



Research article

Agonistic approaches to sexuality: A critical analysis of the conservative mindset^{☆, ☆ ☆}

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ABSTRACT

Why do so many people attack sexualities they do not desire and which do not harm them independently of their negative emotions? This is a question to conservative audiences whose anxious reactions this study aims to explain. I introduce seven principles to clarify the situation. The Foundational Principle sketches the basic normative rules. The Hyperbolic Principle recognizes the ever-present exaggeration of sex narratives. According to the Imaginary Principle, extreme imaginings will become too painful to bear. The Principle of *de se* Reading of Sexual Thought explains contagious emotions and vicarious arousal. The Principle of Motivation argues that sexual images are intrinsically arousing and thus *prima facie* motivating. According to the Principle of Safety, an unacceptable sexual desire feels unsafe and risky. The Exclusionary Principle says, if a person fails to recognize a given sexual desire, she rejects it. This is the principle that characterizes a conservative reaction to unaccepted sexuality. These negative socio-psychological facts have not attracted adequate attention in sexuality studies. Yet, anxious conservative audiences have the political power to jeopardize liberal policy formation, sex education, and LGBT/BDSM lifestyles. The method of this study is conceptual and philosophical. Its premises and result should lead to empirical verification. At the same time, I suggest a more sophisticated conceptual and linguistic framework for advancing the critical discussion of moral tradition, scientific sexuality studies, and diagnostic art.

1. Introduction

The linguistic-philosophical argumentation in this paper has psychological overtones and contains speculative conjectures. We need technical terms and arguments; my reasoning depends on certain not-so-obvious intuitions that provide the necessary background data. Much depends on the sympathetic readers' recognition of these intuitions and their efforts to acknowledge typically suppressed sensibilities and fears. In the case of sex and sexuality, such requirements are demanding. The typical concerns are not

[☆] *Motto*: "Nitimur in vetitum."^{☆☆} The so-called sexual deviancy is still, independently of ICD and DSM, a cultural, social, and moral problem worldwide, and the gains made by the LGBT and BDSM people are wafer-thin on the global scale. Why are they such an agonistic threat? The term "deviant sexuality" has negative connotations; instead, we may speak of what is *socially unaccepted* in this *essentially contested* context. "Unaccepted," unlike universalizable "unacceptable," refers to social facts without being condemnatory: facts do not entail values. However, one struggles to coin a neutral term; consider the comments on ICD and DSM. For instance, Wakefield [16], when he discusses BDSM, recognizes the problems with the term "sexual deviation" and yet uses it throughout his paper (p. 195). Like the later "paraphilia," Sigmund Freud's [50] "inversion" is a technical term based on medical speculation.

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necessarily universalizable because people are different. The sexual world is a private world hidden behind the veil of ignorance of prejudice, moralism, and dubious theories. Yet, the repressed emotions are motivating – and language reflects these facts. I bring into the open the raw emotions that color troubling sexual thoughts in private. Sexual motives tend to be as unpredictable and powerful as they are weird. I explore the emotional and sexual abyss within the socio-psychological realm, especially from the conservative point of view: the benchmark of moral acceptance is normal and natural, and traditional norms provide the guidelines for all good and healthy sex life now and in the future. To return to the original state of innocence and purity is a romantic dream adopted by the conservatives [1]. I emulate here and there the conservative mind games as if they were my position, which need not be the case – this should make the argument easier to present and read. In his *The Basis of Morality*, Arthur Schopenhauer expresses the conservative ethos and pet idea of perversity in typically unreasoned emotional and moralistic terms. Schopenhauer exemplifies hatred of sexuality in a historical and contemporary way; we must not forget or dismiss the extreme adverse reactions to wicked sexual desires [2]. Ironically, Schopenhauer [3] refuses to believe that bestiality was not rare in the countryside.

Bestiality, again, is of infrequent occurrence; it is thoroughly abnormal and exceptional and, moreover, so loathsome and foreign to human nature that itself, better than all arguments of reason, passes judgment on itself, and deters by sheer disgust. (p. 20)

People are different, yet the Typical Mind Fallacy – or the idea that all people are constitutionally similar – tends to dominate everyday thought [4]. However, we are different not only because of our varied social backgrounds and education but also because of hereditary factors [5]. People are not similar, as their variegated reactions to sex and sexuality show. Their positive preferences as sexual agents show a surprising variety, as anyone can see, for instance, on Internet porn sites – but the rejection rate is high, too. Of the forms of sexuality, only the narrowest segment is uncontroversial. Some Christians consider all sex evil and sinful.

Anyhow, when we act, our audiences react to what they see. Sexual agents may play and present their sexual desires to intended audiences; all others are unintended, and they witness what they may, often accidentally. These parties may insist on control over what they see as if sex and sexuality were a threat. The resulting games of power lead to a cul-de-sac when the unintended audiences call for protection against what are “dirty” perverts or “sick” paraphiliacs; at the same time, they insist on expressing their concerns freely, thoroughly, and openly. The resulting confrontation is severe and long-lasting – it is agonistic.

Our task is to understand and explain the relevant mechanics. We admit, of course, that people can be asexual, but others are strongly sexed, free, open-minded, and uninhibited pleasure seekers in matters sexual. Anxiously prudish and secretive, that is, conservative people are common. The latter tend to argue in universalizable moral terms for procreative style vanilla sex, other traditionally restrictive Christian sexual mores, and the appropriate retribution. For them, sex is an ethical matter. They also tend to see sex and sexuality in ideal Platonic value terms, not as a comprehensive source of euphoric pleasure. The conservatives have traditionally been active and successful with their normative claims. Indeed, my argument focuses on conservative circles. On the other hand, I hope conservatives may find illumination on their anxieties that lie just under the surface. People rarely are sexually omnivorous or feel entirely comfortable with every form of sexuality. Most people find some sex disgusting; why is it so? Nevertheless, we should accept, tolerate, and even recognize the styles of sexuality we may personally dislike, as the liberal conscience demands. Conservatives experience difficulties here.

2. Fear and its consequences

We constantly control and, in diverse ways, subdue sexual desires; this applies to all cultures.¹ Our traditional Christian culture represents fear of sexuality, or even hatred, specifically its deviant forms called unnatural and perverted sex, paraphilic sexuality, and sexual inversion. However, such terms are problematic; for instance, Alan Soble [6] dismisses the whole issue sarcastically and exaggeratedly. Yet, he may be right. “[E]valuating sexual behavior by a criterion of ‘healthy sex’ is obsolete, superseded by a reverse definition of health in terms of sexuality. [...] Having sex is healthy, not having is not, and ‘healthy sexuality’ is as redundant as ‘round circle’” (p. 146). Soble does not mention paraphilias – an unconventional choice. Instead, he calls voluntary celibacy and sexual abstinence unhealthy social and psychological practices [7,8]. Another possible liberal strategy recommends the rejection of the notion of perversion [9–12].² However, perversion and the related concepts may not be expendable; as Janet Weston [13] writes: “Within forensic medicine, the language of ‘perversion’ largely fell away, but ‘paraphilia’ took its place. Feminists and gay rights movements from the 1970s began to formulate articulate critiques of this form of abnormality, but it has proved remarkably difficult to dislodge” (p. 57); also [14,15]. Weston is right, but *why* is it so difficult? What are the underlying reasons for this? I try to answer.

