

" A man, to be greatly good, must imagine intensely and comprehensively; he must put himself in the place of another, and many others; the pains and pleasures of his species must become his own."

-P.B. Shelley

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English 331  
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2:00

A few years ago, my sister walked away from a Halloween party with The Best Costume Award after spending the evening dressed as a sado-masochist and passing out little cards which bore the entreatie: "HELP SUPPORT THE NATIONAL SADO-MASOCHIST FUND....give 'til it hurts."

Two years ago, I carried on the Johnson-girl tradition and repeated the costume at a St. Cloud party where it was greeted with enthusiasm. (Especially by a member of the SCSU English department. Though the enthusiasm was entirely in jest, I won't risk the future of my English degree by naming names!)

Upon writing this paper, I wondered how I could openly parade a practise that I do not condone. All that I can come up with is that I hope that it was received in the spirit of good humor in which it was worn.

Though I ascribe to a philosophy that believes that a healthy amount of humor applied to a few taboos once in awhile maintains rather than reduces humanity, I still believe firmly that, though I make fun of them, there are perverse and immoral sexual acts and I do take them seriously when it gets right down to it.

In "Perversion and The Unnatural as Moral Categories," Donald Levy paraded several definitions of the term "perversion" by me and, in the end, I found all of them to be lacking in some way. I couldn't help but think, as once again universal definitions were sought, that the very variance in the definition itself points to the fact that the term is individually defined and applied. It was never made clear to me how one man could think something is perverted and another think the same thing to be perfectly normal.

Therefore, I decided to come up with my own definition, To me, a perverse act can be defined so, by an individual, if that individual: 1) cannot possibly understand or imagine the logistics and/or pleasure that the act might produce, and, 2) is repulsed by that act.

A perverse act does not have to meet both conditions of my definition, however. For instance, I personally cannot understand why anyone would want to put their life in danger in order to do a job such as that of a policeman or astronaut. But I am certainly not repulsed by the idea. Therefore, I would judge these desires to be slightly perverse. Others would not judge them to be perverse at all.

*intended*

*the good*

*granted*

*ok*

*good point*

At this point, allow me to back up and clarify something. Just because I do not wish to engage in an act does not mean that I can't understand why others would. For instance, I have no desire to be a basketball player; however, I can understand why some people do and consequently, I do not judge that desire to be perverse. In the case of the astronaut above, I can understand someone's desire to increase their knowledge about the universe but I honestly cannot imagine why they would be willing to sacrifice their lives for the acquisition of that knowledge.

What is the relationship then, between perversion and morality? I believe that the application of the word "perversion" is in answer to the individual's immediate reaction to the act. "Morality" concerns itself with how that act fits into the individual's value structure, rule system, and religious ideas. An immoral act is incongruous with an individual's rule system and will be punished, if a philosophy of punishment exists with that person, by whatever agent in which they believe.

Can a perverse act be moral? Yes. Going back to the example of the astronaut and the policeman, I do consider the desire to risk one's life to be perverse. I think that it is important that I should point out that, along the lines of my definition, "perverse" does not always have to contain negative connotations. I may consider something perverse because I cannot understand it, but that does not mean that I think it's bad. The question of morality deals with good and bad; and in this situation, I deem the desire to risk one's life, perverse but moral.

Does an immoral act have to be perverse? No. Last spring, I appeared in the theatrical production of One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest playing the role of Nurse Ratched. By the end of the play, she is directly responsible for one man's murder, another man's suicide, and numerous lobotomies and electro-shock therapy treatments. I consider her actions to be monstrous and totally immoral. But I do not consider them to be perverse. I can understand and imagine why she did as she did. I don't condone the actions but, considering her psychological make-up, they are not illogical to me. I am frightened by her actions, but not repulsed by them.

Now let me apply these concepts to the subject of sexual acts.

Into the category of perverse, I shall place bestiality and necrophilia. I cannot imagine how anyone would take delight in sexual intercourse with with an animal or a corpse. The idea of both repulses me.

I also consider these acts to be immoral. According to my definition, an immoral act contradicts an individual's values and rules and may be subject to punishment by a divine agent. I, personally, reject the idea of divine punishment so I shall base my criteria upon the first part of my definition.

Bestiality is the violation of a living thing without its consent. Donald Levy in "Perversion and the Unnatural as Moral Categories" rejects the idea that such an act could be considered as rape since the animal's ability for "consent or lack of it cannot exist." I reject this idea on the grounds that an animal's nonverbal ability to express lack of consent can exist. Furthermore, a mute human being with a mental capacity of a two year old may have the same lack of ability to withhold consent as does the sheep. Are we then to believe that they fall into the same category and the rape of this person should not be labeled thus?

