

Seventy Moral  
(and Immoral)  
Polarities  
of the Everyday



# Seventy Moral (and Immoral) Polarities of the Everyday

By

Frederic Will

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Polarity is dynamic, not abstract. It is...‘a living and generative interpenetration’... Indeed we shall see that the apprehension of polarity is itself the basic act of imagination.

—Owen Barfield, *What Coleridge Thought*

Polarity...is not only a form of thought, but also the form of life.

—Owen Barfield, *Speaker's Meaning*



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# 1. FRIENDSHIP AND HOSTILITY

## Friendship

*Friendship is affection for another person. You can love an animal or admire a landscape but you can't be friends with them. Why not? A friend is by definition a human contact, a person you consider 'another I.' But if a person is 'another I', what is the difference between you and him or her? Is the friend just you thinking another person is you? What is the special value of a friend, if he or she is you?*

## Friendship

### *Examples*

1. I have some old friends, but I try to make new friends. It is not easy. I called up a young Professor recently, to invite him to lunch. I wanted to ask some broad questions about what research scholarship in the Humanities is like at his university today. But it was artificial talk. I like him a lot. But he's in his world, I'm in mine, and it's hard to jumpstart a bond. We will be friendly but never friends.

2. E. M. Forster raised his glass to friendship, which he thought more reliable and rewarding than love. I get it. But I have had several friendships that fell apart, just as I have had loves that fell apart. In common to both kinds of breakdown were communication issues. That sounds awful, to lose a friendship through a failure to communicate.

## Hostility

*Hostility is an attitude hovering between dislike and hatred; it joins people as tightly as friendship does. If I am hostile to you I can't get you off my mind. I think of bad things that can happen to you, and I am glad they can happen to you. I imagine myself observing you failing a test, or striking out in the ninth.*

## Hostility

### *Examples*

1. When I was in my freshman year at Harvard I was in a dorm with two other guys. I didn't like one of them. He was, I thought, cocky and fake street-smart and over-ambitious. All these values, which I very quickly attributed to him, were anti-values to me, and I hated them. Instead of just live and let live I kept confronting. A blow-up was inevitable and one day we came to blows—or to a kind of ungainly scuffle. Rather than forget it later, I remember it later.

2. Hostility closes us off and makes us sick. Then why are we hardwired to hostility? Are we still trying to crush the rival in the jungle? Are we that close to our savage needs? The animals on my lawn—squirrels, chipmunks, hummingbirds, rabbits—walk past each other without paying attention. Are they too just waiting to explode into belligerence?

## 2. CLOSED-MINDEDNESS AND OPEN-MINDEDNESS

### Closed-Mindedness

*To be closed-minded means to be closed to new ideas or ways of looking at things. Being closed-minded is different from being conservative, which can be either open to the new or burrowed into the old. To be closed-minded is too close to the mindset of Archie Bunker to be functional, nor is it good protection for survival.*

### Closed-mindedness

#### *Examples*

1. My wife, an African woman, has many food tastes which I cannot enjoy. When she eats *ohwo*, pepper soup, draw soup, or tripe soup I sign off. I have tried each of those soups, but each of them introduces a flavor or texture that repels me—a viscous okra, smelly slices of stockfish, spices like allspice, which look good as ground powder but taste bad to me, or the sickly sweet smell of tripe. I have learned at least to envisage the world her way in many areas—politics, religion, social values—but the food barrier remains uncrossable.

2. In the faculty lounges of American state universities you will encounter many closed-minded people. These people are likely to be educated, liberal—that is, politically correct—but closed-minded when it comes to perspectives (religious, cultural, economic) which fall outside the current ‘liberal agendum.’ There are many kinds of closed-mindedness, and if one drops in on the coffee lounge of the Headquarters of the First National Bank, or the Jesuit Seminary, or the United Auto Workers one will encounter different species of closed-mindedness. Institutions breed group-think and closed-mindedness.

