2 Sexual Love

While Kant’s views on sex differences and sexual morality have been under discussion for several decades, it seems that, somewhat surprisingly, there are no previous exegetical analyses of sexuality in Kant specifically from the perspective of love. As we saw in Chapter 1, sexuality as a natural impulse of procreation belongs at bottom to ‘animal mechanical self-love’. Hence, the sexual impulse is basically a component of the broad conceptual cluster of self-love. We also learned that, as a vehicle of (human) species-level sustenance, sexual love is a ‘predisposition [Anlage] to the good’. Yet even a brief glance at Kant’s discussions of love in the context of sexuality reveals that several questions were left unanswered in the first chapter: 1) Are the sexual impulse and sexual love one and the same – or what is their relationship? 2) Just how is sexual love predisposed to the good – or how are teleology and morality related to sexual love? 3) What is the relationship between sexual love and love of beauty? 4) Is the general division of love operative in sexual love – and if so, what is its role? 5) How does the notion of love illuminate the status of sex and gender differences in Kant as regards the equality of human beings?

These issues form the underlying framework for the discussion of this chapter. Two main exegetical claims emerge from my reading: 1) In Kant’s earlier works, there is a strong connection between sexuality and love of beauty, but this link wanes towards the 1790s. Beauty can be seen to mediate between sexuality and morality in terms of love, but the extent to which Kant holds on to this picture during the mature period is unclear. 2) In general, sexual love may be divided into narrow and broad sexual love, such that narrow sexual love is simply the natural impulse of procreation, whereas broad sexual love combines sexual inclination with moral love in the context of heterosexual marriage. My interpretative distinction between narrow and broad sexual love will also clarify the status of the general division of love within this framework. Narrow sexual love remains basically outside the grasp of the general division, but broad sexual love proceeds from the narrow when the sexual impulse or sexual inclination unites with moral love of benevolence for another human being.¹

¹ Note that Kant uses at least the words ‘impulse’ [der Antrieb], ‘inclination’ [die Neigung], and ‘instinct’ [der Instinkt] to describe the nature of sexuality. A distinction can be found between inclination and instinct, so that inclination presupposes acquaintance with the object whereas instinct is blind (LE, 27:417.26–27; cf. LA, 25:1114.18–19; both cited in Tomasi 2015). Impulses seem to generally imply the species level, whereas inclinations sometimes presuppose a given agent. Often, however, Kant seems to use these terms interchangeably, and my argument does not hinge on these distinctions. Therefore, I will not analyse them in further detail (see
In accordance with the two main claims, the chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, I analyse the relationship between sexuality and love of beauty. I begin by discussing love in the precritical ‘Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime’ and then track the link between the notions of sexual love and the beautiful through the contexts of Kant’s philosophy of history (in the ‘Conjectural Beginnings of Human History’) and the third Critique. This discussion will also serve as a preliminary for the interpretative distinction between narrow and broad variants of sexual love. In the second part of the chapter, I establish the division between narrow and broad sexual love in greater detail by analysing how the word ‘love’ operates in an array of passages on sexuality in various works by Kant. When showing the existence of broad sexual love, I focus especially on the perspectives of morality in marriage right on the one hand and teleology on the other.

Unlike the other chapters, this one also contains an evaluative element. This is because most of the previous research on sexuality in Kant is specifically feminist in orientation. The existence of these secondary discussions is reflected in the way I treat this particular topic. Many scholars hold that Kant’s views on women are deplorable (see e.g. Schott 1997, esp. Schröder 1997; see also Wood 1999; Marwah 2013; cf. Herman 1993), and his insights were criticised even by his contemporaries. Recent feminist debate on this issue mainly concerns the question of just how deplorable Kant’s views are. From this perspective, Kant is by no means a forerunner of feminism, and the more charitable interpretations tend to assert that his opinions are not ‘quite so deplorable as critics make them out to be’ (Baron 1997, p. 166; see Mikkola 2011, p. 92). The scholars who take the more charitable route sometimes also hold that if we bracket Kant’s substantial discussions on sexual difference as such, we may still use the universalistic, supposedly gender-neutral groundings of Kant’s mature moral theory as emancipative conceptual tools for approaching contemporary problems of equality (gender issues among others) – and in this ‘formal’ sense, Kant’s moral philosophy can be beneficial to feminism (e.g. Nagl-Docekal 1997; Baron 1997; cf. Mikkola 2011, p. 105). On the other hand, some draw on the connections between sexual love (or marriage) and friendship in Kant in approaching questions of solipsism and objectification (Langton 2009, pp. 318 – 327, 362 – 365), reciproc-
ty and responsibility (Korsgaard 1996, pp. 194 – 196), or with the specific intent of revising Kant’s original positions (Denis 2001b). With all these discussions in mind, I wish to show that while an interpretative endeavour such as mine cannot bracket Kant’s sexual teleology and/or his anthropological opinions on sexual difference, the notion of broad sexual love developed below nevertheless supports the idea that Kant was less misogynistic than is often assumed.