Jerome Wakefield [16] writes, but see also [17]:

¹ The long history of violent and cruel repression of sex and sexuality is disturbing [51,52]. Sexual mores vary between historical cultures, see Refs. [53,54], Ch. VI; also [55]. On the Roman Catholic rhetoric for natural sex and against unnatural perversions, see Ref. [56], but also, surprisingly [16], discusses arguments from nature. See Ref. [57], Parts 1 and 4, for an eclectic collection of ideas and opinions. See my Appendix for the culturally informed discussion of the psychiatric classifications of DSM-5 (American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) and ICD-10 (WHO, International Classification of Diseases), and their national versions.

² A dictionary definition of “perversion” is “the changing of something so that it is not what it was or should be” (*Cambridge Dictionary*). A pervert transmogrifies sex into what sex is not or should not be. Or her behavior represents sex in an impossible manner. An agent’s motivation is perverse when she acts in a way that she rejects. But this formulation does not apply to all perverted sexual motives. The sexual meaning entails that she acts in a way her unintended audience cannot accept. The problem is that we cannot say what sex is or should be. And what is the force of this “should”?

Currently, the specific DSM paraphilia categories prominently include pedophilia, exhibitionism, voyeurism, sadism, masochism, frotteurism (rubbing against strangers), fetishism, and transvestic fetishism. Many other paraphilias, from asphyxiophilia to zoophilia, can be diagnosed within a “wastebasket” category of “paraphilia not otherwise specified” (paraphilia NOS) that encompasses any condition judged by the clinician to be a paraphilia that does not fall under any of the specific categories provided by the DSM. (p. 195)

A dictionary definition of paraphilia (*Merriam-Webster*) follows: “[A] pattern of recurring sexually arousing mental imagery or behavior that involves unusual and especially socially unacceptable sexual practices (such as sadism or pedophilia).” Here is a sketch of the definition of paraphilia in popular media: “A paraphilia is a condition in which a person’s sexual arousal and gratification depend on fantasizing about and engaging in sexual behavior that is atypical and extreme. [...] The focus of a paraphilia is usually particular and unchanging” [18]. The malleability of sexual pleasures across cultures generates problems for paraphilia diagnoses, and the evidence for the usefulness of treatment of paraphilias identical to sexual offense looks inconclusive. Paraphilias are socially unaccepted, atypical, extreme, and offending forms of sexuality, yet we find no harm mentioned. Paraphilias mean socially rejected sexual behavior independently of ensuing harm. Why do they represent inappropriate sexuality to their unintended audiences, and why is their rejection such an emotional matter with its retributive implications? The more sex imitates the benchmark vanilla sex, the better – add moral and moralistic conditions requiring not only the partners’ mutual consent, but respect, joint pleasure-seeking, and lasting love.³ Its competing sexual variations are unnatural and perverted. The positive normative conditions are satisfied by BDSM [19–21]. But this is too well-known to deserve discussion here.

3. Seven principles

A set of *socio-psychological principles* explain the perceived affective problems of unaccepted sex but first, a governing background *prima facie* rule, or the Foundational Principle, in the liberal, non-agonistic spirit:

(P1) If an agent understands what she is doing when her sexual behavior hurts or harms her partners or (inclusive “or”) violates their fundamental rights, it is a *crime*; if it hurts the agent and brings about significant suffering, it counts as a *medical condition*. If the person cannot understand what she is doing, she is mentally challenged and needs *psychiatric intervention*. In the first case, the state and society punish; in the second and third cases, they provide medical assistance.

(P1) applies to any form of sexuality, including the desire for and practice of procreative and vanilla sex, which also can cause mental conflicts and anxiety and lead to suppression of sexuality, for instance, for religious reasons. One may indeed struggle with her vanilla desires. Nevertheless, humans are genetically sexual beings: we are vulnerable to sexual desires, arousal, and consequences. People have found vanilla sex a profoundly anxious and dysphoric passion that drives them into abstinence. The Roman Catholic Church has traditionally eulogized such asceticism. Their priests are supposed to shun all sex. Sex acts are sinful *per se*, and hence people conceive in sin; like the Psalmist says: “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). Sexuality is intrinsically evil.

The following principles describe and explain the nature and import of sexually channeled dysphoria among the unintended audiences of mainly unaccepted sex: (P2) The *Hyperbolic Principle* focuses on the *exaggeration* of the sex narratives. (P3) The *Imaginary Principle*: imagination has *limits* beyond which mental reports may become too painful to bear. (P4) The *Principle of de se Reading of Sexual Thought* explains *contagious* emotions and *vicarious* arousal. (P5) The *Principle of Motivation*: sexual images and thoughts are intrinsically *arousing* and *prima facie motivating*. (P6) According to the *Principle of Safety*, an unaccepted desire is unsafe, that is, *risky*; therefore, to feel safe, one condemns and sanctions it. One also takes precautions against similar risks in the future. (P7), the *Exclusionary Principle*; alternatively, we may call it an *Ironic Principle*: if a person fails to recognize a given sexual desire, she *rejects* it; in other words, indifference is a psychologically complex achievement. Accordingly, unintended conservative audiences fear the sexual desires they do not have. (P7) is, therefore, the core principle that characterizes and explains conservative reactions to unaccepted sexuality.⁴ It is disgusting to think of and imagine sex acts and situations one does not want!

The same applies to pornography and sex work, two prominent examples of unaccepted vanilla sex and *a fortiori*, non-vanilla sex. A vulnerable, victimized young woman and a lecherous middle-aged man form a grotesquely offensive pair, independently of the woman’s consent. The unintended, mostly female audiences report negative thoughts and feelings to support their pleas for banishment. Male audiences may also want to end sex work, but their arguments differ. Such agonistics creates a permanent moral aporia, which implies that rational argumentation camouflages an emotional source [22]. No argumentation can resolve such aporias. One may also wonder whether the famous Swedish model makes sense: selling sex is legal, and buying is a criminal act. Also, the status of both gay and “straight” male sex workers requires attention [23]. Are we worried about male sex workers like we care and worry about females? The debate is strangely truncated.

