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Q&A#50 Is Abortion to be Solved by Controlling Male Sexual Behaviour?

September 16, 2018



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This video is a response to a widely-shared, much discussed, and controversial Twitter thread: <https://twitter.com/i/moments/1040468130433097728>.

Within the discussion, I reference a few articles and books.

The NYT article on non-consensual ghosting:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/07/style/modern-love-he-asked-permission-to-touch-but-not-to-ghost.html>.

GQ article on plummeting sperm counts: <https://www.gq.com/story/sperm-count-zero>.

Oliver O'Donovan's 'Begotten or Made?': <https://amzn.to/2xcNFA0>.

Mark Regnerus' 'Cheap Sex': <https://amzn.to/2QA7fhB> (and my review of it: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/reviews/cheap-sex-mark-regnerus/>).

If you have any questions, you can leave them on my Curious Cat account: <https://curiouscat.me/zugzwanged>.

If you have enjoyed these videos, please tell your friends and consider supporting me on Patreon: <https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>.

My new Soundcloud account is here: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

Welcome back. Today I'm responding to a Twitter thread on the subject of abortion. A friend emailed me and asked me to give my thoughts on it.

He was struck by the way that it was shared by people on both sides of the abortion

debate with very strong support for it, and then the different reactions that other people had to it. And so I'm going to read out the entirety of the thread. It's quite a long one, but then I'll respond to it.

I'm a mother of six and a Mormon. I have a good understanding of arguments surrounding abortion, religious and otherwise. I've been listening to men grandstand about women's reproductive rights and I'm convinced men actually have zero interest in stopping abortion.

Here's why. If you want to stop abortion, you need to prevent unwanted pregnancies. And men are 100% responsible for unwanted pregnancies.

No, for real, they are. Perhaps you're thinking, it takes two. And yes, it does take two for intentional pregnancies.

But all unwanted pregnancies are caused by the irresponsible ejaculations of men. Period. Don't believe me? Let me walk you through it.

Let's start with this. Women can only get pregnant about two days each month. And that's for a limited number of years.

That makes 24 days a year women might get pregnant. But men can cause pregnancy 365 days a year. In fact, if you're a man who ejaculates multiple times a day, you could cause multiple pregnancies daily.

In theory, a man could cause a thousand plus unwanted pregnancies in just one year. And though their sperm gets crappier as they age, men can cause unwanted pregnancies from puberty till death. So just starting with basic biology and the calendar, it's easy to see men are the issue here.

But what about birth control? If a woman doesn't want to risk an unwanted pregnancy, why wouldn't she just use birth control? If a woman can manage to figure out how to get an abortion, surely she can get birth control, right? Great questions. Modern birth control is possibly the greatest invention of the last century, and I'm very grateful for it. It's also brutal.

The side effects for many women are ridiculously harmful. So ridiculous that when an oral contraception for men was created, it wasn't approved because of the side effects. And the list of side effects was about a third as long as the known side effects for women's oral contraception.

There's a lot to be unpacked just in that story, but I'll simply point out in case you didn't know that as a society we really don't mind if women suffer, physically or mentally, as long as it makes things easier for men. But good news! Men. Even with the horrible side effects, women are still very willing to use birth control.

Unfortunately, it's harder to get than it should be. Birth control options for women require a doctor's appointment and a prescription. It's not free and often not cheap.

In fact, there are many people trying to make it more expensive by fighting to make sure insurance companies refuse to cover it. Oral contraceptives for women can't be acquired easily or at the last moment. And they don't work instantly.

If we're talking about the put pill, it requires consistent daily use and doesn't leave much room for mistakes, forgetfulness or unexpected disruptions to daily schedules. And again, the side effects can be brutal. I'm still grateful for it.

Please don't take it away. I'm just saying women's birth control isn't simple or easy. In contrast, let's look at birth control for men, meaning condoms.

Condoms are readily available at all hours, inexpensive, convenient and don't require a prescription. They're effective and they work on demand. Instantly.

Men can keep them stocked up just in case, so they're always prepared. Amazing. They are also so much easier than birth control options for women.

As a bonus, in general, women love when men use condoms. They keep us from getting STDs, they don't lessen our pleasure during sex or prevent us from climaxing. And the best part, clean up is so much easier.

So why in the world are there ever unwanted pregnancies? Why don't men just use condoms every time they have sex? Seems so simple, right? Oh, I remember. Men don't love condoms. In fact, men frequently pressure women to have sex without a condom.

And it's not unheard of for men to remove the condom during sex without the woman's permission or knowledge. Pro tip, that's a salt. Why would men want to have sex without a condom? Good question.

Apparently, it's because for the minutes they are penetrating their partner, having no condom on gives the experience more pleasure. So, there are men willing to risk getting a woman pregnant, which means literally risking her life, her health, her social status, her relationships and her career, so that they can experience a few more minutes of slightly more pleasure. Is that for real? Yes.

Yes it is. What are we talking about here pleasure-wise? If there's a pleasure scale with pain beginning at zero and going down into the negatives, a back scratch falling at five, an orgasm without a condom being a ten, where would sex with a condom fall? Like a seven or eight? So it's not like sex with a condom is not pleasurable. It's just not as pleasurable.

An eight instead of a ten. Let me emphasize that again. Men regularly choose to put

women at massive risk by having non-condom sex in order to experience a few minutes of slightly more pleasure.

Now, keep in mind for the truly condom-averse, men also have a non-condom, always ready, birth control built right in called the pull-out. It's not perfect and it's a favourite joke, but it's also 96% effective. So surely we can expect men who aren't wearing a condom to at least pull out every time they have sex, right? Nope.

And why not? Well, again, apparently it's slightly more pleasurable to climax inside a vagina than say on a partner's stomach. So men are willing to risk the life, health and well-being of women in order to experience a tiny bit more pleasure for like five seconds during orgasm. It's mind-boggling and disturbing when you realize that's the choice men are making.

