

Carnal Wisdom and Sexual Virtue  
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(in Raja Halwani ed., Sex and Ethics: Essays on  
Sexuality, Virtue, and the Good Life [Palgrave MacMillan, 2007, 134-46]).

I. Introduction

Sex has been thought to reveal the most profound truths about individuals, laying bare their deepest desires and fears to their partners and themselves. In ‘Carnal Knowledge,’ Wendy Doniger states that this view is to be found in the texts of ancient India, in the Hebrew Bible, in Renaissance England and Europe, as well as in contemporary culture, including Hollywood films.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, according to Josef Pieper, the original, Hebrew, meaning of ‘carnal knowledge’ was ‘immediate togetherness, intimate presence.’<sup>10</sup> But equally prevalent in both ancient and contemporary culture is the view that sex generates the deepest illusions, hiding people’s true selves behind layers of blindness, deception, or self-deception.<sup>2</sup>

There is, however, no contradiction in holding both that sexual deception and blindness are widespread, and that sex reveals some profound truths about us. Indeed, if deception or blindness about our desires and fantasies is widespread, one likely explanation is surely that many of us implicitly or explicitly believe that our desires and fantasies say something important about us – or at least that we believe that others believe that they do. There is little reason to hide from ourselves or others that which we regard as unimportant. But while such blindness to or pretence about one’s own or partner’s sexual needs and desires saves one from embarrassment or from the effort to understand and satisfy one’s partner or oneself, it also subverts a central value of any fulfilling personal relationship: ‘mutual visibility,’ that is, mutual perceptiveness and

responsiveness (Branden, 1980). In sex such blindness means that both parties feel 'unseen' as sexual beings.

Deception or self-deception in sexual relationships can also be about one's intentions towards or feelings for one's partner, forms of deception that are well illustrated by Valmont in his relationship to Madame Tourvel in *Dangerous Liaisons* (1988). All these forms of carnal deception and illusion show a failure of what I shall call 'carnal wisdom,' understood as an aspect of practical wisdom.

Practical wisdom, on Aristotle's view, is knowledge of the human good in general and the ready ability to take the right means to one's own good (which includes, to varying extents, the good of those one cares about). Hence carnal wisdom, as an aspect of practical wisdom, is knowledge specifically of bodily goods and the ready ability to take the right means to one's own good. To put it differently, carnal wisdom is practical knowledge of the bodily conditions of one's own flourishing. Further, as practical wisdom entails and is entailed by the emotional-practical dispositions that constitute the virtues of character, so carnal wisdom entails and is entailed by temperance, the virtue concerned with carnal pleasures. And as the vices of character entail practical foolishness, so intemperance, the vice of excess, and insensibility, the vice of deficiency, entail carnal foolishness.

My aim in this paper is to see how these Aristotelian virtues and vices enable or block mutual visibility, and how these concepts are related to the Kantian notions of objectifying people versus treating them as ends. Contemporary discussions of sexual ethics have focused either on the Aristotelian or on the Kantian concepts. But there are connections between them that are worth exploring. Again, discussions of intemperance

have been either about desiring sex too much or desiring it with the wrong person, neglecting what Aristotle himself sees as central, viz., taking the wrong sort of pleasure in sex. I will analyze what Aristotle means by this as well as his much neglected vice of insensibility, a vice that even Aristotle gives only a passing mention on the grounds that it is too rare to require discussion (NE 1107b 5-9).<sup>4</sup> But at least in a post-Biblical world, sexual insensibility may not be that rare.

My central thesis is that carnal wisdom and temperance are necessary for full mutual visibility and treating ourselves and others as ends, and that the corresponding vices block mutual visibility by devaluing the body, through objectification in the case of intemperance, and through what I shall call 'disembodiment' in the case of insensibility.

Unfortunately, Aristotle's discussion of temperance and intemperance focuses on the appetites for food and drink; he has relatively little to say about *ta aphrodisia*, the pleasures of sex (NE 1118a 32; EE 1230b 27). Hence one must extrapolate from what he says about the pleasures of eating and drinking to the pleasures of sex.