All in all, my analysis of sexual love in Kant shows that despite his seemingly negative remarks on sexuality and his apparent conservatism in sexual philosophy, there is no need to reject the basic idea that for Kant, (narrow) sexual love is a strong and necessary natural impulse of procreation and a predisposition to the good. Moral restrictions only allow the impulse to operate within heterosexual marriage, where the rights of the sexes are nominally equal but the husband is de facto the leader. In Kant’s early work, the union of the sexual impulse and moral love in the husband may be viewed through the notion of love of beauty. Promoting their wives’ happiness through the moral practical love of benevolence remains the most important duty that husbands have towards their spouses, whereas wives are described as being generally more prone to love from inclination. Women serve an auxiliary purpose in the moral progress of human kind, and while they ultimately (or at least arguably) share the same rational capacities as men, they are domestic creatures in Kant’s sexual teleology. The status of women as legal and moral persons is ambivalent and limited, and in this sense there is an inconsistency or an insoluble tension between Kant’s formal moral egalitarianism and his philosophy of sex. In comparison with some of the contemporary statements in the feminist debate around Kant, I hope my argument will also point toward a more balanced interpretation of the status of sex difference in his philosophy.⁴

⁴ By focusing on sexual love in heterosexual relationships, I do not wish to suggest that homosexuality is irrelevant or devoid of love. My chosen focus follows from my Kant immanent exegetical method: Kant’s narrow basic notion of sexual love is the natural impulse of procreation, and he does not discuss homosexuality in terms of love. As one who was not particularly progressive in this respect, still less a sexual libertine, Kant viewed homosexuality as a horrendous moral flaw. I will also have to omit a detailed discussion of Kant’s condemnation of masturbation, even though masturbation, too, relates to the sexual impulse, and hence to sexual love in the narrow sense. For criticisms of Kant’s notorious views on these topics, see Denis (1999) and Soble (2003). Here, I limit my treatment to the kind of sexuality that Kant explicitly discusses in terms of love: sexuality between men and women.
2.1 Sexual Love and Love of Beauty

‘Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime’ (1764) begins with a distinction between two different kinds of pleasurable feelings an agent may have. The first kind represents the simple satisfaction of inclinations. This kind of pleasure is mere ‘gratification’ [Vergnügen] and may occur without any special talents on the part of the agent, without a morally virtuous disposition, and apparently even without the use of rational capacities: it ‘can occur in complete thoughtlessness’ (2:208.14–15)⁵, ‘without their having to envy others or even being able to form any concept of others’ (2:208.7–9)⁶. As examples of this type of pleasure Kant mentions things like food and drink, hunting, business profits, and a kind of sexual pleasure. The sexual feeling is defined in terms of love. It is the feeling of a man ‘who loves the opposite sex only insofar as he counts it among the things that are to be enjoyed’ (2:208.3–5)⁷. If we compare this kind of sexual love with what is said about ‘animal mechanical self-love’ in the Religion, we see that the terms attributed to sexuality in both cases seem equivalent. The animal mechanical impulse of sexuality in the Religion is arational and does not involve comparison – or, more precisely, does not involve an evaluation of the happiness of others in comparison with one’s own happiness. Similarly, the sexual love mentioned in the beginning of the ‘Observations’ need not involve thought, envy, or even the formation of a concept of another human being.⁸ The similarity of these descriptions of sexuality in the

