

"What's the wider context?" is a question operational to counselors/guides as well as to philosophers. Social workers speak of "alcohol-related" problems: this thinksheet is about lust-related problems (of defect/excess in nature and behavior), almost all of which, numerically and existentially, are problems of lust-control, excess/defect. Here I'm calling optimal lust-control, "spirituality." Not that lust-control exhausts "spirituality" as either what or why spirituality is; but I do claim that the humanum, the human thing, is a marriage of sensuality and spirituality, and that when either of them walks out on the marriage, we have something less than the human thing as God intends it.

1. Here are a few of the things I am NOT saying: (1) "Lust" is nothing but glands grasping around for glands. Of the body, that is all it is. And that's not to say glands are naughty: rather, that's all, and exactly what, glands are supposed to do and what we are to honor them for doing and enjoy their doing. But lust is also the mind grasping for knowledge and the psyche grasping for esthetic experience and the spirit or "heart" grasping upward to adore. (2) Since lust of body is so powerful, we should consider superior beings those who foreswear genitality (i.e., take a formal or informal vow against coitus). On the contrary, I see this--while acceptable as a work-asceticism, as in the case of Jesus --as illegitimate as a life-style, and therefore constituting its practitioners as inferior beings. Most of the literature of "ascetic spirituality" is bloodless, gutless, disembodied rot. (3) The essence of spirituality is negative, viz., keeping the lid on the lusts (the lust to genital union, to adore, to experience, to know, to control). (4) We can establish a hierarchy of genital histories vis-a-vis their spirituality potential. On the contrary, God makes equal-quality saints out of the whole range from virginity to promiscuity: all we are and have and have been feeds, when put on the altar, the fire of the Love from which we came and to which we go. (4) Body lust is the lust most apt to sin. On the contrary, the devastation wrought by the lusts is noncomparative. E.g., mind lust gave us nuclear war, which we may not even survive. (5) The defect (underuse) of lust is not so sinful as the excess thereof. On the contrary, failure to reach out is only less public, not less sinful, than the hybris of reaching out.

2. Because genital union has, among all human activities, the highest potential for ennobling/debasing humanity, society has a higher stake in its management than it has in the management of any other activity (murder not needing management, but suppression). Anthro. 101 ought to be enough to persuade us that high genital control correlates with high human achievement, and vice versa. Degenerate societies shift from high to low genital management, as ours today: sex ed in the public schools is now promoted not as genital management but as contraceptive management, since "they're going to do it anyway."

3. Some societies are genital two-stage: (1) Free-swinging genitals till marriage; (2) Severe sanctions against extramarital coitus after marriage. Aside from the fact that these societies are unstable, our society could not possibly adopt this pattern: the permissive-Dionysiac content of "freedom" is too strong to tolerate social sanctions effective for marital faithfulness. The best we can do (and it's no absolute good) is to move forward to separate education of the sexes...or what? Alternatively, public schools might teach a full doctrine of spirituality/sexuality (there being no truth to Freud's notion that the second is basic) ...but the current overreading of "separation of church and state" rules that out. Or we might abandon the public schools with their bio-determinism and start new schools...which we're doing by the thousands...The yearning for intimacy accepts no substitutes for whole person to whole person to the wholeness of God.

*In all Germanic languages, lust denotes non-self-limiting pleasure in anticipation and action.