These six principles explain how sexual risks create dysphoria – they bring about a variety of negative emotions connected to fear, nausea, anxiety, and, finally, aggression. It is well-known that watching porn can be a terrifying experience, and sex work often looks

³ See my detailed criticism [9] of Thomas Nagel [58]. Nagel’s paper is a conservative’s carnal dream, reprinted too many times. All sex that is not based on a mutual love-like emotional basis, looks perverted to Nagel.

⁴ Exhibitionism is an exception to the rule. Certain intended audiences should be horrified. S/M intended audiences are delighted, just like gay communities. – See Ref. [59]; are women more conservative?.

like a debasing commodification of all that is invaluable in loving vanilla sex. The same-gender lovemaking may still be a capital offense in homophobic cultures and countries, and conservatives firmly reject it everywhere. Metaphorically, we may discuss zombie sexuality [24]. Liberal, mainstream sex and sexuality studies may fail to take such negative issues seriously enough.

4. The road to dysphoria

4.1. The six principles in context

Next, I define, explain, clarify, and apply the six principles. We can start from (P2), or the Hyperbolic Principle, “hyperbole,” meaning exaggeration and overstatement, including strange and extravagant embellishments with quantitative and qualitative aspects. The terms grotesque and bizarre describe the applications of (P2) [25]. In other words, if you combine overstatement and its embellishments, you arrive at the categories of the grotesque and bizarre. You find incompatible attributes in excess or something that satisfies the paradigmatic qualifications of bizarre. We celebrate the grotesqueness of unaccepted sex in popular media narratives, religiously inspired lore, folk tales, and today’s ubiquitous pornography. Hence, gays become, to conservatives, a nationwide cultural threat, pedophiles kill babies, pornography makes rapists, BDSM people are criminal sadists and sick masochists, and voluntary sex work is virtual slavery. A husband is a legally authorized rapist. It is a dirty world worth celebrating, as a liberal ironist can say.

The lexical antinomy of hyperbole is meiosis, or understatement, underestimation, irony, and sarcasm – when you call what is excellent and impressive (hyperbole) small and insignificant (meiosis) [26]. The endpoint of meiosis is a minimal entity or nothingness, yet it is intrinsically ironic to call something void when it is not, that is, to deny the obvious. Ironically, we can use hyperbole: a spectacular drag queen is a radically iconic and ironic cultural statement. Quite naturally, hyperbole applies to unaccepted sexuality instead of meiosis – which should apply as conservative intuition dictates that sexuality should stay an indescribable secret because of its bizarre appearance and subversive potential. The need for meiosis is traditional and natural, they say. The tension between *de facto* hyperbole (what is) and *de jure* meiosis (what must be) looks irresolvable. How to diminish something so ostentatious? We should not see what stays evident anyway. Pornography is a good example [27]. Also, in American popular culture, the horror of the female nipple – when they openly display and worship the flesh of breasts – shows how hyperbole and meiosis work side by side.

4.2. The Principle of Hyperbole

Now, (P2), the Principle of Hyperbole applies to unaccepted sex whose images grow in social imagination until they rear their ugly head. For instance, today, gay people will take over and ruin Russia’s and Poland’s sacred, traditional national culture. Gays are ever so seductive and treacherous, seeking nothing else but spreading their perilous poison among the young Christian patriots. Or, to take a historical example, those guilty of bestiality should, according to criminal law, burn at the stake, yet bestiality was common among the sex-starved European peasants. In 1734 bestiality was a capital offense in Sweden. In 1971 Finland legalized it. Or think of the bizarre child masturbation hysteria in Europe at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries [28]. The term of choice was “self-pollution.” Not long ago, women’s nymphomania accused them of promiscuous behavior; this is now a medical, compulsive condition called hypersexuality. Men suffer from satyriasis. But why did the meiotic principle initially fail, only to prevail later? Why can we not just punish pedophiles and provide them with the necessary therapy? Instead, we demonize them and brand them as perverts. For example, in the USA, pedophiles may live in isolated areas and display signs announcing that a child molester lives there [29] (also [16], pp. 196ff). The authorities celebrate pedophilia.

4.3. The Principle of Imagination

The Principle of Imagination (P3) claims that a person is unwilling or unable to imagine and develop epistemically available possible worlds in detail due to the typical psychological resistance caused by emerging anxiety. Certain fictional worlds are too grotesque to consider and imagine in any definite and continuous narrative detail; instead, one can glimpse at them superficially in thought and speech, as explained in Ref. [30], Part III, “Imaginative Resistance.” In other words, one can mention but not assert and nurse them in any narrative detail in mental discourse. One may go to great lengths to avoid contact with such imagery, which is too obvious to warrant more examples. Psychotherapy helps to manage the ensuing pain and panic when such nasty imaginings are compulsive flashbacks. One should not nurse revolting ideas of sex and sexuality, developing the details in a narrative form and adding features and consequences until the imagery becomes unbearable. Significant personal differences exist. (P3) recommends meiosis: certain sexualities should stay secret or, if not, they deserve banishment and punishment and, in these three ways, minimization. We return to this when we discuss magical safety measures against unaccepted sexuality.

Pornography informs and stimulates the imagination. Porn has assumed the role of the great illuminator and is a beacon of bright searchlight in a dark abyss. Yet, as one may say, human intercourse is and has always been a private act, which makes it even more titillating. But performed publicly, sex becomes an abomination, which conservatives generalized and rationalized by focusing on the harm porn produces psychologically and socially. Sex work, in its way, is public, as most traded commodities are. Researchers postulate addiction to porn, making the widespread worries more understandable: addiction destroys a person by ruining the connections between natural sexual desirability and love. Also, a gate theory is popular: porn leads to sexual crime [31]. All this produces and reinforces the fear of porn. Why do so many individuals loathe porn? Why is it such a massive industry? Or the critical question is, why do so many people still watch despised and condemned porn? [32]. Consumers enjoy their favorite porn, regardless of how stigmatizing their preferences may be. This is a fine agonistic example.

Pornography is an externalized form of sexual imagination and reification of lust. It shows real sex, vanilla, and much more. But people may emotionally resist watching and imagining explicit sex scenes and narratives; this applies to any type of sex, including the vanilla variety, even sex they practice. In the case of vanilla sex porn, the resisters shun an unaccepted and unrestricted voyeuristic sexual experience. Of course, we may not call people who enjoy displays of sex perverts, but such consumption patterns may seem like fringe cases of normality to conservatives. Consumers may not have anything against vanilla sex shows, except that they condemn voyeurism. Porn sells voyeurism, but that will change once virtual sex apparatuses allow for personal participation in any sex act without real-life visibility and accountability [33,34].