And honestly, I'm not as mad as I should be about this, because we've trained men from birth that their pleasure is of utmost importance in the world, and to disassociate sex and pregnancy. While we're here, let's talk a bit more about pleasure and biology. Did you know that a man can't get a woman pregnant without having an orgasm? Which means that we can conclude getting a woman pregnant is a pleasurable act for men.

But did you further know that men can get a woman pregnant without her feeling any pleasure at all? In fact, it's totally possible for a man to impregnate a woman, even while causing her excruciating pain, trauma or horror. In contrast, a woman can have non-stop orgasms, with or without a partner, and never once get herself pregnant. A woman's orgasm has literally nothing to do with pregnancy or fertility.

Her clitoris exists not for creating new babies, but simply for pleasure. No matter how many orgasms she has, they won't make her pregnant. Pregnancies can only happen when men have an orgasm.

Unwanted pregnancies can only happen when men orgasm irresponsibly. What this means is a woman can be the sluttiest slut in the entire world who loves having orgasms all day long and all night long, and she will never find herself with an unwanted pregnancy unless a man shows up and ejaculates irresponsibly. Women enjoying sex does not equal unwanted pregnancy and abortion.

Men enjoying sex and having irresponsible ejaculations is what causes unwanted pregnancies and abortion. Let's talk more about responsibility. Men often don't know and don't think to ask if they've caused a pregnancy.

They may never think of it or associate sex with making babies at all. Why? Because there are zero consequences for men who cause unwanted pregnancies. If the woman decides to have an abortion, the man may never know that he caused an unwanted pregnancy with his irresponsible ejaculation.

If the woman decides to have the baby or put the baby up for adoption, the man may never know he caused an unwanted pregnancy with his irresponsible ejaculation, or that there's now a child walking around with 50% of his DNA. If the woman does tell him that he caused an unwanted pregnancy and that she's having the baby, the closest thing to a consequence for him is that he may need to place child support. But our current child support system is well known to be a joke.

61% of men or women who are legally required to pay it simply don't, with little or no repercussions. Their credit isn't even affected. So many men keep going as is, causing unwanted pregnancies with irresponsible ejaculations and never giving it thought.

When the topic of abortion comes up, men might think abortion is horrible, women should not have abortions, and never once consider the man who caused the unwanted pregnancy. If you're not holding men responsible for unwanted pregnancies, then you're wasting your time. Stop protesting at clinics, stop shaming women, stop trying to overturn abortion laws.

If you actually care about reducing or eliminating the number of abortions in our country, simply hold men responsible for their actions. What would that look like? What if there were a real and immediate consequence for men who cause an unwanted pregnancy? What kind of consequence would make sense? Should it be as harsh, painful, nauseating, scarring, expensive, risky and life-altering as forcing a woman to go through a nine-month unwanted pregnancy? In my experience, men really like their testicles. If irresponsible ejaculations were putting their balls at risk, they would stop being irresponsible.

Does castration seem like a cruel and unusual punishment? Definitely. But is it worse than forcing 500,000 women a year to puke daily for months, gain 40 pounds and then rip their bodies apart in childbirth? Is a handful of castrations worse than women dying during forced pregnancy and childbirth? Put a castration law in the books. Implement the law.

Let the media tell the story. And in three months or less, ta-da! Abortions will have virtually disappeared. Can you picture it? No more abortions in less than three months without ever trying to outlaw them.

Amazing. For those of you who consider abortion to be murder, wouldn't you be on board with having a handful of men castrated if it prevented 500,000 murders each year? And if not, is that because you actually care more about policing women's bodies, morality and sexuality than you do about reducing or eliminating abortions? That's a rhetorical question. Hey, you can even have the men who will be castrated bank their spurn before it happens, just in case they want to responsibly have kids someday.

Can't wrap your head around a physical punishment for men, even though you seem to

be more than fine with physical punishments for women. Okay, then how about this prevention idea? At the onset of puberty, all males in the US should be required by law to get a vasectomy. Vasectomies are very safe, totally reversible and about as invasive as a doctor's exam for a woman getting a birth controls prescription.

There's some soreness afterwards for about 24 hours, but that's pretty much it for side effects. So much better than the pill, which is taken by millions of women in our country, the side effects of which are well known and can be brutal. If, when the male becomes a responsible adult and perhaps finds a mate, if they want to have a baby, the vasectomy can be reversed and then redone once the childbearing stage is over, and each male can bank their spurn before the vasectomy just in case.

It's not that wild of an idea. 80% of males in the US are circumcised, most as babies, and that's not reversible. Don't like my ideas? That's fine.

I'm sure there are better ones. Go ahead and suggest your own ideas. My point is that it's nonsense to focus on women if you're trying to get rid of abortions.

Abortion is the cure for an unwanted pregnancy. If you want to stop abortions, you need to prevent the disease, meaning unwanted pregnancies. And the only way to do that is by focusing on men, because men cause 100% of unwanted pregnancies, or irresponsible ejaculations by men cause 100% of unwanted pregnancies.

If you're a man, what would the consequence need to be for you never to, again, ejaculate irresponsibly? Would it be money-related? Maybe a loss of rights or freedoms? Physical pain? Ask yourselves, what would it take for you to value the life of your sexual partner more than your own temporary pleasure or convenience? Are you someone who learns better with analogies? Let's try this one. Think of another great pleasure in life. Let's say food.

Think of your favourite meal, dessert, or drink. What if you found out that every time you indulge in that favourite food, you risk causing great physical and mental pain for someone that you know intimately? You might not cause any pain, but it's a real risk. Well, you'd probably be sad, but never indulge in that food again, right? Not worth the risk.

And then, what if you further found out there was a simple thing you could do before you ate that favourite food, and it would eliminate the risk of causing pain to someone else, which is great news. But, the simple thing you need to do makes the experience of eating the food slightly less pleasurable. To be clear, it would be still very pleasurable, but slightly less so.

