

Antjuan Finch

Miscellaneous: On Contemporary Issues

On Assisted Suicide

The topic of assisted suicide has been the subject of much debate over the past one hundred years. This debate is usually focused on whether or not terminally ill people should be allowed to have their death induced by a physician. Supporters of this act often claim that terminally ill, and chronically miserable people have a right to “die with dignity,” while its opposers often claim that the act would violate many commitments that physicians undertake, one of which is to “do no harm.” Although at first glance this dispute seems to be about the rights of the severely unwell, it actually rises from a more fundamental disagreement. This disagreement is on how one should behave, and treat others when undesired circumstances inevitably present themselves.

My solution to this debacle is simple: whenever possible, measures should be taken to maximise the agency of all living things, and that when this act seems impossible, fighting for the empowerment of life remains the only dignified way to die. Although this solution is impartial by nature, *it was* to some degree derived from my personal experiences. Like many others, I’ve encountered many depressed and suicidal people throughout my life. And like many others, I’ve also known people who’ve taken their life and left the world with more issues than there was before they did it. Likewise, the reasoning which motivates this sort of abandonment has always seemed flawed to me: if one believes that an issue is worth trying to solve — whether it be the cure to cancer, the origin of evil, or a mathematical theorem — they must admit that forfeiting the opportunity to aid in finding a solution to that issue would be much worse than

doing the opposite. In my view, this solution, and its implied actions, can be easily derived from simple analyses of common experiences, and readily observable facts.

Some evidence, or facts to support my approach would include the fact that inducing the death of terminally ill people does nothing to aid the treatment or prevention of the illness that they suffer from. In other words, assisting terminally ill people in committing suicide does nothing to aid others who may find themselves in similar circumstances. While on the other hand, treating these patients for their illness and documenting their outcomes might lead to the saving of millions of lives. Additionally, support for the claim that dying while fighting for the empowerment of life is the most dignified way to die can be derived from a poll that indicated that Americans view military, and police officers as having some of the highest ethical standards among all professionals. This finding indicates that individuals associated with self-sacrifice are viewed as noble, generally, by Americans.

While my argument states that the stakeholders in this debate — being doctors, suicidal, and non-suicidal terminally ill patients — each have much to gain by either potentially having their lives saved, contributing to the saving of lives, or being viewed as noble, arguments contrary to mine are without similar support. An antithesis to my argument, which is essentially a pro-agency position, would be arguing that measures should be taken to prevent terminally ill people from having any say in how their lives might influence others. Even further, this position would be against the furthering of autonomous life altogether. For a moment, let's imagine what the implied actions of this argument might be.

First, one would need to act in a way that reduces the agency of others but doesn't amplify their own. In practice, an extreme version of this action would include the killing of others, the killing of oneself, and the spreading of some seemingly persuasive manifesto or argument that is laced with intense and emotional rhetoric (so as to proselytize susceptible viewers). But of course, this manifesto or argument would be poorly constructed, as adhering to its claims would entail not amplifying one's ability to write or think clearly. For a biological comparison, these actions, if effectively replicated, would affect a society similarly to how metastasizing cancer affects the body of a human. For all societies' sake, I hope that other societies would not elect to put this society out of its misery — or, let it “die with dignity,” as

some might say; surely not attempting to treat its illness would pose a risk for all of civilization. In the end, it's hard to imagine a more unethical view than the antithesis to my position: its embedded philosophy might be the origin of evil itself.

On the Schizoid Personality

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a schizoid is someone who has a longstanding history of displaying four or more of the following qualities: “(1) neither desires nor enjoys close relationships, including being part of a family; (2) almost always chooses solitary activities; (3) has little, if any, interest in having sexual experiences with another person; (4) takes pleasure in few, if any, activities; (5) lacks close friends or confidants other than first-degree relatives; (6) appears indifferent to the praise or criticism of others; (7) shows emotional coldness, detachment, or flattened affectivity”

Prevalence, Symptoms, and Impact

The cause and prevalence of schizoid personalities is uncertain. This uncertainty may be due to the fact that individuals with schizoid personalities rarely seek clinical treatment, and as a consequence, are rarely studied. Nevertheless, the condition is often assumed to be the result of genetic and environmental factors, and estimated to describe less than 5% of the population [1]. The genetic component of the condition is visible while observing the family members of schizoids, of whom are far more likely to be diagnosed with schizophrenia than the relatives of non-schizoid individuals [2]. This finding, and the belief that there exists no significant environmental component to the condition is reinforced by the finding that the children of schizophrenic women are far more likely to have schizoid personalities, and related conditions than the children of non schizophrenic women, *even when raised by foster parents* [3]. These findings, among others, substantiate the view that the schizoid personality may exist on a “schizophrenic spectrum,” which includes a cluster of disorders that share symptoms with, and may be premorbid manifestations of schizophrenia.