4.4. The Principle of *de se* Reading of Sexual Thought and Desire [34]

(P4), or the Principle of *de se* Reading of Sexual Thought and Desire, is next.⁵ We may also call (P4) the Principle of Vicarious Arousal when “vicarious” means a feeling brought about by another person’s feelings, experiences, and actions; this applies to arousal: arousal felt via the arousal of others. Such emotions are contagious. In normal circumstances, people tend to depend on others’ feelings and beliefs, including sexual arousal. My main point is that this principle also applies in the case of forbidden sex, however embarrassing that may be. How to apply this to the fear of unaccepted sex? I will suggest an approach and answer. But first, we must revisit the Principle of Imagination (P3). Suppose one imagines a personally disagreeable and unaccepted sex act. But one does not want to develop the narrative in *de se* terms or to think of one’s vicarious involvement – one halts before imagining oneself *in situ*, participating in and doing what is unimaginable, that is, if one is a conservative “straight” person. We have here transferred arousal, which covers sexualized narratives, pictorial presentations, and actual experiences. Think of fear: when people show signs of fear and panic, everyone tends to panic. As social beings, we are vulnerable to other peoples’ feelings.

Imagine a conservative heterosexual person, Chuck, who enters a bar and witnesses men kissing and caressing. He forms a set of relevant beliefs. He now has a *de re* belief (p), “Everyone (understood distributively) here is gay,” and a *de dicto* belief (q), “They all (collectively) act as gay men do – the feelings of love and desire are so evident here.”⁶ These beliefs lead Chuck towards a threatening *de se* thought like “I might be one of them” or “These are like my feelings, too.” Which epistemic attitude is more dangerous, the *de re* or *de dicto* thought? Chuck realizes that logically “everyone here” includes “I, Chuck” – should this shock him? Not really, because when he enters, his presence falsifies (q): it is no longer true that everyone in the bar is gay. He is in a bar populated by gay and “straight” people. Chuck has no reason to panic.

However, the *de dicto* thought is alarming: the collective emotions and desires in the bar must appear *prima facie* appealing and tempting. Why would they not be appealing in all their excitement and rough tenderness? Emotional transference, terrified sympathy, and multiple vicarious feelings appear in the situation. Hence, Chuck becomes vulnerable to vicarious gay emotions and desires and, ultimately, to participatory *de se* thoughts. Of course, the case is agonistic, making Chuck uncomfortable and motivated to leave. For a conservative person, the situation is anxious because of that *prima facie* tempting gay feelings that implicate risk and danger.

Now, we must explain the emergence of the vicarious emotional states and transferred desires that come along with the alteration of the *de dicto* into a *de se* belief. In this case, the person may anticipate the loss of control that allows the sexual desire to grow (P2) and invade his reluctant imagination (P3). *De se* thoughts entail positive emotional involvement:

Question: Why am I so anxious in this bar?

Explanation: You are a conservative anti-gay person who should not feel vicarious arousal.

The emerging *de se* aspect is the key to understanding the dysphoria that follows from (P2) and (P3). Suppose I fail to cancel my *de se* imagined participation that alarmingly tends to intensify until it approaches an intolerable hyperbole. I must use meiotic tools to alleviate it. However, to perceive is to imagine. In sexual cases, one tends to imagine *de se* because sexual thoughts are, as I will argue,

⁵ The following example shows what the idea of *de se* (of oneself) thought and belief is like: “[A]mong singular thoughts in general, thoughts about oneself ‘as oneself’ (*de se* thoughts [...]) raise special issues, [...] [John] Perry [...] introduces his case with a celebrated example: ‘I once followed a trail of sugar on a supermarket floor, pushing my cart down the aisle on one side of a tall counter and back the aisle on the other, seeking the shopper with the torn sack to tell him he was making a mess. With each trip around the counter, the trail became thicker. But I seemed unable to catch up. Finally, it dawned on me. I was the shopper I was trying to catch.’ Before his epiphany, Perry had a belief [*de re*] about [someone, actually] himself, that he was making a mess. This, however, is insufficient for him to have the reflexive, self-conscious belief that he would express in accepting ‘I am making a mess,’ the one that leads him to rearrange the torn sack in the cart.” [60] (my italics). A simple example of a *de se* thought is a person seeing his image in the police blotter and saying, “Oh, that’s me.”

⁶ Fear of sex and sexuality is *de re* (concerning a thing) and *de dicto* (concerning a dictum). A person fears gay life *de dicto* when he shuns its sexualized narratives and lifestyle. He is *de re* afraid when he abhors gay sex acts and actors. The meaning of sexuality is related to the *de dicto* and sex acts to the *de re* approach: sexuality is what we think of sex, and sex is what we do. Notice that we consider sex acts also without sexualizing them. A newspaper report on rape must not sexualize the case and treat it like pornography. – “I am afraid of gays”; I can read this sentence *de re* or *de dicto*. *De re*: I am afraid of these people, who happen to be gay. Suppose their stop being gay. I am still afraid of them. *De dicto*: If they stop being gay, I am no longer afraid of them. A gay person says he hates gays; this only makes sense *de re*. In the first case, my fear focuses on the people, but in the second gayness, which is their essential property. – The *de dicto/de re* distinction applies to beliefs as well. Consider the sentence “I believe his friend is gay.” I believe this *de dicto* because I see his friends visit gay bars. But I believe *de re* that his friend, who happens to be John is gay because he loves Bill. The first case concerns unspecified individuals and the second a known individual. In the same way, sex is what individuals do, and sexuality is what they think about it.

intrinsically arousing and, therefore, personally motivating. If they are not, why call them sexual? We must distinguish between sex thoughts (concerning acts) and sexual thoughts (regarding what the acts are about) when the latter entail vicarious arousal. I may deny and block arousal, although I still feel its sting – all this makes sexual images and thoughts so alarming. This is a common occurrence.

4.5. The Principle of Motivation

According to the Principle of Motivation (P5), carnal thoughts, perceptions, and mental images are arousing and motivating or have such potential. A well-known psychological experiment shows that after viewing erotic content, the subjects tend to make choices concerning their sexual behavior significantly riskier than what they otherwise make: arousal makes them bolder [35]. The viewing brings about arousal, and now they are more determined to get what they want. Also, in the same vein [36], “a provocatively dressed woman is at greater risk for sexual assault and bears some responsibility for her assault if she is attacked” (p. 599). A provocative dress hints at transferable sexual arousal and has typical behavioral effects.

I distinguish between sex and sexuality: “sex” refers to the relevant action patterns, and “sexuality” to what sex is all about or to certain cultural attitudes and related personal mindsets. For instance, gay life contains sex acts and rests on typical desires, values, and beliefs. Rape may include sex but is not necessarily sexual [37]. Marital vanilla sex may no longer be sexual. Sex without sexuality is not an oxymoron. Compare the following two sentences:

- (a) I want gay sex.
- (b) I want gay sexuality.

As it seems, situation (a) is not arousing. A simple report of a personal desire merely informs the reader of a mental episode. However, (a) has the potential to become arousing. We start developing (a) in a narrative form; we talk about gay sex from a personal point of view, which will be arousing regardless of its attractiveness. One may find its details disturbing or disgusting, but this does not eliminate the arousing effect. The story gets sexualized and starts resembling pornography. A report turns into verbal sexual play in front of an audience who will feel the sting.