Like, maybe you have to eat the food with a fork or spoon that you don't particularly like. Would you be willing to do that simple thing and eliminate the risk of causing pain to

someone you know very intimately, even every single time you ate your favourite food? Of course you would. Condoms or even pulling out is that simple thing.

Don't put women at risk. Don't choose to maximise your own pleasure if it risks causing women pain. Men run most of our government.

Men mostly make the laws. And men could eliminate abortions in three months or less, without ever touching an abortion law or even mentioning women. In summary, stop trying to control women's bodies and sexuality.

Unwanted pregnancies are caused by men. The end. Oh boy, there's lots that could be said about this.

And it's interesting the way that it has been received. That it's a number of people have seen this as a sort of anti-abortion argument, and it really does not seem to be an anti-abortion argument to me. There's a lot more going on here than that.

Rather, it seems to be a calculated diversion of anti-abortion energy into sort of gender war direction, given that, I mean, it's not thinking practically, really. Rather, the point is that we should care more about this than that. We should care more.

We should reframe this issue to see it as an issue of women versus men, or men versus women, rather, and not to see it primarily in terms of killing unborn children. And then you have the practicalities, things like the pullout method and condom use are considerably less effective than in real world use, the most female forms of contraception, where the birth control, even in real world use, birth control, or certainly the IUD, these are considerably more effective. And so if you really wanted, if your aim was to prevent unwanted pregnancies, then those would be far more effective.

And in, given their failure rate, what's going to happen in those cases when a woman gets pregnant? What is this author going to say? Is she going to say, well, we shouldn't have abortion. It's just unfortunate that it's happened in this particular case. You took precautions.

Oh, well, no, it's going to be an argument in favour of abortion. Abortion is the cure for an unwanted pregnancy, as she wrote. The idea of getting rid of abortions is a red herring.

She's not really interested in getting rid of abortions. Rather, that's a red herring. The whole point is stop controlling women's bodies.

That's the point that she ends up at at the end. And the abortion argument is just a means of making that argument, a means of presenting the abortion issue as if it was really about that. It's in many ways the same sort of things that you have in the abortion arguments when people will say the abortion argument is merely caused by the fact that

people aren't prepared to adopt children or that they don't have universal health care or they don't do this, that and the other.

And that if we really want to deal with unwanted pregnancies, if we really want to avoid abortion, then we should do all these sorts of things. And we're the ones that really are responsible, not the doctors that abort children, not the women that have their children aborted, and not the men that pressure them into having those children aborted. In each of these cases, it's put on to some other party to absolve the key parties involved of their responsibility.

And the resolving of responsibility just because some people won't pick up the consequences of your irresponsible actions is not exactly the most compelling argument. And I think the abortion argument is brought into this context in part because she's in a Mormon context. I suspect she's playing in a context where there are lots of anti-abortion arguments and she's trying to divert the energy from those into a different direction by dissembling the fact that she's actually on board with abortion.

And that comes through at various points in her argument by presenting the fact that if we really wanted to get rid of abortion, we just need to deal with this issue by men. Now, we do need to deal with those issues for men. But abortion is still evil.

It remains evil. Even if certain parties aren't being responsible, there is still this evil being done. That needs to be tackled in its own right.

The fact that men are being irresponsible does not mean that abortion should not be dealt with directly. The idea that abortion can only be dealt with indirectly, indirectly through establishing all this left-wing wish list of demands, or by getting men to do this, that and the other, and not tackled directly, that is a problem. It's based very much upon a certain set of conceptions about what these issues really are.

And it's based ultimately upon the conception that abortion isn't really the killing of a child. And that's significant. That's very much what this sort of position tends to boil down to.

Because when you look at these arguments, they're not practical. It's not intended to be practical. Rather, it's intended to be a, well, actually an avoidance of the issue, an attempt to discredit certain arguments, to deflect attention from certain issues, and then to move energy into the direction of a certain set of feminist talking points.

Now, that isn't because those positions have no weight, and there's not genuine merit in some of her arguments. But it's an attempt to avoid the real issues. I suspect her position then functions very much as an attempt to avoid the issues, to displace the issue.

There are a lot of women who have plenty of resources, who have plenty of

opportunities, and yet choose to abort their children nonetheless. And so it's not ultimately, it can't ultimately be stopped by just providing more resources, providing better health care, things like that. Likewise, there are many women who would, who even when their partners are responsibly engaging in safe sex, and again, safe sex is quite a significant euphemism.

It suggests that sex is safe, not when it is making provision for the natural end of procreative, of sexual activity, but when it is designed to avoid the natural end of sexual activity. That whole notion is significant. I mean, people who are married aren't usually spoken of as having safe sex.

When it's sexually exclusive, when it's in a context that's designed to take full account of what sex naturally leads to, the bearing of children, to provide a safe and secure environment, a loving environment within which to welcome that child into the world. That's not seen as safe sex, rather safe sex is avoiding the consequences. And so what we do not see in this argument, throughout this argument, is any real concern for the unborn.

Rather, they are means of discrediting anti-abortion arguments, the arguments here are. And it's for pushing coverage for birth control by insurance companies, things like that. Now, again, these questions need to be asked in their own place.

They are important questions to ask and to consider. But we need to be aware when there are just deflections taking place, which I think this is the case. And the complete failure to take into account practicalities is much of the issue here.

It reveals that this is not a serious argument, at least to me, it suggests that very strongly. I mean, the success rate for the reversal of vasectomies, according to the NHS, the National Health Service in the UK, is 55% within 10 years and 25% after that. Now, that's worth considering.

And then she suggests that, I mean, we need to stop controlling women's bodies. And so to stop controlling women's bodies, we must mandate that every single man at the onset of puberty gets a vasectomy. I mean, there's something, there's quite some, quite the logic within that particular argument.

It does not make sense at all. And it was never intended to make sense. It's about identity politics.

