

Dark Desires and Consent: A Response to Morgan

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Abstract: In the paper *Dark Desires*, Seiriol Morgan aims to argue against the claim that “universal participant consent is sufficient for the moral permissibility of a sexual act” which is largely accepted in contemporary western philosophy. This article examines Morgan's argument against such a claim and improves Morgan's two illustrative cases to better support his claim. It starts by clarifying the meanings of the terms "moral permissibility", "dark desires", and "consent" to make Morgan's argument easier to tackle with. Then, the strong and weak versions of Morgan's claim will be distinguished, and their plausibility will be examined. Finally, it concludes that (i) only the weak version succeeds, and (ii) Morgan succeeds in showing consent to be insufficient for the moral permissibility of any sexual act.

Keywords: moral impermissibility, consent, dark desires

1. Introduction

In his paper *Dark Desire* published 2003, Morgan's argument against the sufficiency of consent which refers to a sexual act runs roughly as an attribution that contains five consequential logical sections as follows [1].

- 1 We have certain sexual desires which are contrary to the duties we owe toward others.
- 2 One can consent to the satisfaction of such desires.
- 3 It is morally impermissible to act in a manner that's contrary to the duties we owe toward others.
- 4 It follows that it is morally impermissible to satisfy such desires.
- 5 Therefore, consent is insufficient for the moral permissibility of a sexual act.

Morgan uses two examples to illustrate his point. One involves the fictional character Vicomte de Valmont (Vicomte), who derived sexual pleasure from denigrating Madame de Tourvel (Madame) [2, 3]. In the Vicomte's case, the Madame seemed to have consented, yet the sexual act seemed morally impermissible [1-3]. The other example involves accepting an ex-lover's “desperate unrequited love” before soon leaving them [1]. Morgan believes such a sexual act is consensual but accepting it would seriously harm the ex-lover's long-term happiness [1]. In both cases, Morgan aims to show that there are certain “dark desires” which are not morally permissible to satisfy even if they are consented to.

Morgan's claim may be interpreted in two ways: the strong version and the weak version. The strong thesis is the universal claim that it is *always* morally impermissible to satisfy one's dark desires, even given consent. Being a universal claim, the strong thesis has both a strict truth condition and an interesting entailment. If true, it would show that there is a whole category of desires that are wrong to satisfy. To refute this version, one only needs to find one successful counterexample in which the

satisfaction of a dark desire is morally permissible. On the other hand, the weak thesis is the existential claim that it is only *sometimes* morally impermissible to satisfy dark desires even given consent. In other words, at least one dark desire is morally impermissible to satisfy. Compared to the strong thesis, this claim is much weaker: to make the weak thesis true, Morgan only needs to find one single case of a consensual but morally impermissible satisfaction of dark desire. Thus, the truth of the strong thesis entails that of the weak, and if the weak thesis is false, then the strong also collapses. Both theses entail the same conclusion, namely that consent is insufficient for the moral permissibility of a sexual act.

It is unclear which side Morgan leans toward. While he seems to mean that dark desires have morally problematic roots, his discussion focuses on only one, namely that of self-conceit. Morgan even agrees with Kant that many – arguably all – dark desires root in self-conceit, which makes them unjustified and morally impermissible [1]. However, there may be other roots for dark desires, and if so, then even if Morgan succeeds in establishing the weak thesis with the Vicomte's and Unrequited Love case, the strong thesis still needs a further argument. This paper will first examine the weak thesis, the claim that dark desires are sometimes morally impermissible even given consent, as allegedly in the Vicomte's and Unrequited Love case. Then, if and when the weak thesis is true, the strong thesis will be examined by considering whether a counterexample exists.

To examine the soundness of Morgan's claim, it is necessary to understand first how he cashes out the three terms "dark desire", "consent", and "moral (im)permissibility". As he does not provide a clear account of them, this investigation will start with a close analysis of the three terms.

2. Moral Impermissibility and Dark Desire

Morgan uses a Kantian conception of moral impermissibility. According to Morgan, a Kantian vice is "the willed pursuit of something which denigrates humanity or undermines human well-being", which is essentially a willed negation of the Kantian duties we owe to others [1]. In other words, if gratifying a desire means subjugating others or making them seriously unhappy in the long-term, then such gratification is morally impermissible. Moreover, the following passage, which appears immediately after discussing which sexual acts are and aren't intrinsically wrong, best illustrates Morgan's conception of moral permissibility [1]:

Whatever turns you on [is okay] [...] so long [...] as what turns you on is not an eroticized contempt or hatred for other people which demeans human dignity, and does not involve ignoring whether or how one's gratification acts to the detriment of someone else's happiness [1].