### Open-Mindedness

*Open-mindedness is an openness to ideas and perspectives that are not typically yours. Although we live in a society in which blocks of closed-mindedness regularly coagulate, we almost invariably praise open-*

*mindfulness. Joe may be closed-minded, but if I call him that he'll get mad. What do we want people to be, closed-minded or open-minded?*

### Open-Mindedness

#### *Examples*

1. I have a Nigerian friend who is open-minded in many regards. He has visited me in Iowa. We took a trip together to an Amish area nearby, where there was a large horse auction, a reconstructed pioneer village, and a country store where folks still speak their dialect of German. To me it was all new and surprising. To James it was much newer. He was, however, open-minded—and open-eyed—about all he saw. He asked questions—about pioneer society, the beliefs of the Amish, the economics of horse auctions—which opened up the experience for me. His open-mindedness was life-giving.

2. I try to be open-minded when it comes to cutting-edge lifestyles. I think gay marriage is a non sequitur, because it is a contradiction in terms; I find lesbianism interesting and literary; I am uncomfortable with male gay sex, largely because of the penetration issue. I am tired of being proud of 'having an attitude,' but uncomfortable about having no attitude.

### 3. TRUST AND MISTRUST

#### Trust

*I trust several people. This trust springs from my confidence both in these individuals, and in my judgment of them. I would count on these people not to spread secrets I share with them, not to steal my money, not to require coaxing when I am in need of support. But my trust in these people only goes so far. Total trust in a person involves a more comprehensive relationship than is implied by these examples. I would only trust someone totally if they did not simply reassure me in the regards just mentioned, but went beyond details into the positive territory of friendship (or is it love?). I would trust my lawyer, my doctor, but this trust might well be simply 'professional,' and not include the element of friendship (or is it love?).*

#### Trust

##### *Examples*

1. I trust my wife above all others. I trust her because we have so intertwined our commitments to one another—neither of us could profit without the other profiting. I trust her because I assume that for her, as for me, undermining the other's good name and achievement could only mean undermining my own. I trust her because through twenty years of being together she has learned, as I have, that our skills are complementary and in each case indispensable to the other.

2. I trusted my dog Biscuits. When I came downstairs in the morning she always jumped up and kissed me, then followed me around the house. This habit held until her last days, in which she was very ill. When she could not rise from her bed she wagged her tail, and made eye contact. When she was well she never decided to modify her routine. She was never in a bad mood. She was never prey to sudden fits of anger, except when tormented—and that was never by me. I could count on her more fully than I can count on myself.

#### Mistrust

*To mistrust is to feel a lack of confidence in another person's commitments or behaviors. It is to feel, when you ask or expect something of that person, that there is doubt they will do what they say or promise. The*

*consequence of mistrust is usually a decision not to put further trust in that person. However, sometimes it is too late to withhold your trust. The untrustworthy person may already be living it up with your girlfriend in Buenos Aires.*

## Mistrust

### *Examples*

1. Ages ago I had a girlfriend I thought totally charmed by me. One night after a poetry reading I went back to her house, we read poetry together, and we slept together. It was pretty exciting. Under the heat of the event we told each other a lot of romantic things. We made commitments in language. Rather inexperienced, I believed it all—what she said and what I said. A few days later I was told in all confidence and innocence, by a colleague in my department, that he had been sleeping around recently, and that one of his conquests, just the night before, had been the young lady I was fascinated by. I was astounded. Not much time had passed since my encounter with her.

2. I have learned to mistrust much that people say. For example, I have been told, by academic colleagues, that it is dangerous to walk at night in big cities. Yet I have often done just that, walked wherever I liked at night in big cities, and I have never seen or had any difficulty. I have walked through dark parts of Manhattan at night. People have treated me okay, as they do in the day. My colleagues tell me I am naïve, a dumb whitey. But am I to discount the experience of a lifetime? Am I to bemoan the danger of walking in cities at night? Or am I to ignore the alarmed remarks of my colleagues?