It's not about justice or consistent principles. I mean, if we really cared about the government not controlling people's bodies, then vasectomy would be the last thing that we'd advocate for. Many people were suggesting sterilising women and then you could reverse the process, but there would be a, after 10 years, you'd only be 25% likely to regain fertility.

I mean, people would be outraged about that. But of course, abortion, telling women that they can't kill the unborn child in their womb, is controlling their bodies. Now, there are issues here because I think the way that certain forms of government policies and laws that people have pushed for have been an invasion upon what should be seen as the space that belongs to women in their bodies.

But that's not the same thing as saying that we can allow abortion, we can allow the killing of the unborn. But there is a certain sort of invasion upon something that is not the public space. The child in the womb is not yet a person within the state, within the realm of the state.

That does not mean that abortion is appropriate. It does not mean that abortion should be legal. But it does mean that we should be careful of certain sorts of laws that are truly invasive upon women's bodies.

And that needs to be considered. And even in legislation against abortion, we need to be aware of pushing at that point. That's not the same thing as saying that doctors should have the right to abort unborn children.

That's not true at all. And so when we think about this particular case, the idea, the suggestion of bisectomies, why that suggestion of bisectomies? Because it's an identity politics issue, ultimately. It's about men versus women.

100% men's responsibility, 0% women's. And so we must exercise these sorts of, I mean, this is truly control of bodies. Every single male body would have to get a vasectomy.

This is not the case of saying those women who want to get an abortion, that they should not be able to perform that particular action, killing the unborn child in their womb. No, this is saying that every single male must get a procedure that is very unlikely, that has a considerable unlikelihood of being reversed. It's a very serious thing to do.

Now, who seriously believes that the government wouldn't use this in a eugenics fashion as well, putting procreation out of the reach of the poor? I mean, we know that sort of thing would happen. It would not surprise us at all. And the cost of these procedures is also considerable.

That's not being considered here at all, because that's not really, it's not really being put forward as a serious proposal. I don't believe at all. Rather, it's being used as a political ploy to avoid certain arguments, to discredit certain arguments, to discredit any case against abortion.

If you really cared about abortion, you would be holding my position. And my position is not really a serious one. It's just a means to discredit the opposition to abortion.

The important thing is to recognise that ultimately, her argument comes down to, you should not control women's bodies. And control women's bodies equals saying that abortion should not be committed. And that's a significant thing to recognise.

Also, in terms of realism, let's consider the fact that men today are only half as fertile as their grandfathers. There was an article about this recently, and I can link to that below in the notes. But this is a huge issue within our day and age.

And so the idea that we'd have the government invest in a procedure for every single man entering puberty to sterilise them, and then expect a number of years down the line that this costly and unreliable reversal, just hope on that in a situation when we already have just half the fertility or the sperm count within a milliliter of sperm, of semen that our grandfathers did. That's a significant thing to do. It's quite a, it's a ridiculous, crazy proposal.

That's a ridiculous, crazy proposal because it's not intended to be taken seriously at all. And I think looking through her arguments, some of the things that she says are, it's interesting to see some of the points at which the true motives and the true things driving the argument come to the surface. The role of the government, for instance, is huge within these proposals, whether punitive or whether this universal sterilisation of men.

And it's interesting to consider the logic that underlies that. And I'll get to that in a moment, I think, thinking about the way that liberal thought tends to work in relationship to government and control and these sorts of things. It also, it seems to me that, again, the question of practicality, that if you want effective birth control, far more effective is women using the IUD or hormonal birth control.

It's, it is costly on their bodies. It does have impacts. If that's, if your concern is preventing unwanted pregnancies, then those are by far the most effective methods.

And so it seems to me that her argument is, it fails on this count, just when stacked up against the empirical facts, because her argument seems to depend upon shifting the responsibility, not actually thinking about the practical measures and how effective they are relatively. In terms of the practical measures that will prevent pregnancy, the most practical measures are those which are exercised by women upon their bodies. But the point of her argument is to shift the responsibility from women to men.

And for that reason, she's not really concerned primarily about what is most likely to prevent pregnancy. Rather, she's concerned about presenting men as 100% responsible for unwanted pregnancies, because this is something that men perform upon women. Men do this to women.

It's not an act in which men and women come together and take joint responsibility for

this action. No, it's something that men ejaculate in women. And that's entirely men's responsibility, because this is something that men do to women.

And that's a very, it's a significant step, the way that she's implicitly framing sex. And we'll see more about some of the ways that she's implicitly framing things, because there's a lot within that that is quite unhealthy and toxic. And so I believe once the energy of anti-abortion arguments has been successfully diverted in these sorts of directions, whether it's in the direction of universal health care or saying that we must adopt before we have any credibility to speak up about abortion, all these sorts of things, we must provide care for women in crisis, pregnancy centres, all these sorts of things.

Really, these are just ways of kicking the issue into the long grass. And once the energy has been diverted by discrediting certain arguments against abortion, what invariably happens is that these arguments fall away, because these were never really seriously advanced arguments. Rather, they were designed as means of dissembling the real motives and means of diverting energy into a more typically feminist cause.

And so arguments such as the ones presented in this thread, I believe, are the vanishing mediator for something that isn't opposed to abortion at all, because the bottom line is she is not opposed to abortion. And that's quite clear at the end, that we should not control women's bodies. And controlling women's bodies is seen in opposing abortion.

And abortion is the cure for the disease, for the wrong, for the sin, whatever it is of unwanted pregnancy. I mean, that's the sort of language that she uses. And so unwanted pregnancy is seen as a punishment or a wrong or something that men inflict upon women.

And as a result, men should have some punitive action that corresponds to that inflicted upon men. And so the corresponding action to men is to an unwanted pregnancy is castration. Again, think about the way that that frames pregnancy, the way that it frames pregnancy in relationship to sex.

And think about just the underlying logic of this argument. And of course, the intentions of the author don't invalidate everything that she's saying. There are some genuine points to consider.