Perhaps Morgan means that acts which demean human dignity or seriously impair someone else's happiness are morally impermissible. Morgan believes that this explains what is wrong in Vicomte's case, such as subjugating the Madame, damaging her happiness, and even taking pleasure in actively bringing about her misery [1]. In the Unrequited Love case, the receiver of love clearly ignores the impact of his action on the other's well-being. Therefore, both cases are morally impermissible.

However, notice that although Morgan borrows heavily from Kant, his conclusion need not presuppose a Kantian perspective. Insofar as one values one's human dignity and happiness, one can derive the same conclusion without endorsing any Kantian principles. For example, a utilitarian would happily accept Morgan's claim if respecting the dignity and happiness of another increases the total amount of well-being [4]. This paper will not discuss the soundness of Kantian ethics, but rather use a neutral definition: that *it is morally impermissible to harm one's dignity or happiness*.

What about "dark desires"? Despite naming his paper 'Dark Desires', Morgan in fact rarely uses the term throughout his paper and never clearly defines its meaning, except for some clues. Evidently, in the cases of the Vicomte and Unrequited Love, some dark desires root in self-conceit. Thus, to establish the strong thesis, it is expedient to identify "dark desires" with self-conceited desires (whereas for the weak thesis it suffices to show that dark desires include them). Since self-conceit is,

according to Kant, always morally impermissible, dark desires are also always morally impermissible [5, 6]. However, such a definition has some disadvantages. First, identifying dark desires with morally impermissible ones makes the strong thesis trivial. Second, we may not want to agree with Kant regarding self-conceit. Alternatively, a definition grounded in Wertheimer's account of harm may be adopted [7].

According to Wertheimer, a victim may experience sexual harm in three ways [6]:

(1) [A] set-back to her rights-based interest in her bodily integrity or her sexual autonomy, an "objective" or "dignitary" harm; (2) palpable physical injuries and enduring psychological harm that impair the victim's ability to function; (3) psychological distress.

In other words, harm may be done either to the victim's dignity, happiness, or body. As Wertheimer's account of harm is well established in the literature, its definition of harm can be readily borrowed to define dark desires as *those the satisfaction of which harms someone*.

Such a definition has several merits. First, it is intuitive that such desires are "dark". When something is defined as morally "dark", harm is often a crucial or even decisive factor. Second, it is compatible with Morgan's view: the Vicomte's case involved dignitary harm to the Madame, and in the Unrequited Love case the ex-lover received harm to their happiness, thus both involve dark desires [2]. Third, since a desire is a wish that such-and-such happens, the consequences are largely intentional. This holds the perpetrator in the Unrequited Love case responsible for harming the ex-lover. Finally, it allows an interesting discussion about whether any dark desires are morally permissible. Thus, it seems reasonable to define dark desires in terms of harm.

Formulated along such lines, the weak claim becomes as follows:

- 1 We have certain sexual desires the satisfaction of which harms someone.
- 2 One can consent to the satisfaction of such desires.
- 3 It is sometimes morally impermissible to harm one's dignity or happiness.
- 4 It follows that it is sometimes morally impermissible to satisfy such desires.
- 5 Therefore, consent is insufficient for the moral permissibility of a sexual act.

Now, it's apparent that the notion of "consent" is central to Morgan's argument. To reach the conclusion, Morgan must show that there is a case in which one consents to satisfy a dark desire of another, yet it is still morally impermissible. Thus, he must first show that some dark desires can be consented to under a plausible account of consent.

The following section will examine three accounts of consent: as no coercion, no excessive harm, and no concealed deal breaker. Since versions of these definitions have been proposed by prominent philosophers such as Alan Wertheimer and Tom Dougherty, they should shed considerable light on the soundness of Morgan's argument [7, 8]. If the weak thesis succeeds under a plausible account of consent, the focus shifts to the truth of the strong thesis; if not, it follows that the strong thesis also fails.

3. Morgan's Argument on Consent Examined

As above, Morgan wishes to claim that consent is insufficient for a sexual act's moral permissibility by providing the counterexample of dark desires. While his conclusion may be correct, his argument succeeds and needs improvement. Morgan needs to answer two questions: (1) whether one can consent to dark desires, and (2) whether dark desires are still morally impermissible given consent. To answer these questions, let's examine how Morgan's argument fares under several accounts of consent.

