Mappes, *Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person*

**Summary**

- Mappes accepts Deontology — the view that what it is that makes an action wrong is that it violates a moral rule or principle (where, unlike Rule Consequentialism, this rule or principle is not ultimately justified by the kind of consequences that would result from people following the rule).
  
  Thus, he writes that “Any human interaction, including sexual interaction, may be judged morally objectionable to the extent that it transgresses a moral rule or principle.” (p. 141)

- According to Immanuel Kant, the fundamental moral norm is that it is impermissible for one person to use another as a mere means to achieving their own private ends. We must treat others as ends in themselves.

  We all have our own private projects and plans. It is permissible for us to pursue these projects and plans — however, we must be respectful of the fact that others are also pursuing their own projects and plans. So, we can recruit others to help us pursue our plans, but their participation must be based on their informed and voluntary consent. If I either force you to act in a way to further my own ends, or if I lie to you to get you to act in a way to further my own ends, then I have used you as a mere means to achieving my own private ends. I have failed to treat you as an end in yourself.

- So, according to Kant, you have immorally used somebody iff you use them to further your own ends without obtaining their voluntary and informed consent.

- Mappes applies this formula to the case of sexual morality and concludes that sex must always be consensual — that is, both parties must agree to sex under conditions of full information.

  A sexually uses B iff A intentionally acts in a way that violates the requirement that B’s sexual interaction with A be based on B’s voluntary informed consent.

- There are thus two ways that a sexual interaction could fail to be consensual: either because one party’s involvement is not voluntary (i.e., they are coerced), or because one party’s involvement is not informed (i.e., they are deceived).

  Note: It’s not enough that the other party is neither coerced nor deceived — they must also be capable of consenting. Children, the developmentally disabled, and the severely intoxicated are not in a position to consent, even if they are neither deceived nor coerced.
Examples of cases in which a person is sexually used because their involvement is not informed:

- A man lies about having had a vasectomy
- A man tells a woman who is only willing to have sex in a loving relationship that he loves her when he doesn’t actually love her.
- A woman tells a man that she is single when she is actually married.
- A bisexual woman tells a lesbian who is uninterested in having sex with bisexual women that she is a lesbian.
- A man neglects to mention to a woman he is courting that he has been in a sexual relationship with her sister (when he knows that this would make a difference to her).

There are two ways that sex could be coerced: the coercion could be occurrent or dispositional.

- Occurrent Coercion is coercion which bypasses consent altogether. Forcible rape (rape which proceeds by physical force) is an instance of occurrent coercion.
- Dispositional Coercion is coercion which undermines the voluntariness of the consent. If a rapist threatens to harm a woman unless she submits, then he dispositionally coerces her.

Other cases in which sex is dispositionally coerced:

Case 1: An employer makes it clear to an employee that if they do not have sex with them, they will lose their job.

Case 2: A debtor refuses to repay their loan unless their creditor has sex with them.

Cases in which sex is not dispositionally coerced:

Case 4: A man offers a woman theater tickets if she agrees to have sex with him.

Case 5: A woman offers a man a trip to Europe if he agrees to have sex with her.

The difference between cases 1 and 2 and cases 3 and 4 is that 1 and 2 involve threats whereas cases 3 and 4 involve offers.

- In a threat, the person says that they will do something bad if you don’t comply with their wishes.
  - A threat leaves you worse off if you don’t comply.
  - This includes the withholding of benefits to which you were entitled if you don’t comply (e.g., Case 2).
- In an offer, the person says that they will do something good for you if you do comply with their wishes.
  - An offer does not leave you worse off if you don’t comply.