And it is, but it is important to consider this framing because the framing is so much of what gives the argument weight. And if you take on board the framing, the argument tends to follow from it. So the normalisation of sterility and sex being purely for pleasure, that is significant.

That birth control is seen as establishing the normal condition. And the normal condition is that sexual activity is not related to procreation. And to the extent that it is related to procreation, it's a failure.

It's seen as an aberration. It's seen as unwanted. It's seen as the child is unchosen.

And it's a risk that is an outlier of a risk that should be avoided at all costs. It's seen as the infliction of some sort of punishment or hurt upon women. And so if you inflict a child upon a woman, you should face punitive consequences.

And so there's a resistance here to the proper end of sexual activity. The idea that the proper end of sexual activity, which is a two partner thing, it's not just men doing something to women. It's man and woman getting together.

And the natural consequence of that sexual activity, not just any particular sexual act, but sexual activity as a series of acts over time, a relationship, and just being sexually active as an individual, the natural end of that is that you will become a parent. But for us, sex is purely for pleasure. And that is seen as an aberration only to the extent that that is chosen, should that be a proper end.

And so the punitive action of castration should be seen as the equivalent of forced pregnancy, of an inflicted pregnancy of men doing this thing to women that inflicts a pregnancy upon them. Now, again, think of practicalities. How exactly would this forced castration work out? I mean, what could go wrong when we think about the government having the right to, or women having the, being able to force a partner to that they've fallen out with to be castrated by the government? I mean, how could that go wrong? Again, there is the abortion as a cure for unwanted pregnancy, and the banking of sperm and all these sorts of things, all buying into a very deep set of values about how sex works.

That pregnancy is a disease, it's something that's inflicted upon people, it's forced upon people, it's something that's alien to the act of sex, which is purely about pleasure. And that sex then increasingly becomes a type of project. It increasingly is determined by to the extent that it is chosen.

That's when it's appropriate. And procreation is that which must be chosen. And so, again, it becomes increasingly about technique.

It becomes about a project that is undertaken through choice, that's determined by choice in its proper form. And so the banking of sperm, reproductive procedures like IVF, and all these sorts of things that are deeply dysfunctional in a number of ways, and that draw us away from the proper end of sexual relations. And it's disturbing that many Christians just take these things for granted as normal.

They are not normal and they are not healthy. I strongly recommend people read things like Oliver O'Donovan's *Begotten or Made* to think seriously about these issues, because many Christians are quite on board with things like IVF. They shouldn't be.

There are a lot of problems with that. And then there's the idea that it only takes two for

successful pregnancies, it doesn't take two for unwanted pregnancies. There's the absolution of any responsibility on the part of the woman here, any responsibility for their choice of men and their willingness to sleep with them.

And one of the reasons why this is such a problem is within a society of casual sex, the more that sex is seen as having no consequences, ultimately just being about pleasure and with no consequences beyond that pleasure, what you have is less responsibility on men. This is what you should expect. Irresponsible men in a situation where there is casual sex as the norm and sex being purely about pleasure.

That's what comes with the territory. And there's a lot that you see within liberal arguments that are about sanitizing sex without recognizing that the very fundamental project, the very fundamental vision that they have of sex, post-sexual revolution is dysfunctional. There's a recent piece in the New York Times that talked about the problem with the limits of consent culture and the need to take it further.

This woman in a hookup who had this man who was a younger man who was very concerned with consent at every single stage. And yet he ghosted her and didn't call back afterwards. And she needed that emotional care after the sexual encounter that she'd found very fulfilling in certain respects.

But then he didn't provide the emotional care afterwards. But the whole problem of the consent culture is it's based upon that. It's based upon that fairly dehumanizing dynamic, the dehumanizing dynamic of sex as an episodic contractual arrangement that's very much based upon consent nowadays, consent to make it far more sanitized.

And the consent, of course, is highly asymmetrical. It's about women consenting to men. And there's a very much an implicit recognition that there is a great asymmetry between the sexual partners.

But in terms of liberal logic, you can't actually say that. And that's interesting to observe. But there's no sense of a common good.

There's no sense of that. And for certain reasons, that is why it's difficult for the woman making this argument to recognize that both parties are responsible for the sexual interaction. The woman is responsible for choosing the men that she sleeps with.

If she's sleeping with irresponsible men, then she has a responsibility for that. And one of the reasons why men are so irresponsible is because sex is cheap. And when sex is cheap, when men aren't expected to take the commitment to marriage, take the commitment to provision, all these sorts of things, then there is a burden that has to be borne in cases of unwanted pregnancy because no one has made provision for those things.

Because sex is not naturally cheap. Sex has consequences. And the reason why we have

marriage as an institution is to ensure that we take on board the weight of sex.

And that requires commitments on both sides. Both sides have to take responsibility. Both sides have to recognize the weight of what they're doing, the weight of their responsibility in the action.

The woman has to be committed to a man. The woman has to take responsibility for her choice of a man. And then the man on his part has to take responsibility for the provision of his wife and his children.

And these are things that take into account the weight of sex. And the idea that sex should be within the context of that responsibility, that marriage is ordered towards procreation, that marriage is designed so that we might assume the weight of sexual relations with another person. That is forgotten.

And so what you have increasingly are punitive and other measures that are brought in by the government. The government constantly has to intervene to back up a system that is fundamentally dysfunctional. And so you have a system that is based upon consent and contract, based upon two independent parties who aren't committed to a common good.

And of course, the child as something that's formed out of their union, if they're not taking responsibility for that union as something that they must be both responsible to, both responsible to its consequences, then it's no surprise that they won't take responsibility for the children and that the children will fall through the cracks. And this whole paradigm, the whole supposed argument against abortion being presented here is based upon a very liberal frame where it's just one party's responsibility. And there's no sense of a truly common good that both parties have entered into a union, which is one flesh that is ordered towards a common good, a common end, and that both parties are invested and responsible for that common end.