3.1. Consent as No Coercion

Suppose consent is defined as there is no coercion involved in the sexual act. In other words, one consents as long as they voluntarily agree without coercion. There are two kinds of coercion: physical and psychological. Physical coercion is rather straightforward, such as one pinning another down by force; contrarily, and controversially, I believe one can be coerced by one's psychological state. Imagine, for example, that an infiltrating narcotics officer was made addicted to a drug involuntarily. While they do not rationally will to take drugs, their addiction forces them to do so. In such cases, the person in question is *coerced* by their psychological states to do certain things against their will. Thus, one can be both physically and psychologically coerced, in which cases one cannot consent.

The weak thesis is true under this definition with some improvements. In Vicomte's case, he did not coerce the Madame into sex, but only rendered the Madame emotionally vulnerable and submissive to his sexual domination. However, the Unrequited Love case may be coercive as whether the ex-partner in the Unrequited Love case is in the appropriate mental state to consent is unclear. According to Morgan, the ex-partner may be "crushed by or now remorseful about the break-up", which means that they may be experiencing an emotion so strong that it *compels* them to desire sex with the receiver of love [2]. As argued above, when a person is *compelled* to do something (e.g. an infiltrating narcotics officer), they do not freely perform such an act. Similarly, the ex-lover may not have freely consented as well. Since Morgan leaves the scenario open to different interpretations, it is difficult to state whether the ex-lover really consents in the sense of being uncoerced.

As a solution, further conditions can be imposed to make the unrequited love case easier to tackle:
[Sane Unrequited Love case]:

S is the object of their ex-lover, *J*'s, desperate unrequited love. *J* is aware that such sex will harm their long-term happiness and is not overwhelmed by their emotion, thus proposes sex to *S* in a sane mindset. Knowing *J*'s desire and temporarily desiring sex with them or whatever reason, *S* offers themselves to *J*, knowing they will shortly abandon *J*. As a result, *J*'s long-term happiness is seriously harmed.

Given such amendments, whether the sexual act is consensual becomes more apparent. As only one Unrequited Love case is needed, the Sane case will replace the original case. In the Sane case, *J* is free both from *S* and their own mental states, thus no coercion is involved. Nevertheless, what *S* did was morally impermissible because it seriously harmed *J*'s long-term happiness. Thus, defining consent as no coercion, *J* consents, and Morgan successfully shows that at least two cases of consensual satisfaction of dark desires are morally impermissible. Thus, if Morgan can accept this account of consent, the weak claim succeeds.

However, Morgan should not accept a such account of consent because it is implausible. Consider Dewey's case Tom Dougherty mentions [8]. Ignorant about sex, the fictional character Dewey Dell was tricked by a physician assistant into sex in disguise of treatment [8]. It's possible that Dewey engaged in the sexual act without being coerced into it: suppose she was not physically coerced by the assistant (e.g. being pinned down and forced into sex), nor was she under any psychological coercions. Thus, Dewey seems to gave consent and the sexual act was perfectly fine according to this account. However, that is obviously false. Dewey was wronged, terribly so. Being ignorantly tricked into sex, it's obvious that she didn't – and couldn't – give morally valid consent which justifies the sexual act. This shows that for a sexual act to be consensual it is not enough if simply no coercion is involved. Thus, Morgan must seek support from other accounts of consent.

3.2. Consent as No Excessive Harm

One alternative explanation of Dewey's case is that she didn't consent because she received an excessive amount of harm which one cannot consent to, thus she was wronged. This account falls

readily out of Wertheimer's theory of harm and our definition of dark desires. Recall that, according to Wertheimer, one can experience sexual harm to one's dignity, happiness, or body [7]. Thus, the absence of consent in Dewey's case may be explained in terms of harm involved.

For Wertheimer, harm isn't equivalent to wrongfulness, and neither does a high degree of wrongfulness entail a high degree of harm. For someone's act to be morally wrong or impermissible, it is not necessary that someone actually experiences the harm; nor does the wrongfulness of the act necessarily entail the level of harm the victim experiences – it is enough that harm is expected as a result of their act [7]. Nevertheless, Wertheimer believes that the actual harm done to the victim does play a role in determining the wrongfulness of the perpetrator's act: other things being equal, the more harm the victim experiences, the more wrong the perpetrator's act [7].

