

ADJECTIVAL PAIRS NEEDED FOR MOTIVATIONAL ADEQUACY

It's Human Rights Day '86 (Dec.10), the day after the release of the National Academy of Sciences' report on teen pregnancy in the USA. I haven't seen the full text, but I have no hope that the study--by medics, social scientists, and public-health experts--uses an adequate sanctional-motivation range, which is what this Thinksheet's about. Eg, betcha it doesn't say sex is dirty (as well as clean): the sanction of purity vis-a-vis sex is taboo, deaddeaddead in Am. except among those the media call "fundamentalists."....But first, my summary: (1) A teen pregnancy every two minutes; annually, 470,000 births & 400,000 abortions; (2) The family has the primary responsibility for teaching human values & appropriate behavior; (3) But also needed are private & government programs; (4) Abstinence & contraception must be supplemented by abortion & adoption; (5) As the chair put it to AP, "Teen pregnancies disproportionately occur among poor families & chn. who do not do well in school" so need additional motivation to "do something with their lives & to act responsibly sexually"; (6) Society must also give attention to the attitudes, motivation, and behavior of boys...I agree with all that, and move on to my motivation for writing this Thinksheet.

1. Sex & violence increase with technological "improvements." The National Rifle Ass'n. wants freedom for all to have the lightweight 9mm machineguns that have recently been spraying restaurants, and in technology-liberated recreational sex the penis has become the Freudian bio-parallel to the 9mm auto-repeaters. The plastic bomb and nonmetal gun can't be xray-detected, & the satchel nuke is on the way; procreation has become so minor a reason for sex that some sectors of society are worrying (as Europe is) about extinction--while other sectors are sunk in a morass of unwanted babies.

2. Instead of being strengthened to control these added impulses to sex & violence (ours, history's most violent century), the old ethico-religious dikes-dams-banks have been weakened. Negative sanctions, instead of continuing to be seen as essential supports of social order, have come to be seen as unnecessary frustrations to human freedom & dignity. The churches & synagogues, rightly for human freedom & dignity, have fallen into moral confusion (what negatives should we continue to preach & teach?) and fear (in the present permissive atmosphere, what will it cost us in contact & influence if we are as negative as we suspect we should continue to be?).

3. "Freedom & dignity!" is a good banner but a bad policy. This pair of abstractions can support Mother Teresa, "terrorists," Reagan's foreign policy, both sides in Northern Ireland & South Africa & Nicaragua & divorce proceedings & parent/child relationships. And, yes, sex, which can be freeing/enslaving & ennobling/demeaning. Which leads me to some other adjectival pairs for sex:

In law, legal/illegal; from education & human development, fulfilling/unfulfilling & wise/foolish & creative/uncreative & creative/destructive & safe/dangerous; in anthro-philosophy, natural/unnatural & natural/human; in ethics, good/bad, right/wrong, celibate/active, faithful/unfaithful, loyal/disloyal, monogamous/"open," healthy/sick, responsible/irresponsible.

4. Is religion the motivational remainder, residue? No, it's the bottom line: good/evil, righteous/sinful, clean/unclean (of which clean/dirty is the religiomoral form). To paraphrase Karl Menninger, whatever become of evil/sin/uncleanness/dirtiness? Rape, eg, is all of that; & child molestation, & egocentric recreationalism, & (?) premarital intercourse, & New Age promiscuity & groupsex polyfidelity, &....