Sentence (b) looks contrived. Yet, I can want to be gay, and in this sense, I like gay sexuality. I do not fancy only gay sex acts but the whole package as a personal statement of identity. Now, (b) as such has no arousing potential whatsoever. The only way to make it arousing is to move over to (a) and start telling sex stories about the ways of gay culture. I conclude that sexualized narratives, in the *de dicto* sense, are potentially arousing. The sexual content is crucial, not the act of description, whatever it is. What is arousing is how one comments on sex acts. The detailed narratives of gay sex and sexuality may be revolting to a conservative mind because of the gay aspect and yet arousing because it is sexual. For a non-gay person, such a narrative contains two mutually conflicting elements. In the same way, when a conservative person watches porn, the problem is public sex: sex is arousing, but sex acts in public are alarming.

4.6. What do I mean by sexual arousal? Think of the following

- (a) The jury heard that this man suggested lewd things to an underaged woman.

In a sense, this sentence is sexual, but not in the same meaning as.

- (b) This man had completed anal sexual intercourse with a consenting but underaged woman.

What is the difference between these sentences? (a) reports an event in the courtroom, while (b) reports a sexual encounter between two people. Therefore, (a) is sexual only indirectly; (b) is sexual directly – yet both make a reference to and suggest sex.

If sexual content is arousing because of the meaning and logic of the terms used, should we not say that both (a) and (b) have the same status? Indeed, (b) is openly sexual, unlike (a), but let us try an experiment on both. We pile up details, and both become openly and unconditionally sexual so that the difference between (a) and (b) gradually vanishes. Both become grotesque pornographic narratives with endless details and implications, allowing various presentation styles and tones. The record remains restricted in the courtroom, and its details stay at bay after they have successfully incited the moral feelings of the jury members. As to (b), no such limitations exist, and a literary-minded narrator may develop the theme as she likes – and dares – depending on the context and its rules and conventions. If this is so, we must say that (a) was a sexualized sentence with an arousal potential. If this is not so, when did the developed sentence become sexualized? When does it become pornographic? (a) had the potential to ignite one’s imagination.

Professional routine, clinical experience, and scientific interest typically thwart (P5). Experienced sex workers’ attitude looks similar: sex is not sexual, or what he does, he does not read in sexual terms – it is his business. In this world, sex does not entail sexuality. Usually, the description of sex entails sexuality *de dicto*, which makes it arousing. Now, arousal follows from the images that trigger off imagination, first allowing the *de dicto* and then the sometimes unwanted *de se* attitude. To understand this correctly: under standard conditions, sex expresses sexuality that entails typical arousal, which is what sexuality is all about. The rule is *no sexuality without arousal*. But this applies only to *de dicto* thoughts, which a learned and professional mind may learn to avoid. When a sex therapist discusses her patient’s problems, she must think of them *de re*, that is, focus on the acts and consequences. She must stay away from personally arousing thoughts – a professional requirement. The therapist sometimes ends up seducing the patient. She has failed to keep the discussion on the professional *de re* level. Instead, she moves to the *de dicto* level, which entails *de se* arousal and sexual motivation [38]. She will, unethically, lust after her customer-patient.

4.7. Towards the Ironic or Exclusionary Principle

Here is a question: why cannot a “normal,” straight, and perhaps prudish person avoid her inappropriate *de se* thoughts? Sexuality is arousing in its typical, personally motivating manner; hence, thoughts of unacceptable sex lead to what is sexual. Think of a consensual S/M show where the master will whip their submissive slaves, cut them with blades, and burn them. They claim they enjoy the pain [21,39,40]. Why is such a scene sexual? No genital play, copulation, orgasm, or semen, yet we assume the pleasure is sexual. In what sense does an S/M act have sexual content? To answer, S/M sex is sexual because of the typically arousing effect of the show. Methodologically speaking, the definition of sexual content by genital play refers to what happens in sex, while an alternative definition refers to affective and conative tendencies of sexuality. The definitions are mutually independent, yet the second one seems more sophisticated. For instance, what makes a sexual fetish sexual? It may have no connection to genital play – and genital manipulation can be asexual.

Sexual thoughts are *de se* or personally involving and thus arousing, however anxious, forbidden, and hidden they may be. And the Principle of Hyperbole (P2) guarantees they grow scary. Anxiety does not matter much, as examples of vanilla sexuality and straight people show, who may be anxious about sex but still play energetically and enjoy orgasms. Vanilla sex can be wild and even bizarre when a veteran couple is fully motivated. “Normal” or vanilla sex utilizes toys and fetishes to mobilize weird desires. Does all this apply *a fortiori* to active participants of unaccepted sex and their intended audiences?

What you do not desire constitutes a personal risk; what does that mean? (P7): conservative audiences fear the sexual desires they do not have. This is ironic. They disapprove and fear certain forms of sex and sexuality; they block their arousing potential even though they are not even *prima facie* harmful. Therefore, they disapprove of the sexuality they do not wish to witness or think of having. Other people’s desires feel aversive and create a personal risk simply because they exist. What is the risk? The danger is that you face what you find is strongly aversive and instinctively feel it may harm you. People experience anxiety when they, say, think of sex work, first *de re* (what happened) and subsequently, *de dicto* (meaning of sex work) and *de se* (personal involvement). Therefore, they insist on banning it. They say they want to protect sex workers, but *a fortiori*, they defend themselves (P6).

4.8. Vicarious arousal: a case study

A conservative, prudish person witnesses a sex act and feels the sexual tension in the air; at the same time, he experiences vicarious arousal, which leads him to the unwanted *de se* thought, “I desire sex now.” This thought creates an agonistic situation because he knows he is not like that, yet he feels as if he were. His arousal is an unwanted fact, which is disturbing. I will explain the creation of his arousal below when I discuss the meaning of sexual language.

Let us look at the vicarious case schematically:

Situation: I do not desire X. You desire X and act on X. This actualizes X for me, and I find the case aversive.

Explanation: You practice X, but now a possible world emerges where I practice X, too. Therefore, your desire threatens my sexual identity – I could be like you.

Note: X is harmless to others. As such, X presents no risk to me, but your desire creates a possibility that I would desire X, which is risky.

Consider Queen Victoria, who is said (apocryphally, of course) to have refused to criminalize lesbianism in 1855, saying that women don’t do such things. She failed to imagine it. The analogical point is that a “straight” person cannot imagine a desire he does not have, say, bestiality, without knowing that someone practices it. One fails to imagine and discover novel passions without help – how could one otherwise come to understand what potential sources of arousal there are? How could I know that a woman’s high-heeled shoe can be arousing? To make the case more realistic: someone practices bestiality, so I learn it is a realizable sexual possibility. After this, every new case reminds me of what I once knew, as if against my will.