## II. The Varieties of Intemperance

### 1. Pigging Out

Like the other vices, intemperance comes in many forms. Gluttons eat and drink too much: 'they glut their bellies past what is right' (NE 1119a 20) and enjoy the pleasures of eating and drinking 'more than they are worth' (NE 1119a 20) 'at the cost of the other things' (NE 1119a 2) such as health, fitness, time, and pocket book (NE 1119a 17-20). The right amount of food or drink is the amount 'that accords with nature,' and this, says Aristotle, is the amount that suffices to fill a lack (NE 1119a 17-18).

If 'lack' here signifies lack of sufficient food or drink, the view seems both uncharacteristically stern and quite implausible as a claim about right eating or drinking. Surely there is nothing irrational in sometimes having a snack or a glass of wine just for the pleasure of it. But perhaps Aristotle simply means that our desire for food and drink should be roughly commensurate with our need for replenishment, not that we should never have a tasty snack or a glass of wine if we are not hungry or thirsty.<sup>5</sup>

Gluttony, then, is irrational and a vice because the glutton doesn't care about the threat to his health, pocket book, time, or - we might add - appearance. Yet if so, is not gluttony a relatively benign vice, since it doesn't necessarily threaten anyone else, and doesn't necessarily harm even the glutton except in his appearance?<sup>6</sup> For some gluttons do live long and healthy lives, thanks to their genetic luck, and some of these lucky gluttons may well be satisfied eating junk food on the run, thereby saving both time and money.

This does not, however, make gluttony any less serious a vice. For what makes a trait a vice is not its actual consequences, but the inappropriate attitudes it involves: an overestimation of certain goods and pleasures and an underestimation of certain others. Someone who does not overestimate or underestimate eating or drinking but still eats or drinks too much is incontinent, not intemperate. Gluttony, says Aristotle, is a mark of 'especially slavish' people (NE 1119a 20-21), because their 'large and intense' and 'indiscriminate' appetites 'expel rational calculation' (NE 1119b 7-11). The glutton abuses his body by treating it like an object to be stuffed, rather than nurturing it as an essential part of who he is. And there is worse to come.

## 2. Pigging Out Piggishly

The glutton is guilty not only of ‘stuffing his face,’ but also of enjoying ‘the wrong things, or [enjoying them].... in the wrong way’ (NE 1119a 23-25). The wrong way to enjoy food, drink, or sex is to ‘enjoy the gratification that comes entirely through touch’ (NE 1118a 32f.). What Aristotle has to say about such gratification is both interesting in its own right and illuminating about a certain kind of sexual objectification. The right way of enjoying food and drink, he says, is to enjoy tastes the way ‘wine tasters and cooks savoring food do,’ discriminating flavors (NE 1118a 27ff) and, we might add, aroma, bouquet, structure, and textures. Such discrimination is a distinctively human achievement, requiring for its development both a certain physiological apparatus and a conceptual and imaginative ability. Animals lack not only the requisite conceptual and imaginative ability, but even (allegedly) the requisite physiological apparatus (EE 1230b36-1231a1-15).<sup>11</sup> Thus, they cannot appreciate the aesthetic qualities of food or experience the pleasures sensed by the taste buds on the tip of the tongue; their pleasure is restricted to the sensation of food going down the gullet.

The glutton is like an animal in these respects. He takes no pleasure in discriminating flavors, much less in the aesthetic qualities of a wine or the colorful display or stylish presentation of food. Like an animal, he enjoys only the pleasures of touch involved in eating and drinking (NE 1118a 31f.). Indeed, the famous glutton, Philoxenus, even ‘prayed for his throat to become longer than a crane’s,’ so that the pleasure of feeling the food and drink going down his throat could be prolonged (NE 1118a 33–1118b 1-2, EE 1231a 15-16).<sup>12</sup> Hence, declares Aristotle, the glutton’s pleasures are bestial (NE 1118a 24).