## 4. SOCIABLE AND LONER

### Sociable

*The sociable person is comfortable in the presence of others, doing what he can to help or fit in with them. Being sociable is easier if one has been raised among siblings or extended family, for, though all is not roses in every family garden, familiarity with humans in groups is good practice in mature social living. There are, of course, many varieties of sociable being: ranging from the gregarious old-boy slap-on-the-back version through the savvy and insightful student of human nature, like Montaigne, for whom 'there is nothing to which Nature hath more addressed us than to societie,' and for whom friendship is the culmination of social pleasures.*

### Examples

1. I have become more sociable, as I become more conscious of what I have to contribute and learn. It took me a long time—fifty years?—to even approach this consciousness, and it has taken me another twenty to learn how to exercise it. My very late-in-life investment of sociability reaches its peak in my lunches with guy friends. Once, sometimes twice, a week I sit down for an hour and a half and a good lunch, with old or new friends. Conversation, among guys past sixty who have worked at life a bit, is likely to be a piece of cake. One enters at any point—the guy's kids and the family's health are sure entry portals—and from there the segues fall like leaves from the trees: the school system, local government, an upcoming election, and of course, if you share a background like university life, the classic laments at how bad things have gotten.

2. As an active and ambitious senior, I like to do my writing work around people. (Solitude can also produce rich plants, but needs to be enjoyed in limited doses.) In Paris I might spend my afternoons at the Café de Flore, in Athens at Zonar's, but in Cedar Rapids I take my laptop to the Barnes and Noble café. What a buzz of innocuous humanity! What a burble of gossip, chit chat, coffee and cookies ordering! I take my seat at the large plate-glass window overlooking the parking lot, and continue writing the thoughts I parked a couple of hours earlier at home. They are always the same, though I change, and though the world changes. Thoughts are probes of the lasting. I appreciate the innocent historicity of the people

around me, such good-natured reminders of my own half-baked efforts to make time stand still.

### Loner

*A loner is a person who is often, though not necessarily, alone. Simply being alone doesn't qualify a person as a loner. One can be a lighthouse keeper on the Maine coast, a prisoner in solitary, an eremite in the woods; and in all those conditions one can still be a sociable being, and think, dream, and write in terms of one's social setting. To be a loner one must feel and think like a loner. One may feel lonely; one may be a visionary; one may be wary: but the essence of the loner is to feel isolated even in a crowd, and, often, richly complete even when alone.*

### Loner

#### *Examples*

1. I walk the track in the mornings with a guy, John, who describes himself as a loner. He is married, has three children, and lives in a town where he grew up and knows many people. Therefore he does not lead an isolated life, but rather a life in which, though always surrounded by people he knows, he feels he exists in and by himself. In the present instance, loner means lonely, though it needn't. Clearly, in this hungry and anxious environment that the West calls society, the condition of many loners will be loneliness—the loneliness of Werther, of Joseph K, or of Nagel (in Hamsun's *Mysteries*)—the loneliness of the homeless or the bankrupt or the morally confused on the streets of our own big cities. John is one more example of this essentially alone condition, in which he finds the satisfaction of a private world, but feels the pain of empty rooms full of empty voices.

2. One of my friends is a loner. He is a quiet man who works as a custodian in a large building complex, and is responsible for keeping the place in order. This job requires him to be at work by five in the morning, to sweep, brush, clean, and keep his eyes out until closure at 2:30 in the afternoon. All this he does carefully, and to the great satisfaction of his employers. S has very little interface with the busy business life that transpires around him—men in dark suits hurrying by to appointments, secretaries moving quickly past on high heels, security men wearing keys and sometimes concealed weapons. S carries on a quiet and capable small job, in the midst of these testimonies to the bustle of our time. S is a loner. And pretty happy.