According to Wertheimer's account, although Dewey was not coerced, she didn't consent nevertheless because the sexual act is expected to cause excessive "dignitary" harm [7]. Dewey's bodily integrity was violated by the assistant. Although Dewey was not aware of such a violation, for Wertheimer it is the objective fact that her dignity was harmed, rather than such awareness, that plays the central role. Thus, Wertheimer's account explains what the previous one cannot – that Dewey didn't consent because she was dignitarily harmed by the assistant – and therefore is more plausible.

Now, there should be a threshold of harm for giving valid consent. To illustrate, imagine a daredevil stunt performer who performs risky live actions and wants to put on a live stunt performance without any safety mechanisms. This means that they will receive an intolerable amount of "palpable physical injuries... harm that impairs the victim's ability to function" when things go wrong [7]. In such cases, they surely consent as they produce the show themselves; however, it's doubtful whether one can validly consent to such an intolerable amount of harm done to oneself. The intuition is that one can validly consent to harm up to a certain threshold beyond which one's consent is invalidated. While the exact condition for such a threshold is open for debate, the supposition that such a threshold be an intolerable amount of harm suffices for the current discussion.

Given such a threshold, consent is invalidated in both the Vicomte's and the Sane Unrequited Love case. In Vicomte's case, the Madame received an intolerable amount of dignitary harm that led to corruption. This makes it impossible for her to consent to the Vicomte, thus the sexual act was not consensual. On the other hand, in the Sane Unrequited Love case, J's consent should also be invalidated if, as Morgan says, "such a liaison will be significantly detrimental to [their] happiness in the long run, and it may be quite devastating" [1]. In other words, if the consequence of such a sexual act is so intolerably harmful to J, then they cannot consent to it.

Under the account of consent as no excessive harm, both of Morgan's cases fail because there was no valid consent. Thus, Morgan must not adopt this conception of consent. Again, another account must be sought to support Morgan's conclusion that the consensual satisfaction of dark desires is sometimes morally impermissible.

3.3. Consent as No Concealed Deal Breaker

Dougherty's own account of consent, which he believes to explain why Dewey's case, is another good candidate. According to Dougherty, some sexual behaviors are not consensual even if uncoerced, because the consent-giver is misled or lied to about an important piece of information called a deal breaker [8]. A deal breaker is a piece of information about the sexual act which would make a partner refuse to have sex [8]. Such pieces of information can be anything – what kinds of sex to have, whom with, or even trivial personal features like hair style, body odor, etc. – as long as the partner would refuse sex if they knew about it. Dougherty argues that when one is misled about the presence of a deal breaker, one cannot consent to the subsequent sexual act [8]. Dewey's case, then, can be explained by the fact that there is an intentionally concealed deal breaker, namely being deceived into sex by the physician assistant: if Dewey knew the assistant's plan beforehand, she would have refused.

Now that Dougherty's account of consent is shown to explain Dewey's case, does it support Morgan's claim? Recall Vicomte's case: he harmed Madame's dignity so that she gives in to him. This is a genuine case of morally impermissible dark desire, as dignitary harm was involved. However, it's controversial whether Madame would consent to him had she known Vicomte's true motivation. Imagine that Vicomte has made clear his intentions to Madame in the beginning, that he wants to seduce and undignify her for sex. Knowing such information, no self-respecting person would possibly consent to the subsequent sexual intercourse, let alone the virtuous Madame. Therefore, the Vicomte case seems to fail Dougherty's test.

One may ask here: what about a person who is indifferent about self-respect? Would such a person consent to the Vicomte with full knowledge of his motivation? In such cases, I think they may be because they lack a crucial premise that allows a self-respecting person to refuse the Vicomte. A generic version of a self-respecting person's reason for refusing the Vicomte looks like the following:

- 1 I do not consent to anything which demeans my human dignity.
- 2 The Vicomte wants to demean my human dignity through sex.
- 3 Therefore, I do not consent to have sex with Vicomte.

The first clause follows from one's valuing their human dignity, and the second clause is an informed analysis of Vicomte's motivation. In other words, demeaning one's human dignity can be seen as a deal breaker through Dougherty's lenses. It is such reasoning that allows a self-respecting person to refuse to have sex with the Vicomte. However, the same cannot be said for a person who does not respect themselves, because, as they do not value their human dignity, they do not hold the first clause, therefore the conclusion does not follow. In other words, an indifferent person may consent to have sex with the Vicomte, even knowing that their dignity would be demeaned. This may be a special sexual orientation, for example, enjoying one's dignity being harmed. In such cases, therefore, no deal breaker is present, thus, according to Dougherty's criteria, consent is given and the weak thesis holds.

