is to

say that the goal of reason control is overriding. So, to take the character stance is to take reason control of inclinations as the goal and perhaps hope that this approximates happiness.

Please note the following warning about overemphasizing sexual morality. The *parental stance* takes using reason correctly for guiding exercises of sexuality as a moral goal. Existential errors are thoughts and attitudes which lead to nihilism. It is an existential error to take the parental stance as *the* moral goal. Such a stance over emphasizes sexuality. From such a perspective nothing asexual matters. But since in fact, sexuality is only a part of human life, a life in which only sexual morality matters is not a life with a theoretical antidote to moral nihilism. The significant human life focuses on controlling all inclinations whose proper satisfaction is important for human life by proper rules for their satisfaction. Such inclinations have proper rules because we have dispositions to satisfy them improperly. Strong and proper character traits are dispositions to satisfy such inclinations in accordance with the proper rules.

The character stance is the antidote to moral nihilism. My case for what is, in effect, traditional Western sexual morality, is that to eliminate development of sexual character from character development diminishes the range of character development so much that character development is no longer an effective antidote to moral nihilism.

¹ See *Theory of Virtue*, AA VI 382ff. .

² See: "Personality and the Making of **Twentieth-Century** Culture" in Susman, Warren. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. pp.271-285.

³ Augustine: *City of God*, bk 14, ch 24, Aquinas: *Summa Theologica* I, Question 98.

⁴ Now available as: *The Theology of the Body: Human Love in the Divine Plan*, Pauline Books & Media, Boston, MA 1997

⁵ *Theory of Justice* AA VI 277-80 .

⁶ An oversimplification of notions from W. D. Ross' *The Right and the Good*, 1930

⁷ On pp. 605-616 of *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, Mary Gregor, Allen Wood, Cambridge U. Press, 1996

⁸ *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*. translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Macmillan, London 1956, see II-42.

⁹ Soren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, David Swenson, Walter Lowrie trans., 1974 Third Edition, 107, p 182

¹⁰ *A Treatise on Human Nature*, Bk II On the Passions, Section III *Of the influencing motives of the will*, 1739

¹¹ See, for instance, the May 5, 2010 *New York Times* article, “The Moral Life of Babies,” by Dr. Paul Bloom.

¹² George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, 1713