## 5. RELIGIOUS AND IRRELIGIOUS

### Religious

*To be religious is to see yourself as a creature of God. Of course all cultures relate differently to what they find inside, as their God or gods, and the history of religion is thus a study of highly diverse conceptions of being God's creation.*

### Religious

#### *Examples*

1. I have grown more religious as I age. I would describe that growth as a new sense of creatureliness. Why should this happen? As I get closer to death, the dramatic mystery of life assails me. I feel more clearly that I have been in the hands of a guiding power. Do I think that my life has been laid out by someone else, and has not been in my power? What about my crumby behavior as a father and husband? Was that God's work? It may have been, if God is a creator who fine-tunes and gets his fingers dirty.

2 If it is religious to go to church, I am now religious. I am a Catholic, and try to participate in the Mass every week. What has this to do with creatureliness? In the experience of the Mass we attest to our glorification of God. We announce that we are children of God. We look upon Jesus Christ as the Son of God—which would seem to mean that to the degree we live Christ we are also being creatures of God. All this evidence of creatureliness is testified to by our statements and behaviors at Mass. I believe that Catholics share this general stance of creatureliness with the other Faiths of the Book. But all of us, at the same time, live in cultures devoted to the idea that man is on his own, and rules his own destiny.

### Irreligious

*To be irreligious is to believe that you exist on earth solely as one of the creatures developing through the process of evolution. You are not created by a conscious Maker but are simply (maybe wonderfully) a part of the cosmic life process, and have no destiny but what you make for yourself.*

## Irreligious

### *Examples*

1 In the United States some 70 percent of people proclaim their religious faith, and yet the number who speak of themselves as non-religious, or atheistic, is growing. Are these figures, any of them, meaningful? Go out into your streets, my friend, and examine the people. Watch them as they sleep or do things or eat things or desire things. (For that's what life is.) Are they religious? Are they irreligious? Or are they just sleeping or doing or eating or desiring things?

2. Dante and Beatrice were children when he spotted her on a street corner. He felt instant love for her. Was she already in his mind the queen of the heavens in whose presence he would ascend to Paradise in the last book of the *Divine Comedy*? Or did he need a lifetime to unpack that thunderbolt that struck on the street corner?

## 6. LOWLY AND EXALTED

### Lowly

*The term lowly seems borrowed from another historical age, or from the Old Testament. Nowadays we prefer to say disadvantaged or underprivileged. We are very sensitive to the harm we have done others through casual dismissal of their value. Yet in crowding out the notion of lowly we lose our sense of an essential lowness in the human condition. We let our careless human pride show. We also blind ourselves to the hard fact that a shocking number of people live as humbled and broken slaves to the system.*

### Lowly

#### *Examples*

1. The lowly earthworm seldom gets the credit he deserves, for his labors in breaking sod and distributing it as loam. Maggots are undervalued despite their precious work in wound debridement. The bat that ruins my night's sleep is immensely useful as a mosquito killer.

2. God created us all equal, I gather, and yet mankind as a whole earns its bread by sweat and tears, and some must endure heavily in order just to get through life. The lowly are at the bottom of the pile, and can be seen gathering 'night soil' in Benares, living in cardboard boxes in Hong Kong, and struggling with kids through the Sonora desert in the tow of a coyote. The lowly seldom get the benefit of that fine embossed term, anymore, and yet there they are, the lowliest of the low, and I am at my laptop naming them. I feel exalted feeling their lowliness.

### Exalted

*Exalted means raised on high, if you go to the Latin. In everyday speech, where the word is rarely used, exalted is likely to mean 'high' in the vulgar sense, as on a drug high.*

## Exalted

*Examples*

1 At Philips Andover Prep School, I used to go every Sunday night to listen to Dr. Pfatteicher play the next in the sequence of Bach organ concertos. He played this music on the resonant organ of the school chapel, and as I sat at the back of the rounded hall I heard the music coming around at me from every direction. I was usually the only person present; it was dark, and I felt swept up by the music. It was a lonely time in my life, a bit odd-man-out as a new kid at the school, and the rich harmonies of Bach saluting God were an intricate and exalting balm.

