

The Attackers: Christians' Obligation to become Deontologists: Those Who Study & Adhere to the Ethics of Duty; Difference between Promises and Vows: Roger Scruton's Dialogue between Perictione and Archeanassa; Seana Sugrue on *Parens Patriae*, Privacy Rights, & Hedonism & that the Traditional Family Is the Framework for Lasting Order in a Society

47. The Christian worldview recognizes that true freedom includes an obligation to regard certain biblical standards as a duty to the commonwealth meaning that citizens must place restraints on their decisions and take responsibility for their actions.
48. Christians should therefore be deontologists. Deontology is a compound of two Greek words: “**δίον (dion)**: that which is binding, needful, and right and **λόγος (logos)**: rule, principle, law of conduct.”<sup>1</sup> The word is defined as “the study of duty or moral obligation: the ethics of duty.”<sup>2</sup>
49. Duty is defined as “a task or responsibility imposed by one’s occupation, rank, status, or calling.”<sup>3</sup> The fulfillment of one’s duty is the believer’s core obligation to the four divine institutions in general and the doctrines of the Word of God specifically.
50. In a client nation it is the duty of each citizen to use his volition to do what is right, honorable, and just. To violate the laws and customs of society is failure to do one’s duty toward his fellowman which in turn does injury to the community at large.
51. To fail to uphold one’s vows of marriage is to fail to do one’s duty toward the spouse and to society at large. The concept of duty is the intrinsic virtue of the vows that are exchanged in the wedding ceremony.
52. The union itself is as much a vow to preceding and succeeding generations as it is to the man and woman exchanging them.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.vv.: “δίον,” “λόγος.”

<sup>2</sup> *Webster's Third International Dictionary: Unabridged*, s.v.: “deontology.”

<sup>3</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: “function: synonym: duty.”

53. The primary reason for marriage is not necessarily the bearing of children since some couples either can't or choose not to procreate.
54. The primary reason for marriage is to establish the secure framework in which the cultural ethos of a society is transmitted to succeeding generations.
55. The key concept in the establishment of the divine corporation of marriage is that of duty which is stressed in the marriage vows.
56. The difference between a promise and a vow is presented by Roger Scruton in an imaginary dialogue between Perictíone \Περικτιόνη (pe-rik-ti-ah'-nē)\, niece of Plato, and Archeánassa \ Ἀρχεάνασσα (Ar-che-an'-as-sa)\, alleged by Diogenes Laertius \Διογένης Λαέρτιος (Di-äj'-a-nēz Lā-er'-shē-as) to be Plato's mistress:

“With the change in my perception of religion,” Perictíone went on, “came a change in my perception of marriage. For what is marriage if not a vow taken before an altar, and what remains of the vow if no god turns up to enforce it? Of course, a man and woman can stand in front of a table and exchange promises. But I think you will agree, most honored Archeánassa, that promises and vows are quite distinct?”

Archeánassa thought for a moment. “Is it not a question of solemnity?” she suggested. “I mean, the more solemn the promise, the more it approaches a vow.”

“By no means,” said Perictíone, and she stared through her guest with evident satisfaction. “The difference between a vow and a promise is profound and metaphysical. For a promise is fulfilled in time. And when the promise is fulfilled it is also finished. But a vow is never fulfilled in time: it is endless and changeless, and there is no point at which the account is closed. Those bound together by vows are bound eternally; which is why the immortals must be present, to seal the vow and endow it with a more than earthly power.”

“Furthermore,” she went on, warming to the theme, “promises and contracts can be undone by agreement, after which no obligation remains. Whereas a vow, once knit, can never be untied, but only dishonored. Such it seems to me, is the real distinction. There is another difference too, and this deeply impressed me at the time of which I am speaking, because it helped me to understand the dilemma in which my poor mother had been placed by her husband’s infidelity. Contracts, I hope you agree, are useful things. Without them, no society can endure, since there can be no security between strangers—and modern society is a society of strangers, is it not?”

Archeánassa signified her assent to this, but could not forbear mentioning that she had heard the point argued by the great Xanthippe Ξανθήπιπη (Xan-thip'-pā), whose great ideas she added, were so much more down-to-earth than those of Plato, and so much more in tune with the female temperament.

“Of course,” Perictíone continued, with a slight frown, “Granny introduced me, before she died, to Xanthippe, and there was an exchange of ideas between us. But to return to the point. Contracts, you will admit, involve an exchange of goods and services. Nothing is given absolutely—all benefits offered depend upon benefits received. Hence the matter of a contract must be defined independently: a bag of horse-hair, say, or a wagon-load of beans. There cannot be a contract to be bound by a contract: such an agreement would be empty and senseless.”

“Indeed not,” said Archeánassa, ...

“But the subject-matter of a marriage,” Perictíone went on, as soon as she had recaptured Archeánassa’s eyes, “what is it, if not the marriage itself? What matrimony means, by way of cost and benefit, can never be foretold by those who create it through their vows. Cares and joys, rights and duties, failures and successes—all are in the lap of Fortune, and none can be known in advance. From which it follows, as I am sure you will concede, that marriage cannot be a contract.”<sup>4</sup>

56. Vows are sustained by duty, a virtue that was defined in the time of our nation’s infancy by Noah Webster in the 1826 edition of his dictionary as:

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<sup>4</sup> Roger Scruton, “Sacrilige and Sacrament,” in *The Meaning of Marriage: Family, State, Market, and Morals*, Robert P. George and Jean Bethke Elshtain, eds. (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 2006), 10–11.