The sexual desire one does not have may bring about dysphoria and spark a variety of penal attitudes accompanied by hatred. Consequently, we use such terms as “perversion” and its pejorative relatives, which have a strong negative message. These words make it clear what we think of unaccepted sexual practices. Ironically, I am afraid of what I do not have, yet I am at a loss about what to do about my feelings. I do not experience the desire, but its *de dicto* idea, as an occurring sexualized thought, somehow motivates me, which is disturbing. I do not want such sex *de se*, and I find the idea repulsive, yet the idea of it inspires me (P4, P5). The result is painful cognitive dissonance and an agonistic source of fear and hatred.

5. Sexual arousal and the emotive aspects of sexual language

To explain vicarious arousal, we can apply the emotive theory of normative language [41]. Consider the following sentence:

Deep in the jungle, Jane Porter murdered Lord Greystoke because of his indecent behavior.

What Jane did is morally wrong. The correct attitude towards Jane and her action is moral disapproval: she murdered the man. Suppose I do not find her action immoral. This requires a good explanation because my attitude is incorrect. If one understands the term correctly, “murder” dictates disapproval. One selects the word “murder” to disapprove of the act morally. Hence it makes no sense to say, “I approve of the murder Jane Porter committed.” Now, think of the following sentence:

Lord Greystoke had repeatedly sodomized Jane against her will.

This sentence is a morally loaded sexual description, and the reader now has a reason to believe that Lord Greystoke is an evil man who hurt Jane, which is disturbing. Why disturbing? The reader has evidence of moral wrongdoing. However, sodomy, according to conservative sensibilities, is a moral problem because of its unacceptably “perverted” nature; thus, the proper attitude towards it is disapproval. Conservative moralists argue that sodomy is an unnatural practice against the laws of nature. Does this justify Jane’s action? If it does, Jane did not commit murder. Our word selection is sensitive to our moral opinions.

Lord Greystoke’s action was wrong; therefore, we need not ask about the appropriate attitude towards it. This is disapproval, but sexuality entails arousal. In other words, sexual content is arousing – especially when developed narratively in any detail. Perhaps a person in the audience does not feel it; this is possible if she concentrates on the case’s legal aspects. But the standard attitude towards sex is arousal. Considering murder, the typical attitude is condemnatory and thus negative – unlike in sex, when arousal is *prima facie* pleasant and positive. We now discuss wrong but arousing things. In the case of Jane, one may feel that the appropriate attitude (arousal) is inappropriate not only because the context is morally evil but also because it is unaccepted. The case is confusing.

We also can express the same ideas in terms of risk. Suppose Chuck, a conservative person, is in a sexual situation. Hence his appropriate attitude is arousal, yet his position is risky. He may or may not feel arousal, but the risk is evident. If he experiences arousal, he would be a “pervert” – a nasty belief and a threat. The problem is real because the proper attitude towards sexual content is arousal. This explains the vicarious aspect of sexual arousal: when I encounter sex and sexual situations, their linguistic descriptions and narrative developments entail the relevant emotive meanings, that is, arousal. Arousal is psycho-linguistically contagious. In the same way, when I encounter crime, the linguistic terms I use dictate my negative moral attitude. To call an act a crime is to call for punishment. To call an act sexual is to call for arousal.

Now, look at the following sentence. The description of the sexual risk takes the form of a counterfactual conditional.

If Chuck had read the case sexually, he would have been aroused and embarrassed.

This counterfactual utilizes the following idea: the usual manner of reading sexual terms is emotive. We may also say:

Terrible sexual images are arousing to people.

A *de se* interpretation follows because now “some people” include “me”:

These horrible objects are objectionably arousing to me.

The second sentence expresses the risk for Chuck. To report sexual arousal always runs a risk of arousal *de se*. Sexual desire is contagious in that it invites a *de se* reading. I wish the reader could verify this through honest and searching introspection. A personal anecdote illustrates the case. As prepubertal boys, we abhorred kissing in movies. We covered our eyes with our hands and screamed aloud. We were horrified, as I remember. We instinctively sensed the *de se* reading of the case, yet we were too far young for a sexual encounter. We hated the unimaginable idea of kissing a girl, and yet we anticipated it as our future destiny. We knew it would be lovely, yet we hated it. A conservative mindset contains regressive infantile features.

Suppose conservatively-minded Chuck witnesses a heterosexual couple enjoying penetrative vanilla sex on the lawn nearby in romantic moonlight. He may react with vicarious shame, but this is not the critical point; the point is that he has a sexual experience. Responses may differ but suppose Chuck indeed had a sexual experience that involves a kind of proto-desire or an indirect experience of desire and lust, initially expressed as “I see what they desire.” This turns into a thought like “How arousing,” which he wants to extinguish.

Consider the following sentence:

I see a heterosexual couple enjoying vanilla sex in front of me on the lawn.

Such a report in present tense invites a *de se* interpretation if one reads the sentence in a sexual sense – and it seems strange to read it in any other way. The witness sees a sex act that is sexual to her, which means that what she sees entails arousal as the appropriate attitude. The point is that a liberal observer need not worry about feelings of lust, arousal, or motivation entailed by seeing the vanilla couple on the lawn; he may be delighted. This is what she would like to do herself, although in secrecy, and thus the arousal. Chuck rejects the sexual experience. Therefore, according to (P3), he refuses to imagine himself on the lawn. The narrative is impossible. But he still risks a sexual thought that contains these descriptive elements plus arousal, possessing them all *de se*; these thoughts and desires disturb him profoundly. “I am not like that” somehow alludes to “Perhaps I could be like that” in an unacceptable manner. The result is cognitive dissonance because Chuck imagines something he cannot imagine and reacts to a desire he does not have. Alternatively, he experiences the threat of imagining something impossible, which is equally painful.

How do we connect the idea that sexual contents entail arousal as the appropriate attitude – without entailing that an individual has the attitude? This is possible. Am I saying all sex words are also sexual, implying that we could not use them in a purely descriptive sense devoid of emotivist charge? Such a neutral use is difficult, but we must try. The professional way of doing it is to change standard vulgar terms into technical terms, preferably derived from foreign language sources. The method applies to highly pejorative “perversion” and “pervert,” making them “paraphilia” and “paraphilic.” The same strategy turns “cunt” into “vagina,” meaning “a canal in a female mammal that leads from the uterus to the external orifice of the genital canal.” (*Merriam-Webster*). All sexual content disappears, and we need no more examples. The folk words, on the contrary, have a solid emotive charge: they are dirty because they combine arousal and disapproval. Carnal terms become expletives.

6. Saved by magic contrafactual thought

The following contrafactual conditional works like magic against the dangers and fears of unaccepted sex:

If unaccepted sex were illegal, people like me would not feel so threatened.