In light of this discussion, Aristotle's claim that temperance and intemperance are chiefly about the pleasures of touch must mean that temperance implies giving these pleasures a back seat to the other sensuous pleasures, whereas intemperance implies giving the pleasures of touch the front – or only – seat in the house of pleasure. The noteworthy point in these passages is the importance Aristotle places on the proper cultivation of sensory pleasures, on the penetration of the carnal by the conceptual and the imaginative. Our humanity is exhibited, he seems to be saying, not only in intellectual pursuits or in acts of courage or justice, but in all the details of our embodied existence. Thus, in the temperate person, the person who best realizes his human capacities, not only his reason but even his appetites 'aim at the fine,' for they are directed at 'the right things, in the right ways, at the right times' (NE 1119b 17-20).

But why does Aristotle assume that someone who is indifferent to his health, appearance etc. will also be coarse and bestial in his pleasures - or conversely? It is true that if we eat 'with all five senses,' as Mireille Guiliano puts it,<sup>13</sup> taking the time to savor the flavors, textures, colors, and arrangement of our meals while enjoying a pleasant conversation with a dinner companion, we are likely to enjoy our food more and to eat less of it than if we eat like Aristotle's piggish glutton. It may also be true that someone who cares about his health and appearance is less likely to be coarse in his enjoyment of food and drink than someone who is indifferent to them. However, there is no good reason to believe that someone who cares for some bodily goods must care for all. Hence, the connection between eating like a pig in the sense of pigging out from lack of concern for health, etc., and eating like a pig in the sense of eating coarsely from lack of sensitivity to sensuous qualities, is a contingent one. So is the connection between eating like a pig in either sense

and eating the wrong things. Many people who eat or drink too much for their health or appearance nevertheless eat the right things, enjoy their meals with all five – or, at least, all four – senses and, overall, have great finesse as eaters and drinkers. Indeed, many of those who are unconcerned about their fitness or their figures might be food connoisseurs and wine-tasters. Conversely, some of those who lack all finesse might still eat the right things in the right amount out of concern for their fitness or figures.

Perhaps Aristotle would say that by ‘glutton’ he simply means someone who goes wrong in every way: he both pigs out on the wrong things from indifference to his health or appearance, and pigs out piggishly from indifference to sensuous pleasures. Alternatively, Aristotle might say that although wrong attitudes in just one dimension suffice to make someone a glutton, the target of his criticism is only someone with wrong attitudes in every dimension. Either way, Aristotle clearly thinks that coarseness in his enjoyment of physical pleasures is central to the unattractiveness and inappropriateness of the glutton’s attitudes towards food and drink; the glutton’s lack of finesse is a mark of his lack of the fine, the *kalon*. As we would say, in acting like a pig, he shows a deplorable lack of self-esteem and concern for himself.

We can now see how this account of gluttony and temperance applies to sexual intemperance and temperance, respectively.

### III. Sexual Intemperance

#### 1. Intemperance From a Weak Appetite

Like the glutton, the sexually intemperate person craves sex too much, or craves the wrong kind of satisfaction. The profile of the licentious person, however, is much more complex and varied than the glutton’s. In particular, the wrong kind of satisfaction he craves implies

wrong attitudes not only towards himself, but also others, attitudes that, as we shall see, are best described as objectifying. The sexually intemperate person can also go wrong in craving sex with the wrong people for the wrong reasons, and this, too, can, but need not, imply objectification. Furthermore, just as the virtuous man chooses virtue for its own sake, and so even without the prospect of any further benefit, so the intemperate man chooses intemperance for its own sake (NE 1150a20-21). In other words, like the unjust or cowardly man, he chooses to act viciously on principle: he is like the law-abiding city governed by bad laws (NE 1152a 20). And so he chooses it even when his sexual desire is weak or practically non-existent (NE VII.4 and 7).

This last seems implausible at first sight. Assuming that Aristotle is talking about interpersonal sex and not masturbation, why would anyone bother sleeping around if he had only a weak desire for sex and no ulterior motive? The idea of gluttony despite a lack of appetite for food or drink is more plausible, since gluttony does not depend upon the cooperation of another, and copious quantities of food and drink will yield the pleasures of a gluttoned belly or an alcoholic stupor fairly quickly and easily. But intemperate sex from a weak or non-existent desire seems more trouble than it's worth. Presumably, Aristotle means that, just as to the gluttonous food appears with a 'to-be-eaten' tag, even when his desire for food is weak, so to the licentious, a sexual opportunity appears with a 'to-be-exploited' tag. The pleasure of sex, no matter how weak, is not to be by-passed, and the pain of abstinence, no matter how weak, is not to be endured.<sup>9</sup> The licentious man chooses intemperate actions for their own sake in that he sees them as inherently attractive, the 'right'<sup>10</sup> thing to do, just as the temperate man sees temperate actions as inherently attractive. It is enough for the dissolute man to see his intended action as intemperate to want to do it,