2. Long ago I visited a number of Baroque churches built and decorated by Balthasar Neuman, in Southern Germany and in Wuerzburg (*Die Residenz*). The exquisite flowing architecture and the elaborate ornamentation exceeded any art I have seen since, for detail, daring of color, and sweep of lines. So powerful was my impression, that even talking about it today is exalting to me.

## 7. TALKATIVE AND QUIET

### Talkative

*To be talkative is to be prone to talk, even to chatter, when there are listeners around. The term 'talkative' tends to be used pejoratively—'he sure is a big talker,' in reference to someone who can't keep his mouth shut—but that usage is not the only one. A person who is 'talkative' may simply be friendly, and happy to sustain the social fabric at the post office, gym, or grocery store.*

### Talkative

#### *Examples*

1. An elderly but ageless gentleman of my acquaintance, in this small Midwestern town, is loudly talkative. Tom is seen everywhere, hanging out with the cops, chatting with the bank manager. He can listen when he must, but he is inclined to dominate conversations, out of a naive conviction of his charms. Recently I met Tom in my doctor's clinic. I was there for a flu shot, but he was there to accompany a friend who had broken her leg. While talking with several patients in the waiting room he was asked how Mrs. R, in a neighboring town, was doing after her gallbladder operation. Tom was on top of the world explaining to the waiting clientele, in a high and dramatic voice, the ins and outs of Mrs. R's operation, the piece of hair that was left in her urinary tract (which then got infected), the likelihood that she may be incontinent from now on.

2. I am sometimes very talkative. At my best I am responsive and witty, but at other times I simply cover up my thoughts with talk. When I am uneasy—as when meeting a former lover or a new friend with whom I haven't yet much in common—I am likely to talk simple air, to discuss the weather or mutual friends, and to do so as though there were no referents to my language, as though it was about its own sound. When I talk emptily, I feel the gears of language-making grinding inside me, but no firm negotiation with the world. I pass on the TV meteorologist's prediction of a storm, but what I am really doing is saying, *this is hard sledding talk, and what I have just said is filler and I know you know it, and I'd like you to help me get out of this unnecessary bind and put me where I do my real work.*

### Quiet

*To be quiet is to refrain from talking, or at least from talking too much. To be quiet can also involve lifestyle, not just language: we can speak of a quiet person as one who retreats to the background, doesn't impose himself. At his strongest the quiet person may be 'meek,' the term Jesus Christ applied to 'those who will inherit the Kingdom.' That is, this person may contain the strength of the knowledge of good and evil, or truth and falsehood, yet may be standing in the corner without saying anything.*

### Quiet

#### *Examples*

1. I have an old friend who is very quiet. Though she is highly articulate, both as a musician and a writer—she recently published a long book on the clavichord—she has no taste for scoring in conversation. You might almost say that, for her, conversation, speaking up, is a violation of the deeper nature each of us is under our language. Writing, I can hear her say, is the clearest record of thought and feeling, because it represents primary language, language before we have given it particular expression in writing or speaking. This friend of mine, therefore, is quiet in a bold sense, giving full play to the voices she and the world entertain as part of their discussion. She is quiet in a strict sense, too, like the seventeenth-century Quietists who were quiet in order to give God a place to speak in them.

2. Pastor U, in southern Nigeria, is short in stature, reserved in speech, and the kind of person you might barely notice. He prefaces every statement by 'praise the Lord,' but even with that phrase he is chary. When not directing the Shell Oil Employee Middle School for his region, he is either attending a church service or polishing his car, which he does with great care. He has three children with him in Ughelli, where he rents from us, and his mind, for what one could presume, is on his wife and two other children, back home in Calabar. Pastor U has cut his whole life, not only his language, back to simplicities, and yet for that reason, somehow, his quiet existence becomes a provocation to speak with him and to know him better. His being there, his quiet routine, his 'praise the Lord' prefaces: all these surfaces provoke one's desire to know him better.

