DADT III Overview I: Personal Motivation

Let me tell my audience why I continue to write, why I "carry on".

I do remember suddenly wanting to start piano when I was in the third grade. I don't know, at a certain level of conscious choice, why. In time I started listening to classical records and collecting them. Music encapsulated a certain notion of what was beautiful or virtuous or even "right". Later, a sense of self-expression moved into other areas, including writing and playing chess. For example, a chess opening could seem to express a universe of "rightfulness". Eventually, I came to see the selection of another adult person for intimacy as "expressive".

Others would interfere with my expressive forays. They might demand that I join in collective efforts to "protect" others in the "tribe" or family or community, particularly through the "women and children" idea. Their tone was coercive. It may have started with the intention of my learning the skills it would take to become dependable in the workplace and economically self-sufficient – and that is all fine – but it seemed to go beyond that into demands to fit into the social structure of the community. For example, it was important to be able to care of others, whether that meant raising children or protecting aging parents. These encounters have occurred at various points in my life, but particularly during my "coming of age" (school to college and Army years), and more recently during my period of eldercare for my mother, and recently since "inheriting" the estate.

I can say that, as in the poem by William Henley, I want to remain "captain of my soul." I know that is double-edged. My media activity spans an enormous range of material that I have to stay on top of. Therefore, I cannot join someone else's cause without disrupting my own business, or creating serious public conflicts. I do understand that the needs of specific human beings are quite compelling. But one's is not necessarily more deserving than the other until it relates directly to my own life somehow.

At this point, I need to make a pronoun shift. After all, there is no "they". I could substitute "you", to mean any person who contacted me "wanting something" beyond what would have been necessary for me to carry my own freight. As I look back over the decades of my life, I can sense in many situations what "you" wanted and agree that there were occasions when I regret how I behaved. (The details would be another discussion.) What "you" wanted seems to add up to something, but it also contains a lot of internal contradictions. So one of the biggest points of my writing is to help "you" understand what you wanted, or really needed, especially from me.

There's an opposite side of this "bitcoin." That is, how my "side" (on the political and social spectrum of these "culture wars") thinks I should behave, or how that side argues its case. I also want "my side" to understand that, even though I am a bit "different", it needs to make arguments that stand up to strong moral notions about personal responsibility, and aren't just predicated on notions like immutability, victimization, or belonging to a stigmatized group.

Some of this discussion gets, of course, into the reaction of others to my homosexuality, especially earlier in my life. That's a separate discussion, but once the topic comes up, it tends to take over. But the real issues are much broader. They have to do with the limits of modern ideas of

individualism (perhaps hyper-individualism), personal autonomy and sovereignty. There is some inductive reasoning here. If some social pressure can be put on me to go along with the needs of others as related to the long term future welfare of the group, then one could propose some general principles about what people who are "different" should expect.

This may be a disturbing suggestion. Is "loving your enemy" (as in the Bible) really "understanding" your "foe", even if you "feel" nothing? I thinks so. Is this like an African-American's being asked to understand the "motives" of a slave owner or segregationist in the past (or even today)? I think there's a split. My "difference" has to do with my actions and values, which may sometimes be distracting to others. I think it's in my interest to understand how they feel. Yet I recognize that some will see that my taking "authority" seriously gives it unnecessary credibility and facilitates "oppression."

Being "different" may not be the same as being "special." But I do see myself as in a "gray" zone, with some moderate "disability" maybe related to mild autism, Asperger's, or neurological development, where I understand the implications of my potential effect on others, either by my actions (such as self-broadcast) or by inaction (not joining in their social structures and "protecting" others in a manner that is or was often expected, particularly of males). People with more clearcut disabilities may not be in a position to leverage themselves and "get out of things" that others have to do (for them or for everyone).

My experience suggests that what "you" want from "people like me" is more personal attentiveness to the needs of others, but often as achievable only within conventional social or business structures, where there is some hierarchy of authority. Sometimes this has a largely marketing focus, with an expectation of an openness to the idea of "helping" people by selling to them (usually other people's wares) through conventional cookie-cutter huckster channels. Other times, it's largely personal, with an emphasis on giving people personal attention on their level, or even becoming their "buddies". In both cases, this interaction could come at a cost of loss of self-expression in areas where I would otherwise achieve personal satisfaction, and it means finding "meaning" in meeting interpersonal goals set by others. It is more difficult for me than for others because I don't have the skills of social competition normally needed to do these things comfortably. The idea of "bringing it down" to show certain kinds of other people intimacy is disquieting in that, in the past, such social interaction from me would have been considered inappropriate or unwelcome. But modern medicine makes the need for this sort of social capital more pressing than it used to be.

"You" have often put forth the idea that socialization open to complementarity is a pre-requisite for healthy and permanent heterosexual marriage. That certainly has implications for how marriage is viewed, as a result of "proper" social development rather than the cause.

"You" tend to see demanding more contribution to social capital from "people like me" as essential to sustainability of a way of life. It's important to have a "generative" investment in the people that will live in the future (that is, in today's children), before being heard from or having a say in things. It's important to share in the risks of personal sacrifice and not leave them to others where, in time, indignation and social tensions will become hard to contain. On the other hand, demanding this kind if participation from "me" is very convenient to those "in power" and very easy to abuse, as history proves. Even so, what "I" do is very much a moral issue for "me", regardless of the risk that others can abuse me.

Some current social and economic issues illustrate how this expanded moral compass of personal responsibility can play out. For example, concerning the debate (in 2013) over "Obamacare", many healthy people object to suddenly having to pay more to help pay the expected claims of those known to be more likely to get sick, as a solution to the "anti-selection" problem. Likewise, they would object to more socialized forms of medical coverage that are accepted in much of the rest of the world. But they give no real answers as to what should be done with the "sickly". Logically, some combination of these events happen: healthy people pay for sick people through common mechanisms, healthy people take care of sick people in person (most often in "the natural family") or the sick people perish. "You" have to take some kind of position.

Eldercare, while partly covered (for medical, but not custodial care) by a social entitlement in the United States (Medicare), even takes the problem further, as does care of the disabled in general. Working people have to support the elderly, who are living longer while sick. In practice, many people will experience "family responsibility" for their parents and even other family members even though they did not personally decide to have children.

Most well-established religious practices recognize that inequality necessarily exists in any prosperous or successful society. Some of this inequality is a result of being more or less "fortunate" in terms of circumstances or even plain luck, and some of it deals with inherited ability, and some deals with moral character. In practice, it is impossible to separate these cleanly, no matter how libertarian one's intentions. That is why how one deals personally with those less well off – and how one perceives the meaning of the experience – is such a daunting issue that never goes away. Past generations knew this. A rising standard of living for western society has sometimes insulated us from this, resulting in a dip of moral awareness; but ironically, technology is bring it back full circle.

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