The bearing of the child that their union is naturally ordered towards. But of course, it's just one party's responsibility. And this again is the way that liberal arguments tend to build things around dysfunction.

It's an attempt to order society around all these dysfunctions and we must get medicines for each form of these dysfunctions rather than actually thinking about how do we develop health? What is a healthy sort of relationship? And how do we edify society and bring society to a position where healthy relationships are encouraged? And so consent-based ethics, these sort of punitive measures upon men, all these sorts of things, and lots of emphasis upon birth control, etc. All of these things are based upon a fundamentally dysfunctional paradigm and the attempt to plug, stop the problems that that leads to naturally and to relieve the pressure of the consequences without actually solving the root dysfunction. And so you're dealing with the symptoms rather than the

underlying illness.

But for liberals, the idea that you might actually celebrate and push forward marriage as the norm and really put your weight into that, a situation where people are truly one flesh, where they depend upon each other. Liberal society constantly thinks in terms of dysfunction and distrust and suspicion. So the woman might be abused.

The woman might not want to get pregnant. All these sorts of things. Those are the cases that are constantly foregrounded.

And as a result, they will push against anything that would give marriage weight because giving marriage weight depends upon a society based upon trust and structures of trust. But the liberal paradigm is based upon structures of suspicion that arise from the lowest common denominator situations of dysfunction. So the situations where trust cannot exist, where you have people in hookups with men and women who do not really know each other, who aren't really taking responsibility for each other, who aren't really caring for each other.

And so what you need to do is have the government come in to impose sanctions or you must have all these preachers of etiquette come in to teach men and women how to relate in a particular way within relationships that are fundamentally contractual, individualistic and not ordered towards a common end. And so we need to recognise the logic that underlies these positions. We need to recognise just how much they are focused and built around dysfunctionality.

And for instance, we have made divorce easier and easier and we've celebrated that sort of thing because it gives women an easy route out. And most divorces, the majority of divorces are instigated by women. And that may be in response to mistreatment, but often it's not.

And it's interesting that the rate of divorces is highest among lesbian couples. It's not just about the fact that men are the problem, rather it's the fact that women are more likely to get divorces. And there seem men are problems in many of these situations and do give rise to the divorces.

But there is a greater willingness of women to pursue that option within the current situation. And so we need to consider these sorts of things. And making things difficult for people to leave is part of encouraging the development of a context of trust.

Now, within our society, we are constantly focusing upon all those situations of dysfunction that can arise. And so you do not want to have any situation where you need to trust your partner because there might be an abusive situation. So you need the easy route out.

Now, within a society based upon trust with many different structures of trust,

overlapping structures of trust, there can be ways out. But the encouragement and the pressure is to keep in and to work upon building structures of trust and building structures of functionality and health. Whereas within our society, a liberal society is based upon individualism, distrust, and the fear of dependence upon other parties.

We constantly have to emphasise autonomy. And autonomy has to be the basis of everything. Everyone must have an escape route from any situation.

Any contract should be easily dissolved. You should have no lasting commitments. All these sorts of things, everything to preserve you from actually entering into the risk of trust.

And yet a healthy society is based upon structures of trust, mutual dependence, and that sort of thing. That does not mean that we don't provide structures that make allowances for those extreme cases. But those extreme cases should be regarded as exceptions.

We provide exceptional solutions for those exceptional cases. We do not use those to determine the norm of everything else. And so marriages should be strong.

They should be maintained by robust divorce laws that discourage divorce and make, put a lot of weight upon responsible choice of partners. We should have an encouragement and a discouragement of relations that are just casual. We should recognise the weight of pregnancy.

And part of the weight of that, the weight of that is seen in the bearing of children. And it's seen in the consequence of having to do that. Not in the idea that you can relieve yourself of that consequence easily.

And that if you're a man and you impose an unwanted pregnancy, you should have punitive sanctions. Having punitive sanctions to take the place of the natural weighty consequences of sexual union. So we want the sex free of consequences.

And then if those consequences, those natural consequences come along, what we do is we impose unnatural, punitive government imposed sanctions upon the men within that situation. Again, think about the logic that is taking place here. Because we've denied the natural weight of sexual union, we have to impose a government weight upon the actions in those cases where it does have consequences.

Rather than actually making allowances for those consequences, the norm, the idea that we should be expecting marriage if people are going to be sexually active and outside of marriage, we should have a deep social stigma upon sexual relations. And that there is a responsibility for women to choose their men carefully. And cheap sex is something that will lead to irresponsibility in men.

And it will also lead to problems for women as well. Mark Regnerus's recent book on this,

which I reviewed, I can link that below, deals with some of these dynamics in great depth. There are deep problems for both men and women within this modern paradigm that would seek to reduce any weight to sex just because of the lowest common denominator cases, rather than seeking to pursue the healthy situation as the norm and then dealing with other cases and extremists on their own basis and providing structures of trust that people can fall back to where their primary structure of trust has failed.

Now, that's a very different thing from having a society that's fundamentally built upon suspicion in its social relations and then radical trust upon the government to provide for the lack of all these bonds of trust within society, the government intervenes and gives structures of trust that are alternative or structures of punitive and coercive, forcing people to go through certain measures to make up for the lack of trust in society. No, we need to pursue those structures of trust as the healthy norm. And then that works out.

We also need to be realistic. Many of these things are like the arguments that tell, that say, we shouldn't teach women to take care for their safety. We should teach men not to rape.

Yes, we should teach men not to rape. That should be fairly obvious. And I don't think that this is something we could do better in certain cases.

We should talk about the problems of certain types of sexual relations and how things can be coercive. And particularly within a society that encourages unsafe sex, sex that does not truly take into account the wellbeing of the other. Because contractual relations do not focus upon the wellbeing of the other party.

And that's one of the problems. Our society is based upon contractual relations, based upon a very lowest common denominator notion of consent. And in those relations, you're not really concerned that much with when you engage in an economic transaction with a shopkeeper, you're not that concerned with how that transaction works out for him.