## 8. BITTER AND FORGIVING

### Bitter

*Some events leave us bitter. My best friend has been making out with my wife. My students have been hatching a plot to report me to the Dean. My mother has been overheard saying she wishes I had never been born. I get bitter. I think, f— them, but that only makes me more bitter.*

### Bitter

#### *Examples*

1. Like many of us I have harbored a few resentments. I knew at the time that these were landmark moments, that I was on the cusp of bitterness, but I didn't at the time know the cost of bitterness, or any remedy for warding it off. I believe now that immediate assault on the embittered part of me would have been the best procedure. Whatever was required to shrink the developing bitterness, as though it were a boil, should have been applied at once—hedonistic diversion, prayer, drop-dead exercise—whatever it took. But I guess I had to go through the process, once or twice, before knowing how to deal with it. The next time, I throw the book at it.

2. The alcoholic preparation called *bitters* is said to promote digestive health. The liquid can combine fruit, barks, herbs, with carefully measured portions of alcohol, to stimulate the digestive system, and to distribute a sense of wellbeing. The idea of working with the bitter to promote health is provocative. Can we blend the bitter in our minds with an anti-bitter, and shock off the primal bitterness?

### Forgiving

*To be forgiving is to put away resentment and bitterness, or, better, to stem those two emotions at their source. The sooner the better with forgiving. Best is not to walk even a step down the road of resentment. Best is—but mustn't this be an action taken in the quiet depths prior to any event?—not even to have had to decide not to be bitter or resentful. Where would such a preformative decision take place? Can we talk soul anymore? Or is that just an escape word, to cover our ignorance of the workshops of willpower within us?*

## Forgiving

### *Examples*

1. I find it hard to forgive myself for certain wounds I have inflicted on other people. What is involved in forgiving yourself? You need to isolate 'yourself' inside of yourself, and tell it you are one with it, no grudges. Is there a 'yourself' in there, when you introspect, or look inside? There should at least be an area of darkness, if I may so call it, where you find it unnerving to venture. That area is where the blow took place that wounded you. That's where the decision to pursue with anger lurks. Somewhere in there you will have to go with your decision to forgive yourself.

2. I am as reluctant to say 'I forgive you' as I am to say 'please forgive me.' I was not brought up on the use of such expressions, and never, in my lucky and benign parental home, heard such expressions used. My parents didn't talk that way. And why not? Was it that we did not inflict pain on one another? Surely not. Surely we inflicted pain, even if inadvertently. We must have had deeper reasons not to use those formulas involving forgiveness. Could we not even have imagined doing a harm to one another that required a request for forgiveness?

## 9. VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

### Visible

*Something that is visible is something that can be seen. People, as well as things, can be visible, and in more ways than one. A person can literally be visible: you can see him or her. He may be partly visible, as in a cropped photo where part of his body was not caught by the camera, or he may be super up-close, as in a real big guy who's standing in front of you and about to hit you in the face. A person can also be visible on the social (or political, or intellectual) scene, notable for ideas or achievements.*

### Visible

#### *Examples*

1. The Rocky Mountains are often sharply visible from Boulder, Colorado. This visibility is at its sharpest when cloud formations are rapidly passing across the mountain range, at one time concealing, at the next revealing it. The transitory covering of the range, frequently cutting into the solar brilliance, seems to intensify the visibility of the range when the clouds have passed. Is the range actually more visible when the clouds have passed over, and then left it? Or is the range of the same visibility, and the difference in clarity solely in the perceiver? Is the perceiving eye shocked and startled by the return of a clear vision of the mountains? Are the mountains like an old friend, whom you see at the far end of an airport for the first time in twenty years, and consume with your eyes as you walk rapidly toward her?