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⁵ ‘bei völliger Gedankenlosigkeit statt finden können.’
⁶ ‘ohne daß sie andere beneiden dürfen oder auch von andern sich einen Begriff machen können’.
⁷ ‘derjenige, der das andre Geschlecht nur in so fern liebt, als er es zu den genießbaren Sachen zählt’.
⁸ Considering that the sexual impulse may hinder the use of one’s rational capacities, one might like to think of the impulse in terms of ‘passion’ [Leidenschaft], for the hindering of reason is constitutive of what a passion is for Kant. However, in the Anthropology Kant explains that ‘one cannot list any physical love as passion, because it does not contain a constant principle with respect to its object.’ (AP, 7:266.12–13) / ‘keine physische Liebe als Leidenschaft aufführen kann: weil sie in Ansehung des Objects nicht ein beharrliches Prinzip enthält.’ According to Kant, sexual desire disappears (at least temporarily) once it is satisfied, and passions are more like long-term obsessions. In the Anthropology, however, Kant also lists sexual inclination (alongside the inclination to freedom) as a ‘passion of natural inclination’ (AP, 7:267.35–268.1; see also MM, 6:426.26). As a natural passion, sexual inclination relates to affects, which are rash, sudden, overwhelming feelings (see AP, 7:252). In the discussion that follows, though, he again distinguishes between sexual inclination (of mere animals) and passion (AP, 7:269.13–14) and does not say anything about it in terms of passion (or affect) (cf. LA, 25:1361). Perhaps he means that obsessive (or simply long-term) sexual love for a person can
general framework of the concept of love serves as preliminary evidence that there might be such a thing as narrow sexual love in Kant, which consists merely of the animal impulse to sex and the pleasurable satisfaction of this impulse. Since this kind of sexual love seems to involve viewing the other as a ‘thing’ [eine Sache], it also suggests that there is a kind of solipsism related to sexuality (see Langton 2009, 325–327) – that is, the objectification or depersonalisation of the other human being in the context of the animal impulse.

What interests me most in the first section of this chapter is the relationship between the sexual impulse and the notion of the beautiful. The question is: how does love of beauty proceed from crude or narrowly construed sexuality? Kant’s essay quickly moves on to distinguish the abovementioned ‘lower’ feelings from feelings of a ‘finer’ [feinere] sort. The finer feelings are feelings for the beautiful and the sublime.⁹ In general, Kant analyses the finer feelings by attributing them to various topics, such as landscapes, morality, national characteristics, and sexual difference. In the sphere of sexuality, Kant’s basic idea is that women are marked out by the notion of the beautiful, men by the sublime. This basic distinction corresponds to a distinction Kant makes concerning morality: ‘Subduing one’s passions by means of principles is sublime’, and ‘true virtue alone is sublime’ (2:215.5–24)¹⁰, whereas ‘tenderheartedness that is easily led into a warm feeling of sympathy is beautiful and loveworthy’ (2:215.33–35)¹¹. This latter, feminine virtue is, however, ‘weak and always blind.’ (2:215.37–216.1)¹² As some commentators (like Patrick Frierson (2011)) have noted, Kant’s idea is not that women are not at all sublime and men not at all beautiful. It is rather that individuals of both sexes express these qualities in varying degrees, such that in comparison with men women are for the most part more beautiful and less sublime, and vice versa (Kant does not discuss whether the qualities might be reversed within a particular individual, or whether a given woman might be

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⁹ These concepts are seminal to the domain of aesthetics, and their history runs through Edmund Burke’s A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) down to Longinus’ treatise On the Sublime (around 100 AD). Both texts were widely read and very influential in Kant’s time, even though they are not mentioned by Kant in the ‘Observations’ (for Kant’s later discussions of Burke, see C3, 5:277; 20:238).

¹⁰ ‘Bezwingung seiner Leidenschaften durch Grundsätze ist erhaben.’ / ‘ist wahre Tugend allein erhaben.’

¹¹ ‘Weichmütigkeit, die leichtlich in ein warmes Gefühl des Mitleidens gesetzt wird, ist schö

¹² ‘schwach und jederzeit blind.’ On the whole, the passage anticipates Kant’s mature discussion of sympathetic participation, or Teilnehmung, in (MM, 6:456–457).
more sublime than a given man, or a man more beautiful than a woman). Kant asserts further that general education and societal relations pertaining to sexual difference should be organised so that the defining characteristics of both sexes are emphasised. As Frierson points out, Kant’s distinction between the beautiful and the sublime as regards sex is both descriptive and normative. (Frierson 2011, pp. xxix–xxx)

Kant emphasises that the beauty of women, regarding both their looks and their demeanour in a broader sense, is based on the sexual drive, which is dependent on the aims or purposes of nature: ‘no matter how far one might try to go around this secret, the sexual inclination is still in the end the ground of all other charms’ (2:234.21–23). Further down he writes:

This whole enchantment is at bottom spread over the sexual drive. Nature pursues its great aim, and all refinements that are associated with it, however remote from it they seem to be, are only veils, and in the end derive their charm from the very same source. (2:235.19–22)