That which a person owes to another; that which a person is bound, by any natural, moral or legal obligation, to pay, do or perform. Obedience, respect and kindness to parents are *duties* of children; fidelity to friends is a *duty*; reverence, obedience and prayer to God are indispensable *duties*; the government and religious instruction of children are *duties* of parents which they cannot neglect without guilt.<sup>5</sup>

57. Duty is defined by the most current Merriam-Webster's dictionary as "a moral or legal obligation; the force of moral obligation."<sup>6</sup>
58. Seana Sugrue addresses the attack on duty in her essay "Soft Despotism and Same-Sex Marriage." She quotes Alexis de Tocqueville who predicted that legally decreed rights would lead democratic societies into a "soft despotism."

Self-indulgence in the realm of sexuality demands exactly the kind of gentle despotism that Tocqueville understood democracies have good reason to fear. It requires that the state increasingly step into the role of *parens patriae*<sup>7</sup> to pave the way for the pursuit of self-gratification. Self-indulgence is what the United States Supreme Court encourages through its doctrine of privacy rights, which it decrees to be fundamental to the American constitution. Privacy rights include the right to use contraceptives, to abort children, and to have sexual relations with the partner(s) of one's choice so long as there is consent.<sup>8</sup> It is a doctrine that allows individuals to believe that they can enjoy sex without consequences; indeed, that they have a right to do so.<sup>9</sup> This is the state to which liberty has been degraded in our times. Rather than to be equally free and autonomous, we are to be equally indulged and infantilized to pursue our sexual desires.

<sup>5</sup> *An American Dictionary of the English Language*, s.v.: "duty."

<sup>6</sup> *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v.: "duty."

<sup>7</sup> "**parens patriae** \pă'-renz pă'-trē-ī\. Latin: parent of his country. The role of the state as sovereign and guardian of persons under legal disability. By exercising this authority the state emphasizes that a child is not the absolute property of a parent but is a trust reposed in a parent by the state as *parens patriae*" (Steven H. Gifis, *Barron's Dictionary of Legal Terms*, 3d ed. [Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Services, 1998], 345).

<sup>8</sup> See generally *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965) (right of married people to use contraception; extended to unmarried couples on equal protection grounds in *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, 405 U.S. 438 (1972)); *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973) (right to abortion; upheld although reshaped in *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833 (1992)); and *Lawrence v. Texas*, 123 S. Ct. 2472 (2003) (right to engage in sexual relations with consenting adults, including homosexual conduct).

<sup>9</sup> As expressed by the Supreme Court, "At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life." *Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pa. v. Casey*, 505 U.S. 833 at 851 (1992).

Few doctrines are more disingenuous or dangerous than the Court's doctrine of privacy rights. The name of the right speaks volumes. It is a right to turn inward, to have regard only for one's self, to do what one wants to do without interference from the government. It is precisely the disposition that Tocqueville warned against, for it is the disposition that turns us from being men and women, capable of self-governance, into children who confuse liberty with license. As critically, the centralization of power that results has the potential to result in social and political stagnation.<sup>10</sup> (p. 187)

Those who demand privileges from the state do not govern themselves; they do not exercise rights that exist independently of the state. They accept their "rights" as gifts of the state, which are accepted as entitlements. In the case of privacy rights, these degrade humanity while they clothe slavish passion with sacred right. Moreover, if Tocqueville is right, these rights come at a high price for they risk weakening the long-term viability of the political system. Like communism in the Soviet Union, excessively centralized political power runs the risk of collapsing from its own weight and inertia. For this reason, a reform that substantially weakens critical institutions of civil society ought to be regarded as threatening to political freedom. (pp. 187–88)

Without the power of the state, privacy rights, like same-sex marriage, would not exist. The right to do whatever one wants to do can only exist in a society that removes all impediments and tidies up the social dislocations and inconveniences created by the sexual indulgence of its members. What results is soft despotism incarnate; adults are free to gratify themselves so long as they don't seek to rule themselves in common with others. This turn inward, for the sake of self-gratification, is politically enervating and potentially oppressive.<sup>11</sup> (p. 188)

59. The concept of "duty" is missing from the environment conjured by the several Supreme Court decisions cited by Dr. Sugrue, a subject she addresses in this paragraph:

<sup>10</sup> Tocqueville writes, "I think that extreme centralization of political power ultimately enervates society and thus, in the end, weakens the government too. But I do not deny that with the power of society thus centralized, great undertakings can be carried through at a given time and for a specific purpose [ie. War]. (*Democracy in America*, trans, George Lawrence [Harper, 1998] p. 677). See also p. 701: "It would seem that sovereigns now only seek to do great things with men. I wish that they would try a little more to make men great, that they should attach less importance to the work and more to the workman, that they should constantly remember that a nation cannot long remain great if each man is individually weak, and that no one has yet devised a form of society or a political combination which can make a people energetic when it is composed of citizens who are flabby and feeble."

<sup>11</sup> Seana Sugrue, "Soft Despotism and Same-Sex Marriage," in *The Meaning of Marriage: Family, State, Market, and Morals*, eds. Robert P. George and Jean Bethke Elshtain (Dallas: Spence Publishing Co., 2006), 187–88.

Unlike same-sex marriage, marriage is a distinctive, pre-political form of social order that is first and foremost about *duty*, especially to offspring, while it also promotes the mutual support and sustenance of the husbands and wives. Its justification does not rest on the quality of all adults, regardless of sexual orientation, but upon the inequality and vulnerability of some members of our species, particularly children. Marriage demands that men and women curb their sexual appetites, that they commit to a member of the opposite sex, and that they accept the burdens of parenthood if and when children result from their union.<sup>12</sup>

60. However, one can't trumpet the sanctity of marriage when the institution of marriage has been flouted for half a century. We have sown the wind, now we reap the whirlwind.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 185.