2. I live as something visible, and will in fact die visible too, and be visible until my cremated ashes have been dispersed. (Won't even those ashes, which will become grains of earth, maintain some form of my visibility?) From the inside, however, I am not visible as a whole living being. I may see my hand, or my knee, but I can barely see the tip of my nose or the skin of my lower back. What evidence have I that I am visible in the round? For evidence I turn to my experience of other people. I look at my wife, who is visible in front of me. Am I visible like her? I cannot see her back when I am looking at her front. Does she have a back? Does she have a front?

### Invisible

*Something is invisible if you can't see it. In the Credo of the Catholic Mass the ancient text asserts that God is the 'creator of all things visible and invisible.' What are invisible things? Are they thoughts? Are they words that are heard but not seen? Are they all the things in the world—like kids playing on Avenida Espinosa in Buenos Aires—which I cannot see? Are those things, which are real but not visible to me, invisible too? And if they are visible, why can't I see them?*

### Invisible

#### *Examples*

1. Ideas may seem to be invisible but they have an effect in the world. Or *are* ideas invisible? Analyze an example. The idea that mankind might be able to fly sprang from the mind of Leonardo da Vinci, whose observations of bats and birds suggested the possibility of human flight; he was forever sketching possible flying machines. What then is the meaning of 'sprang from' the mind of Leonardo da Vinci? Was there anything we would call an idea (of flight) in Leonardo's mind, *before* he observed animal behavior and conceived of its possibilities? Or were Leonardo's observation and conception themselves the idea of flight, and was the idea of flight accordingly not (exactly) invisible? May not ideas best be considered action springboards which we attribute to mind? Ideas would thus be invisible in the sense that my essential being-here is invisible, but not in the sense of impossible to envision.

2. There are two musics, the score of a piece of music, and the music itself, which the score encodes. The former is invisible, the latter visible. Would we say that the score makes the music visible? Take Mozart's *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*. That genius was able, it seems, to conceive an entire piece of music, whole, in his head; that is, without 'scoring' it as he went along composing it. Was the music invisible as he created it? Or was it a visible fabric awaiting scoring? In his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' Keats wrote that 'heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter...' He was referring to painted figures on an ancient Greek vase; he urges the pipe-playing revelers to continue their playing, as though the soundless sounds of their playing were the sweetest music. Are those unheard sounds like the invisible score Mozart 'saw'?

## 10. PRURIENT AND CHASTE

### Prurient

*To be prurient is to be lustful and sexually aggressive. This condition is peculiar to humans, for prurience requires a mindset complex enough to take pleasure in the forbidden; the prurient individual adopting a salacious and often subversive attitude toward his intended prey.*

### Prurient

#### *Examples*

1. A dirty old man is a perfect candidate for prurience. His underpants tickle him in the presence of fresh young things, but he is not ready for action. He sits as close as possible to the object of attraction, but he won't touch more than her shoulder. He's the nicest possible guy, and his feelings are perfectly natural. It's only a question of tickling.

2. We exist as nervous systems. Push us, prick us, pump us, finger us, we turn into all the appropriate alarm buttons. We shiver and shake and dance and buckle and prance...depending on the button you push. Push, if you like, the little green button in the lower right corner...that'll move him closer.

### Chaste

*To be chaste is to abstain from sexual activities. This may be a willed condition, requiring discipline, or the result of nature. In either case desire is frowned on, as a source of unpredictable danger.*

### Chaste

#### *Examples*

1. In many cultures the chastity of young women is highly valued, and pre-marital sex is viewed as a serious impediment to marriage. The prevalence of pre-marital sex, in the Western industrialized world, is widely tolerated, though individual scruples may play across these societies, and sharply limit sexual play. Thinking loose, but behaving chaste, is the formula for many young women's navigation of their wild oats.

2. Attempts to enforce chastity, like the infamous chastity belt, are widely thought to have been ineffective, and not to have prevented even masturbation. The human brain is the only effective chastity belt, but what female brain will wire to total abstinence, unless given some kind of sanctification as a lure? I said no because the Virgin Mary said no, and said a robust yes at the same time?