While the overlap of the presentation of the symptoms of schizophrenia, and the schizoid personality are evident — with the most notable being a flattened affect, and a diminished sense of pleasure — the disorder which most resembles the schizoid personality is aspergers syndrome. This claim can be substantiated by the DSM V’s criteria for autism spectrum disorder (which includes aspergers syndrome), which lists many symptoms that would be met by most schizoid

individuals, such as, a “lack of facial expressions and nonverbal communication,” which would be met by someone who shows emotional coldness, detachment, or flattened affectivity; “deficits in developing, maintaining, and understanding relationships,” and “an absence of interest in peers,” which would be met by someone who neither desires nor enjoys close relationships, and takes pleasure in few, if any, activities [1]. Additionally, autistic spectrum disorders often precede, or are comorbid with childhood onset schizophrenia [4]. Moreover, 3 out of the 4 remaining criteria for autism spectrum disorder closely resemble neurotic compulsions, and high neuroticism is associated with a higher risk of developing schizophrenia [5]. These findings, among others, substantiated the view that asperger's syndrome, and the schizoid personality, differ only slightly, and that where they do, it may be mostly regarding traits that indicate a greater risk of developing schizophrenia.

While schizoids appear less likely than autists to develop schizophrenia, both disorders are associated with higher than average occurrences of antisocial, and suicidal behavior [5][6][7][8]. Although this increased likelihood is concerning, it becomes less alarming when consideration is given to the fact that simply having a mental disorder is associated with an increased likelihood of these behaviors [10][11]. What’s more, to make these findings even less shocking, one needs only to consider the relationship between having a mental disorder and being bullied during childhood, and the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and suicidal, and criminal behavior [12][13][14]. Furthermore, these findings may also serve as evidence of the potential link between the schizoid personality and creative production.

Treatments and Outcomes

Treatments for schizoids rarely yield what are typically considered desired outcomes. The condition is life-long, is often unresponsive to medication, and schizoids rarely attend therapy consistently, when they do seek it. Moreover, schizoids have been estimated to comprise about 19% of the homeless population of the United States, which is alarming considering that the condition is not associated with any intellectual impairments [15]. Although this claim has not been thoroughly researched, I suspect that the troubles schizoids may have with securing, and maintaining employment, may be due to their unenthusiastic nature. Indeed, it is difficult to

imagine someone who “takes pleasure in few, if any activities” seeming like a very motivated employee, or potential employee, to most people.

While the prognosis for some schizoids may be bleak, this is not the case for all those who have the condition. Some schizoids live without any impairments in functioning, and others even produce work that is of great value to society. Evidence for this claim can be derived from that people who are on the schizophrenic spectrum are overrepresented among populations of creative people [16]. Likewise, creative people have been shown to have people on the schizophrenic spectrum overrepresented among their relatives [17]. What’s more, this link may even increase alongside creative ability. This claim could, perhaps, be most persuasively validated by observing quotes from Leonardo da Vinci, who was arguably one of the most creative individuals to ever live, and a schizoid himself.

Leonardo once wrote “Marriage is like putting your hand into a bag of snakes in the hope of pulling out an eel” [18]. As one might infer, he never married and probably didn’t have any close relationships. At another point he states, “If you are alone you belong entirely to yourself. If you are accompanied by even one companion you belong only half to yourself or even less,” indicating that he likely almost always preferred solitary activities [18]. While expressing his lack of desire in sexual activities, he’s said “Intellectual passion drives out sensuality,” and “The act of procreation and anything that has any relation to it is so disgusting that human beings would soon die out if there were no pretty faces and sensuous dispositions” [18]. Indeed, asexual people are often disgusted by sex [19]. At once indicating that he likely took pleasure in few things other than the fruits of his own genius, Leonardo said “I am not poor. Poor are those who desire many things. The natural desire of good men is knowledge” [18].

If Leonardo’s remarks here are to be taken seriously, then there is little reason to believe that he would not have qualified for a schizoid diagnosis. What’s more, there is also little reason to believe that if he were alive today, his eccentric nature may not have prevented him from maintaining a job, and in turn, prevented us from reaping the benefits of his creations. I believe that this inference expresses more about the short-sighted tendencies of society, than it does about the pathological nature of Leonardo’s condition.