Or, in the case of conservative women, “If heterosexual female prostitution were illegal, women like me would no longer feel threatened.” The public may believe that criminalized and efficiently suppressed sexualities cannot threaten them because they no longer exist in their imagination. Still, because the law cannot guarantee disappearance, nothing can provide total safety – except in a magical sense. Yet, conservatives may insist on a law against sexual excesses as if this somehow made the world safer. Illegal acts may become invisible, so they no longer have unintended audiences. Intrinsically pejorative terms, such as perversion, and to a lesser degree, pseudo-scientific terms like paraphilia, also provide magical linguistic protection against vice, sin, and depravity by censoring them. The word “perversion” is like a wall between the conservative person and the sexuality she does not recognize. Here we have a linguistic fetish that protects good people from evil, deviant desires. Those who accept and practice unaccepted sex carry the virus that infects others, especially the youth (P2). If we reject such ideas, unaccepted sex acts in privacy or under the gaze of their intended audiences hurt no one. Therefore, legal measures against them are unfounded – this is a core liberal idea.

In his comprehensive study, Joel Feinberg [42] offers a liberal moral theory concerning a bundle of bad experiences and their reception. His chapter “A Ride on the Bus” catalogs and illustrates those human experiences that “are harmless in themselves and yet so unpleasant that we can rightly demand legal protection from them” (p. 3). Why on the bus? In middle-class American society, a bus is a scary place full of lower-class characters. Anything may happen there. Stories 13–33 are sexually loaded, like my illustrations of Chuck and the pair in the park – his list deserves a classical status. In my story, the couple forces the passer-by to confront a sex scene and its arousing sexual potential. Feinberg [42] writes, “To be forced to suffer an offense, be it an affront to the senses, disgust, shock, shame, annoyance, or humiliation is an unpleasant inconvenience, and hence evil, even when it is by no means harmful. [...] Their victims are wronged even though they are not harmed” (p. 49); hence the law forbids them. This is a liberal view.

Conservatives take sexual offenses more seriously. We find two versions of this consequentialist argument: (1) individualistic and (2) collective. – (1) A conservative person demands criminalization because of the offense he experiences, but he also calls the experience harmful. It harms him, which may well be the case. The shock may trouble and scar him, and the anxious flashbacks require psychotherapy, which means the incident was offensive and harmful. Feinberg’s liberal idea of offense is unrealistic – or biased. In other words, the acts he narrates will not harm a liberal, unlike a conservative person; or a liberal refuses to identify his reactions as harmful. Conservative sensibilities differ because their offensive emotions turn into actual harm, as they claim.

(2) The consequentialist individualism of (1) may not sound typically conservative. From a traditionalist collectivistic point of view, we imagine a conservative arguing for criminalization because those serious offenses harm the historically well-ordered society and its decent social life. The items in Feinberg’s catalog are not only offensive but harmful to us all collectively and then *a fortiori* to a particular person. Here a conservative thinker utilizes (P2), or The Hyperbolic Principle, when she claims that the cases listed by Feinberg tend to spread around and cause havoc in decent, good, traditional mores, which entails irreparable collective harm.

However, unwitnessed offenses are also possible, and here we find a proper divider between the conservative and liberal consciousness. Namely, a conservative believes that unaccepted sex acts occur unwitnessed behind the thin walls of her home; hence she feels offended. The problem is that her beliefs may be true or false, yet her feelings are the same. Feinberg [42] writes, “When an unwitnessed person defaces flags and mutilates corpses in the privacy of his rooms, the outsider is outraged, but *he* would not claim to be the *victim* of the offensive behavior. He thinks the behavior is wrong whether it has a true victim or not, which outrages him” (p. 67). But Feinberg fails to explain the nature of the disgust and other negative emotions. One can also feel offended by unwitnessed acts that are not morally wrong or illegal *per se*. Thus, a gay bar or S/M club next door can be offensive. You may not see female heterosexual sex workers at work in a legal bordello. When I think of pedophilic acts, I think of offensive wrongdoing, but the offensiveness of a sex show may not result from it being wrong in the same sense. You know gay life is acceptable in this culture, but you may still feel offended by the behavior next door. You make a plea for their eviction motivated by nimby. Feinberg does not seem to understand how the conservative imagination works. He has no idea how serious an offense unwitnessed unaccepted sex can be. For a conservative mind, local “unaccepted” turns into universalizable “unacceptable,” or a sociological fact into a moral judgment.”

A person can feel offended because he suffered from mental images and imagined narratives that affront his sensibilities, producing disgust, shock, shame, anxiety, or humiliation – all of them dysphoric inconveniences with scarring potential. The victim may call the police if she sees something, but what to do with the unwitnessed cases that bother her so profoundly? What if my next-door neighbor is a male sex worker, as I suspect? I hate to imagine enemas and gay anal penetration; naturally, it bothers me. I see one way out: only if sex work in all its forms were illegal would I get protection against my anxieties. I insist on firm countermeasures and thus make a plea for legal guarantees. This is not always possible, which is embarrassing and leads to half-baked compromises with the liberals. For instance, the resulting juridical arrangements for legalizing porn typically contain a clause that in no circumstances may porn become accidentally visible to its unintended audiences. Porn, sex work, and other vices must stay under the lid that a person must first lift if she wants to enjoy the contents.

The mainstream controlling interests apply to both colloquial and scientific languages. We speak about unnatural sexuality, perversions, paraphilias, inversions, and other expressions that refer to unaccepted sex and sexuality. We provide elaborate scholastic classifications, like those in ICD and DSM. We are sure that we need such terms; they are indispensable and somehow morally, experientially, and scientifically grounded. We cannot imagine or afford life and morality without them because the worlds of sex and sexuality are so dangerous and offensive – precisely in what sense we fail to explain. Sexuality must be kept at bay. We call religion, science, and the law to assist us. Here is the final and ultimate irony of sexuality: people hate unaccepted sex, yet they are irredeemably

captivated by it. The unimaginable desires we do not have and will never have (P7) keep us in their grips. What we do not see invades our troubled imagination.

Suppose Chuck had a bad experience in a red-light district porn shop he mistakenly entered. Here the word “nasty” hides an equivocation: his experience was nasty, and the desires of others are nasty. They are different things, yet he conflates them. Therefore, Chuck suffers – the emerging sexual *de se* thought attacks his identity at various levels, including religious, sexual, moral, etc. He may exaggerate when he says he will never recover, but he has a right to be angry and vindictive. He would not accept Feinberg’s meiotic idea that such offensive experiences cause no harm. Feinberg’s liberalism is unfounded to him. And Chuck has a sympathetic audience when he insists on legal precautions against such filth. Only legal measures can ease anxieties – yet the hatred remains.