even when the prospect of sexual pleasure in itself is not strong enough to motivate him, and there is no further benefit to be had. If we remember how character habituation works, the phenomenon no longer seems puzzling: the virtuous and the vicious are both capable of being motivated by principle alone, that is, by the thought of doing what they see as the fitting or noble thing.<sup>11</sup>

If this still seems somewhat implausible psychologically, we may recall the thoroughly convincing portrayal of just such characters in Choderlos de Laclos' 1782 novel, *Les Liaisons dangereuses* or *Dangerous Liaisons*, that of the Vicomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil. Valmont and the Marquise plot and plan the seduction of their unwary victims not out of huge sexual appetites, or even always for some external advantage such as revenge or prestige, but often simply for the pleasures of sexual cruelty or sexual betrayal. What makes their sexual liaisons intemperate is the wrongness of their reasons for these liaisons, and what motivates them to act intemperately is their delight in this wrongness, rather than the prospect of sensual pleasure. Often, of course, their motives are mixed: they delight in the wrongness of their actions, but they also have ulterior motives. Thus, in the main plot line of the book and movie, Valmont, having seduced every society woman to come his way, sets out on his greatest expedition: the seduction of the inexperienced-in-the-ways-of-the world, virtuous, faithfully married Madame de Tourvel. Breaking a woman of character without destroying her virtue will be exciting as well as amusing. Moreover, it will prove to himself and others his absolute power over women and seal his reputation as the most irresistible and powerful lover in Paris:

## 2. Intemperance with Finesse

For all his wickedness and shallowness, however, Valmont is not a brutish lover. Although his casual and frequent sexual encounters are often more-or-less boring rituals for him, he *can* be a fine, sensitive, lover, imaginative and passionate, the analog of the wine-taster, not the bestial glutton. This is evident in his relationship with the virginal, fifteen-year-old Cecile, whom he seduces as a favor to the Marquise in her complicated game of revenge on Cecile's soon-to-be-husband. It is evident, more generally, in his fascination to women. And it is evident, most of all, with Madame de Tourvel, whom he seduces out of the most wicked of motives, but whose open, uninhibited, passionate sensuality evokes from him the same total passion and sensuality.

However, Valmont displays all the other marks of intemperance: he regularly engages in sexual adventures with the wrong people for the wrong reasons at the wrong times and by the wrong means. His overriding aim is to wage and win wars of sexual conquest - and his favorite weapons are deception and stealth. Thus, as we shall see, he is guilty of objectifying his victims in a variety of ways.

## IV. Intemperance and Objectification

### 1. Objectification

To objectify someone is to treat him as an object. This can mean different things, as Martha Nussbaum shows in her illuminating analysis of seven different senses of 'objectification' (Nussbaum 1995, 387-8). Valmont, I will argue, is guilty of objectifying women in five of these senses. To the extent that one woman is interchangeable with another in his quest for power and reputation as preeminent seducer, Valmont treats women as *fungible*, even though he has charm and finesse enough to make them feel uniquely valuable as long as

they are with him. To the extent that he uses them as pawns in his deadly, albeit bloodless, games, he treats women as mere *instruments* of his purposes. To the extent that he deceives them and robs them of choice, he *denies their autonomy*. To the extent that he cares not a whit for their desires or feelings before or after he has achieved his purpose, he *denies their subjectivity*. And to the extent that he leaves them broken, he *violates their integrity*.

Valmont's treatment of Madame de Tourvel bears the stamp of all these forms of objectification, albeit qualified by the unexpected development of feelings for her. After falling in love with her, he spurns her cruelly to prove to himself and to Merteuil (unsuccessfully, in both cases) that she is completely fungible. He uses her as a mere means to his project - but gets attached to her as an end. He robs her of choice by deceiving her about his feelings and intentions before the conquest – but the conquest leads to a change in his feelings. He is totally unconcerned about her welfare or her point of view as he prepares for the great seduction - but repents after he spurns her and breaks her heart – and his own. In ignoring his own genuine needs and interests for the sake of proving his 'independence' and invulnerability, he also denies his own subjectivity and violates his own integrity.