On Abortion: Agentic Acceleration

Much ado about morality has been espoused regarding abortion, and its related matters. Digressions into fruitless debates on the aliveness of a fetus, the validity of divine commandments, and what to do in cases of rape or potentially retarded children are common deviations that get entertained when people of opposing viewpoints discuss this topic. These digressions seem to be born from a shared principle between the interlocutors: that steadfast positions on this, and possibly any topic, should be avoided, presumably because consistently rigid applications of any particular principle is often considered taboo, viewed as stubborn, and mistaken for a claim to godhood, or omnipotence — because of course, a claim to certainty must be failing to take into account other perspectives, and therefore be wrong, and of course, ironically, those who hold this position are usually *certain of it*. So in an attempt to show the folly of this perspective, I'll be focusing on a single case regarding abortion and then following the expected tangents just to show the universal utility of my principle. This principle is that whenever possible, measures should be taken to maximize the agency of all living things. The case is that of Sherri Finkbine, who, after consuming a prescription tranquilizer while pregnant, discovered that she would likely give birth to a severely deformed baby due to an unstated side-effect of the medication. Sherri eventually aborted her pregnancy.

First, let's address whether or not abortion can ever be ethical. To address this matter using my principle, we must first determine the point at which a child is alive. Because aliveness connotes some degree of sovereignty, the point at which an unborn child is alive should be designated to the point at which the child is able to survive outside of the womb. This is, in part, a fitting designation because few people would consistently defend the position that life begins before then. This position would be indefensible for most people because it implies that everyone, including God, would be guilty of unjust killings. An unjust killing, in this case, would be the termination of non-sovereign beings, which would include not yet born people, which would mean that God would be guilty of an infinite amount of murders for not allowing there to be an infinite amount of births occurring at any given point in time. So ending a pregnancy before the child can survive outside of the womb, by my principle, would not be unethical.

This position would imply that Sherri Finkbine’s aborting of her pregnancy was not unethical, as, at the time, that action was clearly conducive to the agency of the individuals involved. But this ruling is sure to spark some retorts from those critical of my position. One might ask, “Wouldn’t that imply that one should abort all not yet viable children?” To which my answer would be *no*, as it is not clear that aborting not yet viable children is always the most agentic action, but *it is* clear that aborting not yet viable children is not directly anti-agency. In other words, as it is today, ending early-stage pregnancies is not unethical, but may not always be the most ethical thing to do.

Surely more criticisms would follow this explanation. A likely candidate for such a response might be, “Wouldn’t this philosophy be inhumane, as it views humans as just conduits for power?” To which my answer would, of course, be no. To act in accordance with my principle is to actuate your humanity, and foster your potential. Sherri Finkbine, according to my position, to some degree realized humanity’s potential when she aborted her pregnancy. Her action existed on a continuum of behaviors with upward bounds, pointing to more and more freedom, and less entropy.

Wry with confusion, and desperate for a gap in my gall, my detractors are sure to fire another question. This question would be of the type that inevitably makes its way into nearly all conversations regarding claims to truth, and their implications. This question would be, “Where does this end?” To which my answer is obvious: it doesn’t. My principle, if consistently and rigidly applied, engulfs all perspectives, derives a view for every angle, an action for every sight, and moves in all directions before diverging back into itself just to emerge with more meaning. This rebirth would, naturally, provide treatment for its own ailments: a deeper need for connection; a greater resolve and fury; even more lust for the knot of all knots — the tying together of all loose ends through nothing if not through drive and reason. This principle is to encourage the acceleration of agency, forward the force that allows for everything, and foster its children. This principle is not a claim to omnipotence, or perfect law; it is a tracking of logic and its relationship to matter and a submission to the combinations therebetween that do not contradict themselves, but instead, grow stronger upon contemplation. My principle is not to will to power, but to power what powers everything. My principle is not a claim to, or denial of

godhood, it is a pattern of behavior that if extrapolated, and consistently and rigidly applied, awakens godliness.

On the Origin of Sexuality, Two Opposing Views

Abstract

Sexuality and its influences pervades nearly everything a person says or does. Given this fact, it seems reasonable to infer that developing a coherent and dynamic understanding of sexuality would greatly enhance our understanding of human behavior, and empower us to better address some of the perceived issues which have been associated with sexual expressions. To attempt to further this development, I'll be summarizing and comparing two popular views on sexuality from two different periods, and then be providing my perspective on each view alongside an avenue for continued research on this topic. The first view that I summarize is a social constructivist view on sexuality, and the second is an evolutionarily derived one. In my conclusion, I address the validity of both views and suggest ways that hypotheses on sexuality, and hypotheses more generally, could better be tested.