Finally, we reach the conclusion that the weak thesis succeeds under Dougherty's account of consent: since no concealed deal breakers are present, an indifferent person can give morally valid consent to sex with the Vicomte, which involves dark desires which are morally impermissible to satisfy. In other words, there is a case where the consensual satisfaction of a dark desire is morally impermissible under a plausible account of consent, therefore the weak claim succeeds. Evidently, even this claim is weak, as it takes a great effort to identify one case in its support.

Having established the truth of the weak thesis, let us turn to examine whether the strong thesis – that it is always morally impermissible to satisfy dark desires – is true. As it is a universal claim, the aim will be to come up with a counterexample that, if shown to be successive, would prove the strong thesis false.

Notice here that the strong thesis is no more plausible than the weak, as it logically entails the weak. Therefore, by no means do I attribute this claim to Morgan – I believe that he has already made a great achievement in successfully establishing the weak claim. However, if it does succeed, it is certainly a more philosophically interesting and significant claim, which would require an even more radical change in traditional sexual ethics. With that in mind, let us proceed to examine the strong thesis.

4. The Strong Version of Morgan's Claim

So far, the weak version of Morgan's claim is shown to succeed under Dougherty's account of consent. This section will examine whether the strong version holds as well. Recall the strong version:

- 1 We have certain sexual desires the satisfaction of which harms someone.
- 2 One can consent to the satisfaction of such desires.
- 3 It is always morally wrong to harm one's dignity and happiness.

4 It follows that it is always morally wrong to satisfy such desires.

5 Therefore, consent is insufficient for the moral permissibility of a sexual act.

According to the strong version, all dark desires are morally impermissible, even if consented to. Insofar as the Vicomte's and Unrequited Love cases go, this claim seems to be correct.

This section will investigate whether there are other desires which Morgan would consider to be dark but do not involve damaging one's dignity or happiness and the satisfaction of which is morally permissible. If there are, then the strong claim would be false, and some dark desires aren't so "dark" after all. Here it may be helpful to examine a case of BDSM, which satisfies apparently dark desires but is widely accepted as morally unproblematic.

BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, and Sadoomasochism) often involves the infliction of pain and dominant-submissive interpersonal relationship [9]. For example, as illustrated in the movie *Fifty Shades of Grey*, BDSM usually involves one party as the Dominant, being superior and inflictor of bodily pain, and another as the Submissive, who is the inferior and receiver of pain in the relationship [9]. As such, the desires BDSM satisfies are dark: they involve intentionally harming someone (for the dominant it is someone else, for the submissive it is themselves). Acknowledging the dark nature of desires, practitioners of BDSM usually require that all parties be consensual, aware of the risks involved, of a sound mind, and negotiate limits and "safe words" [9]. In other words, while BDSM typically satisfies harmful sexual desires, practitioners endeavor to make it morally permissible.

Take the relationship between Christian and Ana in the movie, for example. Intuitively, most of what they did is morally permissible. That Ana has given Doughertian consent is evident from the negotiation scene where Christian carefully ensured that Ana knows what will happen [10]. This prevents any hidden deal breakers. What Morgan would contest in this case is the permissibility of their sexual activity, i.e. is it morally permissible for Christian and Ana to engage in a BDSM relationship? From his viewpoint, the fact that BDSM involves dignitary harm suffices for it to be morally impermissible, even if both Christian and Ana consent. However, some BDSM acts are morally permissible given universal participant consent.

Is BDSM necessarily morally impermissible because the sexual desires it satisfies harm someone's dignity or happiness? Miller believes no. He argues that the context of BDSM is significantly different from the context of actual social injustice. In his words,

[In BDSM] Minimally, consent means that everyone involved agrees to the activity. When it comes to taboo domination such as race play, communication is important in that it allows the participants to develop trust and respect for each other. Without communication, there is no setup for when a BDSM context begins, and it would be difficult to tell whether those desires are for a BDSM experience and its pleasures or for a racist outlet [9].

According to Miller, whereas in the actual context of injustice mutual respect is often absent, in that of BDSM mutual respect is ensured, which constitutes the key distinction between the two activities [9]. To illustrate the difference, compare racial role-playing and real racist sexual assault, for instance. In actual racist sexual assaults, the victim is necessarily disrespected (i.e. treated as a means for sexual pleasure and racial discrimination) regardless of their consent – the perpetrator demeans the human dignity of their victim. However, in BDSM participants are not disrespected: they negotiate terms, have safe words, etc. Both sides are treated as ends in themselves – their interests and limits are considered, instead of one side becoming simply a tool for the other's sexual satisfaction [11].

