

# What is marriage?

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## ◆ Marriage

- ◇ Marriage is the fundamental structural unit of society.
- ◇ Marriage secures companionship for living, sexual activity, and parenting.
- ◇ Marriage provides a context for bearing and raising children.
- ◇ Marriage gives rise to nuclear families. Nuclear families give rise to extended families. Extended families give rise to clans and tribes. Clans and tribes give rise to nations.
- ◇ The words *nation* and *nativity* both derive from the Latin *natio*, birth. The word *nation* refers to a group of people related by birth, thereby forming an ethnic group — a cultural group sharing language, dress, food, celebrations, religion, calendar, history, etc. Over time, the meaning of *nation* has evolved into the concept of the people, together with their terrain, that lie under the jurisdiction of a sovereign government.

## ◆ History of ethical theory

- ◇ The history of western religion was identified with establishing high ethical standards. The reason given was to honor God, and the reward was paradise or heaven, as in Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- ◇ Four major religious concepts of western religion originated in Zoroastrianism: monotheism, a cosmic antagonist to God (Satan), apocalypticism (ultimate victory of God over Satan, of good over evil), and dichotomous afterlife (heaven vs. hell, paradise vs. lake of fire). See *Human Life*, Edition 1 p. 75-80, Edition 2 p. 81-86; *In Pursuit*, p. 242-249.
- ◇ Zoroastrianism was spread throughout the Near East under the Persian Empire 550-330 BCE, but, notably, the Persians did not try to conquer India or China, and they were unable to conquer Greece, so independent, secular, intellectual traditions were able to develop in India, China, and Greece.
- ◇ During the 500s-300s BCE, secular ethical systems were developed independently in Greece under the classical philosophers, in China under Confucius and Lao Tzu, and in India under Siddhartha Gautama.
- ◇ During the 1700s European Enlightenment, intellectuals advanced secular arguments for ethical behavior, harkening back to ancient Greece and ancient China.
- ◇ My work shows how to develop a rational theory of ethics based on a theory of knowledge. Girgis, Ryan, and George develop a theory of marriage using a secular rationale.

## ◆ Best predictor theory of ethics

- ◇ Ethics entails principles for relating to other people.
- ◇ Our relations with other people are fundamentally about interdependence and intimacy — mutual need and mutual meaning. I call this *the relational duality*:
  - ◆ Interdependence or need — to enhance one's physical well being
  - ◆ Intimacy or meaning — to engage in meaningful activity
- ◇ Skill is given by the simplest, most effective means for achieving a goal of interest.
- ◇ Ethical principles are principles for most skillfully achieving the relational duality.
- ◇ The relational-duality goals don't need to be conceived as such by people. This is a best predictor model: an attempt to devise the simplest, most accurate model for predicting human behavior. The same modeling idea applies to babies, bugs, and plants, though they don't conceive of goals as such.
- ◇ There must be a balance between egoism and altruism, both to achieve meaning and to achieve social stability. The greater the egoism, the lower the social stability. Slavery was a very unstable institution.

- ◇ Commerce in the free market serves all parties. There are facets that require centralized regulation, but government historically engages in excessive regulating, thereby distorting incentives and motivating undesirable side effects, as in the minimum wage and mandated healthcare coverage.
- ◇ Traditional marriage — monogamous, heterosexual marriage — is an ethical principle, that is, a principle for most skillfully achieving the relational duality.
- ◇ Attraction to the same sex can't be the result of natural selection since same-sex mating is infertile.

## ◆ Theory of conjugal marriage – Girgis, Ryan, George

- ◇ Traditional marriage — monogamous, heterosexual marriage — is a principle for most skillfully achieving human flourishing — human health and prosperity.
- ◇ Only conjugal marriage can be discretely defined and rationally defended as a unique relationship that is foundational to a stable and prosperous society.
- ◇ The criterial feature of conjugal marriage is comprehensive union. There are three facets of union:
  - ◆ Union in mind and body
  - ◆ Union in life and procreation
  - ◆ Union in commitment — commitment to an exclusive and permanent relationship
- ◇ The discreteness property of conjugal marriage is given by coitus — sexual intercourse that naturally serves the purpose of procreation. Coitus is possible only between one man and one woman.
- ◇ If we eliminate coitus as a discrete defining property of marriage, we are left with a multidimensional space of continua: degree of emotional intensity, degree of commitment, degree of sharing material resources, degree of sharing time, degree of sharing goals, degree of mutual sexual activity (as opposed to activity with other partners), etc.
- ◇ Due to boundary breakdown, it is impossible to rationally partition a continuum. Hence, it is impossible to rationally define marriage in terms of such a partition. On boundary breakdown, see *Human Life*, Edition 1 p. 61-63, Edition 2 p. 67-69; *In Pursuit*, p. 128-129.
- ◇ See chapter summary handout for detailed summary of ramifications presented in book.

## ◆ Sexual attraction considerations

- ◇ How can the concept of woman be defined such that genetic endowment can determine that a man is sexually attracted to a woman or that a woman is sexually attracted to a woman?
- ◇ How can the concept of man be defined such that genetic endowment can determine that a woman is sexually attracted to a man or that a man is sexually attracted to a man?
- ◇ Such attraction can't depend on cultural conventions or appearance styles, such as hair and clothes styles.
- ◇ Why is a man not sexually attracted to women per se but to a small subset of women determined by personality, appearance, age, and relationship? Why is a woman not sexually attracted to men per se but to a small subset of men determined by personality, appearance, age, and relationship?
- ◇ Consider the New Guinea example: as determined by tribal culture, a male youth proceeds through three well-defined sexual stages — homosexuality, bisexuality, and heterosexuality.

## ◆ Sexual attraction model

- ◇ Sexual attraction is based on personality attraction.
- ◇ Our genes determine general behavioral propensities that, through interaction with life experiences, determine our sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is learned by the automatic unit of the mind, which is why it seems integral to our nature. See *Human Life*, Edition 2 p. 42-47; *In Pursuit*, p. 76-81.
- ◇ Due to human intelligence and human culture, humans don't need genetically endowed sexual-attraction propensities to ensure propagation of the race.