The Social Constructivist View

The popularisation of the social constructivist view on sexuality is largely attributed to Michel Foucault's originally three-volume work, *The History of Sexuality*, which was published in 1976. This view is that, according to Foucault scholars Susan Brownell & Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, "'Sexuality' is an invention of the modern state, the industrial revolution, and capitalism" [1]. In favor of this view, Foucault argues first by claiming that the notion that human sexuality was largely repressed from the 17th to mid 20th century was constructed by the powers that be to justify sexually unrestrained behavior. Foucault claims that, instead, sexual openness actually increased during this period because this is when the Roman Catholic Church began calling for its worshipers to confess their sinful thoughts and behaviors. In Foucault's view, this newfound control on sexual discourse allowed the Catholic Church to categorize non-wedded and heterosexual sexual activities as perverse, while simultaneously creating a society consisting of "blatant and fragmented perversion" [2]. This newly expanded sexual openness, according to Foucault, then made possible the open study of human sexuality by scientists; but according to Foucault, this open study ultimately aided various political forces in

supporting state racism. In his final account of the history of sexuality, Foucault states that the movement from an “antirepressive” view on sexuality marked a “shift and reversal in the great deployment of sexuality” [2]. Ultimately, the late author of *The History of Sexuality* claims that if we are to undo this reversal we must construct a view of sexuality that is divorced from law, and separate from the views of our governing bodies. Extending his argument even further, Foucault claims that the central issue here is power and its centering “on the body as a machine” [2]. And power, according to Foucault, is simply what fosters life.

The Evolutionary Perspective

The theory of evolution was first unveiled in 1859, by Charles Darwin, in his book *On the Origin of Species*. The theory states that certain traits, in certain contexts, make an organism more likely to survive, and or reproduce. This theory implies that sexual behavior, in the words of evolutionary psychologist Diana Fleischman in her 2017 publication “Sex as Bonding Mechanisms,” is “the currency of evolution” [3]. Furthermore, according to Fleischman, sexual behavior also grants an evolutionary benefit by strengthening and reinforcing social bonds. To support her theory, Fleischman cites that female bonobos often engage in homosexual behaviors which strengthens their relationships and allows them “to form alliances to challenge larger stronger males” [3]. Furthering her argument, Fleischman then states that progesterone, a hormone associated with affiliation, “is associated with greater self-reported desire to engage with others of the same sex, and men who are primed with affiliation related words are more likely to report wanting to engage in homoerotic behavior, but especially when male subjects had higher salivary progesterone” [3][4]. These findings indicate that there may be neurobiological evidence that same-sex erotic behaviors, and sexual behaviors generally, are associated with stronger social bonds, which are presumably evolutionarily useful. As for more specific claims on sexual or erotic preferences and tendencies, Diana Fleischman’s husband, Geoffrey Miller, believes that most biological and personality characteristics that individuals are attracted to simply signal evolutionary adaptations. One example of this phenomenon, to Miller, is verbal creativity. Miller believes that humans evolved a vocabulary that is larger than is needed for

survival because the use of a large and creative vocabulary signals high intelligence to potential mates, and intelligence is considered to be a supremely evolutionarily useful trait.

The Two Together

It is clear that the social constructivist and evolutionary views on human sexuality take two starkly different approaches to understanding the concept: one focuses on its semantic origins, and the other on its deeper utility. Yet, somehow, each approach entails an explanation of the other. The social constructivist, believing that our modern notions of sexuality originated from a desire to justify sexual rambunctiousness, would likely view the evolutionary position that consensual sex is mostly an untrammelled good as proof of its priors; while the evolutionary theorist, believing that social unity increases evolutionary fitness, would likely consider the social constructivist' preoccupation with social matters as proof of its. Indeed, when judged solely on how one position contextualizes the other, one might conclude that each theory is equally valid — but looks can be deceiving. In this case, the best approach for discerning which position is more coherent would begin by observing each framework's internal consistency: testing each analysis on itself. The social constructivist, claiming that power is to blame for the faults that it sees, also believes that power produces life and wants to dictate how terms are constructed. Here we see that the social constructivist view on sexuality is both incoherent, and entails an application that ends in extinction. Contrastingly, the evolutionary perspective, which essentially only claims that sex confers many benefits, presents an argument that can be supported at a meta-level by its premises. It is unlikely that Diana Fleischman and Geoffrey Miller have not formed beneficial social affiliations as a result of their publications, and it is also unlikely that either of the conjectures discussed in this paper would have come to exist had our ancestors had a repressive view on sexuality — something that Foucault apparently views as a travesty.

Conclusion

Regardless of the claims of the theory in question, it is rarely disputed that sexuality often plays an integral role in one's daily life, and cultural setting. The way in which this role

manifests, however, has been subject to much debate. When comparing and analysing a social constructivist and evolutionary view on sexuality, I noticed that the evolutionary view allowed for a parsimonious interpretation of its claims when interpreted through its own framework, and that the social constructivist view did not. In other words, the social constructivist view on sexuality was incoherent. My intention here was not to draw this conclusion before I began my research; I simply found two popular, and opposing views on sexuality and decided to compare them. Moreover, it seems that the outcome of this comparison may allude to a potential fact relevant to addressing empirical theories of any type. This fact being that because reality must be presumed coherent for anyone to posit anything coherent pertaining to it, one's theory regarding anything must also be coherent, or, meta-consistent. As for how this approach is relevant to specific claims about human sexuality, it deems the evolutionary view and its claims to be more useful, accurate, and likely to persist without serious opposition.

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