## 2. Brutishness and Objectification

By contrast with Valmont, the brutish lover suggested by Aristotle's depiction of the glutton objectifies his partners in the *manner* of his sexual interaction. Like the glutton who is insensitive to the varied pleasures of food, enjoying only the sensation of food going down his throat and glutting his belly, the brutish man is insensitive to the sensual and aesthetic pleasures of sex or, for that matter, the emotional pleasures of erotic love, enjoying only the touching and rubbing of the body parts that lead to relief of his sexual tension. In being insensitive in these ways, the brutish man lacks both the self- and other-awareness necessary

for recognizing his own and his partner's capacities and needs for pleasure, and cannot give or receive the varied pleasures of sex. His lack of awareness expresses his lack of wisdom about the value of human sexuality and how to achieve it. Hence, the self-objectification of the brutishly intemperate man goes even further than that of Valmont. In devaluing sexuality, he denies both his own and his partner's subjectivity, and uses both himself and his partner as mere means to the end of sexual relief.

### 3. Kantian Objectification

My use of this Kantian language, however, should not be taken to suggest that Kant would agree with my claim that it is only intemperate sexual desires that are objectifying. Far from it: according to Kant, all lust is inherently objectifying, for it necessarily reduces the other person to a mere object for one's enjoyment (*Lectures*, 163-4). In the grip of sexual desire, both parties think only of their own satisfaction, and use each other as mere tools to this satisfaction, denying each other's subjectivity and autonomy. Moreover, in consenting to be thus (mis)used, both parties consent to their own objectification.

Kant argues that marriage can make up for the objectification inherent in sexual desire and behavior by joining the married couple in 'a unity of will' whereby they respect each other as ends and have equal rights over each other (*Lectures*, 167).<sup>12</sup> But even if marriage always created an equal, mutually respectful relationship, it would not change the fact that there is nothing much to be said for sex from the moral point of view. For Kant, sexual desire is an appetite that, like hunger or thirst, leads us to treat its object as just an object. This is true as much in masturbation as in interpersonal sex. To surrender to sexual desire is to drive out all thought and become desire's tool, blindly doing what it demands for its satisfaction. As Kant declares, with an air of self-evidence: 'The ground of

proof [that masturbation is inherently degrading] surely lies in the fact that a man gives up his personality (throws it away) when he uses himself merely as a means for the gratification of an animal drive' (*Metaphysics of Morals*, 179).

Kant is right that in deeply satisfying sex there is a surrender of self-consciousness and often even conscious thought to the imperatives of desire. But why does Kant believe that surrender to sexual desire necessarily makes us mere tools of this desire and leads to a denial of subjectivity? After all, in an intense musical experience also we often surrender self-consciousness and conscious thought without becoming mere tools of the experience, much less tools of the composer or musicians. The same applies to other experiences, such as losing oneself in dance or in the swell of ocean waves. Whitman writes about his desire to 'go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,/ ... mad for it to be in contact with [him]....,' to see the smoke of his own breath and hear 'the beating of ... [his own] heart' (Whitman 1900, poem 14). The sensory and emotive responsiveness to rhythm, melody, and harmony, the kinesthetic joy of dance, the sheer physicality and continuity with nature experienced in the touch of waves or leaves or sun – all these highlight our sense of ourselves as embodied beings. And in giving ourselves over to them, far from denying our subjectivity, we celebrate an aspect of it that is usually only implicit and submerged. Only a very cribbed notion of what we essentially are can see these experiences as objectifying. Yet this is precisely how Kant must, in consistency, see them if he is to condemn surrender to sexual desire as inherently objectifying.