You're just concerned with getting what you want out of the transaction. And within that sort of economic system, is it any surprise that men should want more pleasure from sex? We've been told that pleasure is the end of sex. And then there is a marketplace that allows for that.

If one woman isn't prepared to have sexual relations without a condom, there are plenty of other women who are. And so the very logic of this economic system of competition, of contractual and consent-based sexual relations, it leads to this dysfunction. And let's be very clear, this is a dysfunction, the way that men do not take concern for their partners.

But you're not going to encourage that without fundamentally changing the entire liberal

paradigm of sex by throwing out consent-based sexual ethics and having something greater than that, which is a system that's based upon a one common good, male and woman, man and woman coming together in marriage for a common end, so that it's the well-being of both parties and that both parties take concern for the other as their own flesh and that both should be equally committed and equally responsible in bearing the consequence, the natural consequences of their sexual union. And it's their sexual union. It's not just two discreet sexual acts that bump into each other.

No, there is a sexual union here and both parties must take full responsibility for that. And so we don't reduce everything down to a lowest common denominator, build our society around mistrust, suspicion and punitive actions really imposed by the government. And the increasing dependence upon the government is very significant here.

But perhaps, I mean, there are some statements that are particularly telling. I mean, abortion is the cure for unwanted pregnancy is one big thing. But there is something even more than that, that I think is significant.

The one sentence that really stood out to me from her writing was, there are men willing to risk getting a woman pregnant, which means literally risking her life, her health, her social status, her relationships and her career so that they can experience a few minutes of slightly more pleasure. Now, let's think about that statement very carefully. And let's consider the way that the entirety of our modern economy, as it relates to women in the workplace almost, is built upon the normalisation of contraception and abortion.

The idea that if a woman gets pregnant, that means literally risking her life, her health, her social status, her relationships and her career. It's telling. The whole dignity of women within our society is built upon this resistance to procreation, this resistance to the natural ends of sexual union, apart from choice.

We need to be very clear about this, that liberal society, its ideas of sexual equality, all these sorts of things, are based upon the masculinisation of women, based upon the idea that sex leading to pregnancy is something that is inflicted upon women, is something that is a violent crime against women that undermines their place within society. Really think carefully about that. There is a dysfunction at the heart of any society that thinks that way about pregnancy, that has formed a society where people who are pregnant are marginalised, where society isn't ordered in a way that is encouraging the building up of life, the building up of the household, the building up of the union of men and women being bound together through faithful lifelong unions, so that their ends are common.

And so that the bearing of children is for the good of men and for women, and fatherhood is taken seriously. And also that men's work is seen as being for the end of building up their wife and their families. And so there's not two just sexes that are

detached from each other, competing against each other as independent agents within the marketplace.

Rather, we build our society around marriage where men and women have a common good, a common end within the household, and that their ends are not fundamentally in conflict with each other. Rather, we have differentiation between men and women that recognises these things fall very differently upon their shoulders. And there will be certain things that men are considerably more able to do than women.

As a result of pregnancy and vice versa, and we need to form a society that's based around the interaction and the common good of men and women, rather than seeing them as two discrete sets of individuals who are fundamentally supposed to be androgynous. And then pregnancy is that thing that undermines a society that's built around expected androgyny. There is a huge problem here, and it's the elephant in the centre of the room of so many of our issues within our sexual culture.

We have built our society around the neutralisation, the sterilisation of sex. And we've built it around the denial of the consequences of pregnancy, consequences of pregnancy that are primarily focused upon the woman. There is not symmetry here.

There is not symmetry naturally, and there will not be symmetry socially and otherwise. And a society that is not prepared to deal honestly with that asymmetry, which our society definitely is not, will struggle. It will not be able to talk well about these issues.

And so if we need a society that is dignified, we will need to build it upon trust and common good between men and women, not competition and opposition of their interests as detached individuals. But the more that you build things upon the dysfunctional cases, the more that you build it upon the lowest common denominator, which liberal society does, upon distrust, self-interest, and all these sorts of things. Our whole economic system is built upon the idea of self-interest redounding to the common good.

And it just does not happen that way. In the same way, if you expect a contractual, competitive and consumerist model to lead to healthy sexual relations, it's not going to happen. You can try and mitigate it.

You can try and domesticate that. But ultimately it won't happen. We need to have a functional model of the union of men and women towards a common good and a recognition of their different strengths and their different parts that they have to play, that they're not equally capable of advancing in the marketplace after having children.

And the marketplace having become the centre of our lives and a realm that pits individuals against each other, it's made it very, very difficult to talk about giving dignity to women within society and giving a true equality of weight to women in society without

trying to get the government involved in ever more levels and ever more punitive ways and ever more forms of coercive social construction, whether that's through reproductive technologies, whether it's through eugenics type methods. And this is the direction that this sort of argument heads towards. Castration, vasectomies, sperm banks, all these sorts of things, that's the whole structure it's built upon.

A society of technique, government control and method to make up for the fact that we've lost trust, we've lost common good, we've lost true healthy marriage culture. And as a result, you fall back upon government procedure and technique because that's the one thing that we come to trust. And this is the underlying problem within this whole paradigm.

And the vision of men and pregnancy again here is one that is highly reductive. Men fundamentally are reduced to inseminators who might perhaps take some sort of responsibility, but they're fundamentally inseminators. And the loss of dignity here, the loss of dignity that comes with marriage that establishes man's place as a father, with all the responsibility that comes with that and all the weight that the norm of marriage places upon every single man who's sexually active.

It's important to recognise that marriage isn't just for the people in it. Marriage is for everyone. Marriage says that those actions done outside of marriage are not responsible.

Sexual relations outside of marriage are irresponsible. They are not taking account of the natural consequences of sexual activity. They're not taking responsibility for that and they're not preparing themselves for that.

And this is the sort of the two paradigms that arise with each other within this sort of argument. And if we wanted to get rid of abortion through any sort of methods, we could say the death penalty for women who kill their unborn children and that would get rid of abortion. But the point is, we have to deal with the tricky issue of justice.