7. Appendix on DSM and ICD: cultural problems and science

Two problems exist concerning unaccepted sexuality: common anxious fears and the relevant medical science classifications. Are these threads mutually independent? They should be, but the medical views are culture-dependent and controversial.⁷ We may connect the two lines, but how? This is a challenging question I do not try to answer. – The distinction in DSM-5 between paraphilia and paraphilic disorder violates the Foundational Principle (P1) (see [16], p. 203). According to (P1), we need only the concept of paraphilic disorder. The idea of paraphilia is empty. But do we need names for all the problematic human conditions? Notice that from the fact that a zoophilic person is anxious about his situation, we cannot infer that zoophilia is a medical disorder – it is unlike a malignant tumor. I have a phobia, so I seek therapy, but anxiety (a symptom) is the medical disorder here. If I am anxious about my sexual preferences, my debilitating anxiety (a symptom) is a medical disorder in question. I need palliative care. Pedophilic behavior is a crime – and it is helpful to have a name for it. All crimes have names [14]. After his treatment, the anxiety-free pedophilic should no longer feel free to act on her sexual desires, but this does not mean we should not punish him. A criminally violent person is in an analogical position.

Whether unaccepted sexual behavior means diversity and is a legitimate source of euphoria or psychological defect and mental illness is as old as psychology. Christianity voted for the second alternative about deadly sins, and criminal law offered its formidable resources to snuff out abominations. Also, the ICD and DSM have existed for a long time and, as some experts claim, reflect the consensus of psychiatrists and psychologists – a fact we cannot ignore. Skeptical sexologists and psychologists tend to disagree with them [43]:

The DSM criteria for diagnosing unusual sexual interests as pathological rests on unproven and, more importantly, untested assumptions. Given the explicit intent to produce an empirically valid document, the DSM must provide supporting documentation. Even if future research should verify their current assumptions, they have been inserted into the DSM inappropriately at this time. In the interim, these untested assumptions can be and are being misused. (p. 106)

Harsh words indeed, but Moser and Kleinplatz are not alone with their opinions: sexologists and psychologists have reasons for being critical: sexuality is an essentially contested field of discourse. Jack Drescher [44] and Wakefield [16] offer moderately critical but detailed constructive nosological deliberations. Soble [45] is equally complex but more acute; see also [46]. The conceptual difficulties of DSM-5 nosology are obvious. The relevant literature shows consensus and disagreement: different forms of sexuality exist, but the rest is open to debate – such a wide variety is typical of human behavior. What is exceptional is the strong negative emotions sexualities trigger. From a moral point of view, the implications to forensic science are apparent: sexual deviants may face legal punishment, in earlier Christianity and still, in some cultures, death. To make things more complicated, Wakefield [16] writes: “the revision of the paraphilia criteria is being driven to some extent by the unique features and requirements of the forensic situation” (p. 197; also [13]).

Based on the Foundational Principle (P1), my philosophical and psychological approach focuses on how unintended conservative audiences react to “perverted” behavior and desire. Why is the reaction so adverse, emotional, direct, and strong? Hence, I want to avoid the controversies surrounding ICD and DSM. Drescher [44] thoroughly reviews the relevant issues, both historical and systematic. Symptomatically, Drescher [47] discusses the politics of GID (Gender Identity Disorder). Yet, GD (Gender Disorder) displaced it:

Other members and advocates of the trans community expressed concern that deleting GID from the DSM-V would lead third party payers to deny access to care for those transgender adults already struggling with inadequate private and public sources of healthcare funding for medical and surgical care. (pp. 1–2)

A disturbing cultural problem concerning psychiatric nosology is its dependence on the Christian Bible [44]:

Traditionally, religion has played a vital role in codifying socially acceptable expressions of gender and equality. Gender beliefs about the proper roles of us are firmly rooted in Judeo-Christian and other traditions that regard gender role transgressions as grounds for censure and castigation – even punishment by death. (p. 440).

In some EU countries, the relationship between religious spirituality and psychopathology, especially unaccepted sexuality, is significant [48]. In other EU countries, such problems are less attractive. In the USA, Christian beliefs are still relevant. Drescher [44],

⁷ Pedophilia is a significant widespread fear today [16], so “Two further proposed changes [to DSM-5] consist of new categories to be added to the paraphilic disorders. The first is hebephilia (sexual arousal to pubescent children), to be incorporated into an expanded category of pedophilia (arousal by prepubescent children) to be labeled pedohebephilia” (p. 196).

in his chapter “Homosexuality and GID: Contrasts” carefully – much too carefully – lists what he calls “Biblical condemnation”: Genesis 19; Leviticus 18:7, 22; Leviticus 20:13; Judges 19; I Kings 22:46; I Kings 23:7; Romans 1:27; I Corinthians 6:9; I Timothy 1:9–10. What does this prove? Gay people live in sin. Homosexuality is a permanent Christian theological problem, grave turpitude, and a source of negative sanctions, fear, anxiety, and dysphoria. Psychiatrists may remove homosexuality from GID and DSM, but that does not change its widespread dysphoric and sinful nature. Sodomasochism, or F64.1, F65.0, F65.1, F65.5, and F65.6, disappeared in 2010 from the Finnish version of ICD, but that does not change its popular dysphoric image as a “perversion,” even if S/M may be a fashionable consensual trend in urban social subgroups. A recently advertised S/M game in Finland pierced the skin with meat hooks and hung the person from them in the air. That sexual pleasure – if it is sexual – is as far as possible from the euphoria of vanilla sex.

Actual science, at least in the positivist sense, should be, as much as possible independent of cultural and religious external factors. Its ever-advancing findings are evident, proven, stable, value-free, and, most of all, non-historical. Such scientific knowledge of human sexuality is difficult to achieve. Sexuality is a psychological source of euphoria and dysphoria, and that applies to all forms of sexuality. At the same time, a large part of sexuality becomes politicized through legislation. Specific forms of sexuality qualify as mental diseases, sins, and moral depravity – because of the intolerable anxiety they produce in their unintended audiences. They are something one loathes and hates. Priests, legislators, and medical doctors rush to control those bringers of anarchy, social chaos, and doom. Yet, their successes have been questionable. Harassing and beating up male gay people was an accepted practice in Finland – sociologically, this counts as informal control. The times may have changed, but the controlling interest is still there [49]. Should we start paying more attention to unintended audiences and not only those sexual “deviants”? Their audiences need help, too. Can psychology and psychiatry help treat the members of unintended audiences and alleviate their dysphoria and anxiety? Doing so would promote wider sexual freedoms and their euphoric aspects. This is a laudable positive goal. Today the measures suppressing unaccepted sex seem to go in the wrong direction.

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Timo Airaksinen: Conceived and designed the experiments; Analyzed and interpreted the data; Contributed reagents, materials, analysis tools or data; Wrote the paper.

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