Necrophilia is the violation of a nonliving being without consent. At first glance, it would seem that an act of this sort would be hurting no one. However, I think that it should be considered that this act may indeed violate certain religious or personal taboos held by the family and friends of the deceased. On the practical side, bestiality and necrophilia may also open doors to the spread of disease.

I do consider transvestism and voyeurism to be perverse; however, if the acts hurt no one, I do not consider them to be immoral. I do not consider masturbation to be either perverse or immoral. If any of these acts hurt the individual who engages in them, i.e. if they perpetuate mental illness or increase loneliness, I do not judge them as much immoral as I consider them to be simply sad.

Finally I judge homosexuality to be neither perverse nor immoral.

I agree with Levy that there are different kinds of homosexuality. To me, acceptable homosexuality is homosexuality that is engaged in between two consenting individuals who have given time and thought to their sexual preferences, who are not forcing their homosexuality on anyone, and who are not engaging in homosexuality simply to be accepted politically or personally. An acceptable homosexual experience is one that does not leave either partner in anguish over their sexual activities.

Russell Vannoy brilliantly refutes two common arguments against homosexuality. In "Sexual Perversion: Is There Such a Thing?" he states that homosexuality cannot possibly be defined as unnatural in a universe that is nothing but nature. He also refutes the idea that there is a natural law that orders all of us to be heterosexual and procreate. If there was such a natural law, Vannoy believes that all people would simply be heterosexual and procreate just like all people must breath and sleep and die. But since we must keep being reminded by sermons and lectures, a natural law must not exist.

I have made an observation within the last few years:

David and John have been living together for three years. They love each other very much. They are each other's best friend and rely upon each other for support and guidance.

It is rumored that David and John are lovers. Scandel breaks out. David and John are considered perverts. No one wishes to have anything to do with them. BUT WAIT! It is found out that it is all a lie! True, David and John have these feelings for each other but they are heterosexual. They both have steady girlfriends, in fact, John is engaged to be married! Sighs of relief escape every mouth, foreheads are dabbed with handkerchiefs, God's in his heaven.....

Lynn is a top-notch executive. She is respected by everyone and can provide to her business invaluable expertise that no one else can give. She's hard-working, friendly, and keeps her personal life to herself.

*Very Good!*

Suddenly it is discovered that Lynn is a lesbian. Suddenly her work is considered to be under par. Suddenly the rest of her morals are questioned too. Suddenly she is accused of "coming on" to other female employees.

*Intimacy!*  
( It occurs to me that the interrelationships of people are of no consequence until it is revealed that they are gay. In the case of David and John, the relationship between heterosexual David and John and homosexual David and John is exactly the same. It is only when the term "gay" is attached to it that people can't accept it.

What does this lead me to believe? That the only thing that people are objecting to is the actual physical relations that David and John are having in the privacy of their own home. Relations, I might add, that we were told from Day 1 of our tiny lives that were none of our business and should be kept private.

*yo -  
ridy  
will*  
( Religious contentions that homosexuality is wrong because it violates God's plan I cannot argue with. This argument is based on faith and, as I have said before, I cannot argue against faith. However, I do think it is a little presumptuous to assume you know the inner workings of a mind that can create a universe. And for those who feel it is their moral duty to persecute gays because they are disobeying God----I would like to see their Morality Monitor stickers that The Almighty undoubtedly passed out to them at birth.

I believe in the individual's right not to accept homosexuality if they really believe it to be wrong. But you can reject an action and still love a person. Why do people feel that they must make others feel bad (like referring to "so-called atheists",) when these people do not believe in the same things they do? I think it is because they can feel more secure. If you can feel that you have a direct line on what God wants you to do-- and other people don't, it gives you the feeling of having an edge, of, as Ken Kesey stated in an Esquire magazine interview, "having more good beans when I get to Heaven."

I would like to close with a reaction to a letter that appeared in The Chronicle in reference to the Dorn issue. The writer stated that the Catholic Church had not changed through time and consequently their views on sexual perversion were time honored and correct. By virtue of the fact that the Church

hasn't changed, that proves that it's values and laws are absolute and correct. The Church then, has remained steadfast and true and has refused to change according to whim and caprice or any other new and dangerous philosophy that threatens God's plan. The Church doesn't change.....

.....do they still burn people at the stake?

Oh! What a fine paper! So  
great to read - thank you.

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