The heart of the problem, of course, is Kant's view that our physical being is external to and uninformed by our rational selfhood. Within this metaphysical framework, it is impossible to see how interpersonal sex can be an experience of mutual visibility and

reciprocity. Thomas Nagel's description of the multileveled patterns of perception and arousal, in which we achieve a finer and more intense awareness of ourselves and our partners as embodied beings (1969), is a phenomenon that must remain impossible and incomprehensible on Kant's dualistic views, according to which treating a person as an end requires seeing her as essentially rational and only incidentally embodied. It seems that sexual desire is suspect because it encourages us (perversely, for Kant) to see ourselves and our partners as essentially embodied.

If, by contrast, we acknowledge that individuals are necessarily both embodied and rational, we can see sensitivity to the physical, aesthetic, and emotional pleasures of sex as essential to temperance and carnal wisdom, and to treating others and oneself as ends in the complex interactions of sexual desire and behavior. As the epicure's knowledge of food and wine expresses itself in his discriminating enjoyment of them, so too lovers' carnal wisdom and temperance lead to, and express themselves in, their sensual enjoyment of their bodies.<sup>13</sup> In sexual desire and fulfillment, we achieve a vivid experience of ourselves and each other as ends, as (in Roger Scruton's words) 'centers of value here and now, in the condition of mortality' (1986, 251). For sexual pleasure, perhaps alone among pleasures, integrates mind and body and makes us visible to ourselves and to each other in our totality (Branden 1980, 85-88).

#### V. Insensibility and Disembodiment

Devaluation of the body through lack of sensuality is not restricted to brutish intemperance; it can also take the form of what Aristotle calls "insensibility," which, in contrast to brutishness, might be expressed in over-refinement or passivity. Insensibility as a vice is not a naturally weak desire for sex, but rather a habituated disposition which may be due to

religious asceticism, unacknowledged guilt or shame about sex, lack of self-confidence, sloth, or other factors. Whatever the source, the insensible lover I have in mind is too repressed to even fully experience, much less show, sexual passion or a desire for sexual pleasures, much the way that a well-brought up lady in the antebellum South was too genteel to fully experience, much less show, a desire for gustatory pleasures.

In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean-Paul Sartre describes a woman on a date who becomes ‘all intellect’ when her companion takes her hand, pretending not to notice what he’s doing and what she’s allowing. Her motivation for this pretence to herself and her companion is shame and horror at the thought of admitting the man’s ‘desire cruel and naked’ (96-8). She is simply ‘not the sort’ to want sex for anything but cuddly affection and respectful attention. If this attitude is habitual with her, she has the vice of insensibility. When insensibility is widespread in a culture, as in the late-1920s Kansas town depicted in *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), it can visit emotional devastation on those who value sex, such as the young lovers in the film.

Whereas the brutishly intemperate man shows his lack of carnal wisdom by reducing all sexual pleasures to the pleasure of orgasm and treating the body as a mere means to this pleasure, the insensible lover shows it by ‘elevating’ all sexual pleasures to the pleasure of soulful communion – and treating the body as an afterthought. Thus, whereas the brutish man objectifies himself and his partner, the insensible man ‘disembodies’ himself and his partner. He is too uncomfortable in his body to be capable of abandoning himself to the (muted) tugs of his body. His refinement serves as a barrier to that immersion in bodily pleasures that Kant sees as a threat to personhood. Ironically, it is only the temperate and wise lover, such as Madame Tourvel, who self-confidently identifies with her body and can

abandon herself to sexual desire, who can achieve ‘that ecstasy of the senses’ that enables her to experience herself as an end.<sup>15</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

I have argued that carnal wisdom and temperance are necessary for a central value in interpersonal sex: mutual visibility. In contrasting temperance and intemperance, I have followed Aristotle in focusing on the difference in the kind of pleasures they involve. Brutish intemperance blocks mutual visibility and devalues the body by reducing it to a mere means to sexual relief. It is this, and not, contra Kant, the surrender of self-consciousness and conscious thought to desire, that is objectifying. However, both intemperance and objectification come in different forms, as Valmont’s treatment of Madame Tourvel illustrates. Insensibility, which Aristotle mentions only in passing, also devalues the body, but by ‘spiritualizing’ it and, in effect, refusing to grant sexual desires and needs full recognition. Insensibility thus involves disembodiment.