Certainly, Miller did not mean a specific Kantian respect in this context – a "mutually respectful" BDSM activity does not necessarily mean no subjugation is involved. Nevertheless, one can easily imagine a case of BDSM in which both parties are respected as ends in themselves instead of as means for sexual gratification. This is evident in the relationship between Christian and Ana. There were many scenes that showed that they did not treat each other as mere means to satisfy sexual

desires, the most obvious of which is the negotiation scene mentioned above, where Ana suggested amendments to soft and hard limits and banned certain plays and Chris obviously accepts. Certainly, one may argue that Chris accepted Ana's proposal not only because he respected her free will, but also because he wanted to have sex with her, and rejecting her proposal would mean losing the chance. Granted, when two parties are negotiating contracts, practical interests certainly play an important role. However, given the pretext that Chris has repeatedly stressed the importance of this contract to Ana, he has fulfilled his duty of due diligence and thereby shown his respect for Ana. If he did not respect her, he could trick her into signing an unacceptable contract and do as he wants, including those things Ana didn't want (until Ana objects and terminate the contract); and the fact that he takes Ana's feeling and rights into account means that Chris did not wish to demean Ana's dignity. Thus, Ana and Chris were involved in a consensual satisfaction of dark desires, without being morally impermissible.

Morgan may respond by saying that not all cases of BDSM are like Ana and Chris – some of them involve really dark desires and are morally impermissible. As Miller mentions, when sexual activities are undergone to satisfy certain actual hidden, “vicious” desires, they become morally impermissible. In his words,

If the dom is a closeted racist or secretly wants to rape women and uses BDSM scenes as an outlet for his desires, then his character is vicious. This would make him morally unsound. As for the sub, if she internalizes the racism or misogyny – if she accepts racist or sexist attitudes against her own race or sex – then there is also a problem [9].

According to Miller, when BDSM is used as a disguise for certain “vicious” desires such as racism or sexism, the practice is morally impermissible. If what Miller means by “vicious” is captured by what Morgan means by “dark”, then it seems like they are agreeing: when one partner secretly wants to harm the dignity of the other, it seems that the satisfaction of that desire is morally impermissible.

One response is that this scenario is not consensual in the appropriate sense. In this scenario, the sub did not give Doughertian consent – she (as Miller supposes to be a woman) was deceived into having sex with her partner who actually wanted to rape her. It should be apparent that, according to Dougherty, the sub's consent becomes invalidated and the sexual act becomes nonconsensual, which is the reason why it is morally impermissible. In other words, through such invalidation of the sub's consent, the sexual activity changes from BDSM scenes to rape. This becomes clear if the mental states of the two partners are taken into account. For the sub, it is her dom partner playing a rough make-believe game on her, and she believes that her dom does not mean to harm her dignity. However, for the dom, what he experiences should be extremely similar to – if not completely identical with – what goes on in a rapist's head: that he is raping her, using her as a mere means for his sexual satisfaction, while his respect was pretended. In other words, the dom tricks the sub into sex and prevents her from giving Doughertian consent. Since this case isn't consensual, it does not support Morgan's claim.

If this argument is correct, then there is a counterexample to the strong thesis, which claims that it is always morally impermissible to satisfy dark desires, even if consented to. We have examined the case of *Fifty Shades of Grey* and argued that the relationship illustrated in this film is a consensual and morally permissible satisfaction of dark desires. It is consensual in Dougherty's sense because there are no concealed deal breakers, Ana and Chris had carefully discussed the contract. The same evidence shows that both parties (and especially the sub who is central to the question) are respected and not dignitarily harmed, thus the sexual act is morally permissible. Finally, it satisfies dark desires because it involves damaging someone in both the physical sense and in terms of the dominant-submissive relationship which falls short of dignitary harm. Therefore, the strong claim isn't successful.

5. Conclusion

This article examines and revises the version of Morgan's claim in *Dark Desires*. Although it shows that the strong version of Morgan's claim isn't successful, it has demonstrated that his argument successfully establishes the weak version, which claims that there is at least one case of dark desire which can be consented to, yet the satisfaction of which is morally impermissible. Therefore, Morgan has succeeded in showing that consent alone is insufficient for the moral permissibility of all sexual acts – for some, there must be additional conditions. This means that the contemporary conception of sex ethics must change in a more conservative direction: while consent should remain in a central position, we must also have a kind of "ethical sensitivity" towards the nature of our desires, by the warning from Morgan.

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