Would that be just? I don't think it would. And in the same way, the idea that we must just establish this system of vasectomies and castration, again, recognise it's a universal thing of vasectomies because everything is built upon the lowest common denominator. Everything is built upon the fear of dysfunction, upon the normalisation of dysfunction and then the establishment of medicinal or methods that are designed to protect us against certain negative consequences.

There's never any deep consideration of how we pursue the good. And then the increased dependence upon the state. The state increasingly comes to play the part of the father and the husband.

In relationship to women, because they can't trust their husbands, they can't trust their fathers, they can't trust the structure of support that men can provide in that way. And

so the patriarchal state has to step in. The state that increasingly plays a highly helicopter parent type role, protecting and intervening in every single role, place in people's lives and increasingly involved in their sexual relations.

What we have here is a loss of responsibility and the less responsible people become, the more the state has to assume responsibility. Rather than the relationship between men and women established in marriage being seen as a public institutional statement of their private bond having public consequences. What we have now is the mandated protection of the privacy of the relationship between man and woman.

So that any compromise of that, any compromise that might suggest that that relationship might have consequences beyond the private choices and ends of the individuals involved, any sense that that relationship naturally projects itself into the public realm, into the civil realm, into the realm of social consequence, is now resisted and the government has to be involved. And so we privatise marriage, we de-institutionalise marriage, treat it as a bespoke union that can be chosen by the parties involved, that does not take any proper form, that can be dissolved at will. And that is very much the result of this, this particular framing of sexual relations and marriage.

It's one that has robbed sexual relations of their weight. And that weight is not just, oh, you must be really responsible now. And that responsibility is a sort of punitive thing that is designed to limit your pleasure.

Rather, it's recognising that our sexual potential, our procreative potential, our capacity to unite ourselves with another person is one of the most powerful things that we possess as human beings. And if we steward that well, it can be something that leads to fruit that is lifelong lasting, that can grow out into the world, that can form rich and powerful and united households, that can join people together, men, women, and children, and form these deep, strong, and enduring bonds that cross generations. And if it's maintained in a responsible way, we can change society with these bonds.

But when we want irresponsibility, when that's the thing that we want, when we want to absolve ourselves of any consequence, then we will establish a whole sexual order, as this argument is arguing for, a whole sexual order based upon not bearing the consequences. And as a result, we render ourselves impotent. We render ourselves sterile.

We render ourselves, I mean, in literal senses, but also in symbolic, spiritual senses. We're not having an effect upon the world. The life and the spirit of human beings as they come together is not being used in a way that is going to change society, that is forming something powerful and lasting.

No, it's spent entirely upon fruitless and episodic encounters. And this is fundamentally the paradigm that we are moving towards within a society of liberal consent-based,

contract-based sexual ethics. And we need to recognise within these arguments what is really going on.

What are the convictions betrayed at the heart of the argument in key sentences, like abortion being the cure of unwanted pregnancy, or pregnancy being something that is the risk to women's livelihoods, to their life, to their status and to their careers, as if that is where women's dignity is primarily to be found. And in a society like ours, it is, all too sadly, that all too often, this is where their dignity is to be found, because we have formed a society based upon detached individuals and self-maximisation for one's own self-interest within the marketplace. And so mitigate our sexual culture as we might try.

It will not ultimately solve the underlying dysfunction, a dysfunction of a society built upon self-interest, built upon detached individuals serving themselves and engaging in dissolvable relationships with other parties that are contractual arrangements and exchanges. And unless we solve that, we're never going to arrive at anything good. But as Christians, we should see ourselves as upholding a vision of sexuality as a powerful force within the world, a force that can form society, that can be at the heart of forming lifelong lasting intergenerational unions of people, that the love of a husband and wife for each other and their faithfulness is that which can lead to the formation of a home, a realm of welcome within the world.

It's like a tree that can spread out its branches into the world and give refuge to others. It's one that can produce children who are bound together in bonds of siblinghood and have love for each other because of their union in their parents. It's something that gives security to each individual person that is born into such a loving union.

Because for instance, I know that my life does not arise ultimately from some transaction, some choice. It doesn't really matter whether I was chosen or not. My existence has dignity apart from the, even beyond the choice of my parents.

It's not about choice, it's about welcome of the gift of the child. And the ability to perceive children in that way rests heavily upon the way that we can consider our sexuality. When you consider sexuality as fundamentally sterile with pregnancy being a risk, of course you're going to support abortion.

Of course you're going to see, have the category of the unwanted, unchosen child as a big, powerful one within your mind. Whereas when we think about sex in a healthy way, the character of chosen or unchosen no longer has that same force. There can be surprise pregnancies, of course, but the point is, are we going to welcome the gift? And in that sort of case, what we see is the recognition that a child can be born out of a loving bond that precedes any political arrangement, that precedes, logically precedes political arrangements, social arrangements, legal arrangements, that precedes all these sorts of things, technological procedures, medical processes, and ultimately arises out of the loving bond between two people.

A loving bond that expands and welcomes the child that is born into it as an expression of that bond. And so the child is the natural expression of the loving bond of the parents, not something that the man has inflicted upon the woman through his ejaculation into her. No, it's a loving bond that is expressed in the bearing of the child.

The one flesh union is seen in the child and that's the natural, the normal way of seeing sexual relations. And from that normal way, we will see just how dysfunctional things are apart from that. This has been a long discussion and if you have any further follow-up questions, please leave them on Mercurio's Cat account.

If you would like to support these videos in the future, please do so using my Patreon account, especially if you found these helpful over the last while. I really appreciate the support. It really does make it possible for me to do these on a regular basis.

And if you have found them helpful, please tell your friends about them as well. I'm really encouraged to see people watching these and finding them useful. Lord willing, I'll be back again tomorrow, perhaps with a book review.

God bless and thank you for listening.