Both intemperance and objectification, on the one hand, and insensibility and disembodiment, on the other, share a common problem: a lack of carnal wisdom and an impoverishment of carnal pleasures.

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<sup>1</sup> Doniger 2001a; date of access: 7 February, 2005. Doniger doesn’t tell us which movies, but *Damage* (1992) fits the bill, with Stephen (Jeremy Irons), who is obsessed with Anna (Juliette Binoche), trying to penetrate her soul (and his own?) through sex. Thanks to Betty Robbins for this example.

<sup>10</sup> Pieper 1998, 70.

<sup>2</sup> Doniger 2001b; date of access 7 February, 2005.



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<sup>4</sup> Dent mentions it only to announce that he will not discuss it, although he does suggest Casaubon in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* as an example of an insensible man (1984, 135).

<sup>5</sup> Juha Sihvola states that Aristotle's claim that the right amount of food or drink is the amount that suffices to fill a lack is explained by his view in *Rhetoric* I.11 1369b33-35 that the appetites are produced by the pain of a lack or dissolution and aim at the pleasure produced by replenishment (2002, 208). But Aristotle merely says that 'appetite is desire for pleasure' (1370a17-18). In his paper in this volume, Sihvola replies that Aristotle's definition of pleasure "as a movement by which the soul is perceptibly brought into its normal state" is, arguably, a "reference to Plato's discussion in the *Philebus* of pleasure in terms of perceptible processes of dissolution and replenishment" (note 14). But how to reconcile the claim that pleasure is movement to a normal state with Aristotle's claim in *NE* that gluttons derive pleasure from glutting their bellies? Sihvola believes that Aristotle changed his conception of pleasure the *NE*.

<sup>6</sup> I am assuming here that if someone's eating harms him neither in his appearance, nor in any other respect, then he is not eating too much relative to his needs, and so is not a glutton.

<sup>11</sup> I owe this reference to Sihvola (2002, 208).

<sup>12</sup> But see <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/pseudodoxia/pseudo714.html> for another view of Philoxenus.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Julia Reed's review of Mireille Guiliano's book, 'French Women Don't Get Fat: Like Champagne for Chocolate' (2005); date of access 12 February, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Raja Halwani for suggesting the latter possibility.

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Right’ in that it is the fitting or natural and praiseworthy thing to do for a man of his caliber, not in that he believes that intemperate actions are right according to conventional morality or for the general run of men. This is compatible with Aristotle’s claim that the vicious man is unconscious of his vice (*NE* 1150b35) on the only plausible interpretation of this idea: the vicious man is unconscious of the fact that his attitudes and actions are not praiseworthy even for him.

<sup>11</sup> So the virtuous man’s actions are not *always* motivated *both* by the recognition that they are right *and* by his emotions or appetites. In the passages on “mixed actions” at 1110a 5ff, Aristotle makes it clear that the virtuous man will feel pain in the right act if it entails the loss of something he (appropriately) loves. Closer to home, when the virtuous man has to abstain from sex because there is no right way to satisfy his appetites, he will find his abstention painful ‘to a moderate degree’ (1119a 14, W.D. Ross’s translation [*The Complete Works of Aristotle, The Revised Oxford Translation, Vol. 2*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984]. Irwin’s translation, on which the temperate man ‘suffers no pain’ when so deprived, seems less plausible to me.).

<sup>12</sup> For critical discussion of Kant’s view of marriage and of sex, see Denis 2001, Singer 1994, and Soble 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Pieper holds that the desire for carnal knowledge - knowledge of the beloved through sexual union - is a desire for a total experience of him and of oneself (1904, 70). This is overstated. Like other desires for knowledge, this desire may also be for only partial knowledge

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<sup>15</sup> Getting involved with Valmont is an expression neither of wisdom nor of foolishness. It is simply a mistake, a mistake not hard to make given his concerted and clever ruses to deceive her.

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Acknowledgments: This paper started as a presentation on a panel on *Sexuality and Virtue*, Pacific Division Meetings, APA, 2005. Thanks to Heather Battaly for inviting me to participate in the panel, to Linda Zagzebski for conversation and, most of all, to John Bishop and Raja Halwani for their thoughtful comments on earlier versions.