In the ‘Observations’, the great end of the beautiful and the sublime as regards the character of the sexes is marital happiness. This is the proper object of refined sexual love, and it is in this context that the broader notion of love of beauty develops out of the crude and arational, narrowly conceived sexual impulse. What is of importance here is that beauty occasions love, and sublimity esteem. Hence, in the ‘Observations’ Kant holds that love in the broader sense does not operate symmetrically between the sexes. The experience of sexual beauty is aroused by nature’s procreative aim through the male sexual impulse. Even

13 Kant’s notorious comments on women’s education, which was a hotly debated public issue during his time, derive from his normative insistence on the supposedly natural characteristics of the sexes (see Petschauer 1986). As Baron points out (1997, p. 167), Kant does not imply that women are not capable of higher learning; he apparently opposes their education on the basis that it would compromise their beauty. And as Peter Petschauer (1986, p. 285) correctly argues, Kant’s views on women’s education ‘remain static’ between the ‘Observations’ and the published Anthropology. In terms of Kant’s near contemporaries, gender-equal education was advocated by the mayor of Königsberg, Theodor von Hippel (see Schröder 1997).

14 ‘man mag nun um das Geheimniß so weit herumgehen, als man immer will, die Geschlechterneigung doch allen den übrigen Reizen endlich zum Grunde liegt’.

15 ‘Diese ganze Bezauberung ist im Grunde über den Geschlechtertrieb verbreitet. Die Natur verfolgt ihre große Absicht, und alle Feinigkeiten, die sich hinzugesellen, sie mögen nun so weit davon abzustehen scheinen, wie sie wollen, sind nur Verbräumungen und entlehnen ihren Reiz doch am Ende aus eben derselben Quelle.’

16 It is, however, implicitly clear throughout Kant’s writings that the sexual impulse is active in both sexes, and I know of no scholars who deny this.
though it seems that women might perhaps be generally more prone than men to experience a (non-sexual, neighbourly) feeling of love\textsuperscript{17}, it is men who love women rather than the other way around. The man appreciates the noble [\textit{das Edle}] in himself and the beautiful in the woman, whereas the woman’s feeling is for the beautiful in herself and for the noble in the man (2:240.26–32). Transferred into the sphere of love, this idea means that ‘the man […] can say: \textit{Even if you do not love me I will force you to esteem me}, and the woman, […]: \textit{Even if you do not inwardly esteem us, we will still force you to love us.’ (2:242.5–9)\textsuperscript{18} However, this should not be understood in terms of squabbling or a crude struggle for power. The marital couple is ‘a single moral person, which is animated and ruled by the understanding of the man and the taste of the wife.’ (2:242.14–16)\textsuperscript{19} The end is \textit{mutual} happiness, and it is moral love and beautiful obligingness that yield the proper flavour of marital life: ‘the more sublime a cast of mind is, the more inclined it also is to place the greatest goal of its efforts in the satisfaction of a beloved object, and on the other side the more beautiful it is, the more does it seek to respond to this effort with complaisance.’ (2:242.18–22)\textsuperscript{20} In fact, Kant seems to propose that the man should ultimately come to love his wife not because she is beautiful but because she is his wife. (2.220.30–221.7)

The love (of beauty) at issue in marriage in the ‘Observations’ is thus not merely the crude sexual impulse, or the mere desire to derive pleasure from the use of another person as a sexual object; at least from the man’s perspective, it is a combination of sexual desire and what Kant later comes to call love of be-

\textsuperscript{17} Kant states that women ‘do something only because they love to, and the art lies in making sure that they love only what is good.’ (2:232.1–2) / ‘thun etwas nur darum, weil es ihnen so beliebt, und die Kunst besteht darin zu machen, daß ihnen nur dasjenige beliebe, was gut ist.’ And later on: ‘the feeling of love of which she is capable and which she inspires in others is fickle but beautiful’ (2:236.29–30) / ‘das Gefühl der Liebe, dessen sie fähig ist und welche sie anderen einflößt, ist flatterhaft, aber schön’. The association of women with inclination and beauty seems to parallel the ideas put forth later in the \textit{Groundwork}, and especially in the second \textit{Critique}, according to which beneficence from inclination or love lacks proper moral worth but is nevertheless \textit{beautiful} (C2, 5:82.18–20). Note, however, that the verb used in the first ‘Observations’ passage above is \textit{lieben} but \textit{belieben}, which according to the Grimm and Adelung dictionaries can be close to love but can also imply liking in a much more general sense.

\textsuperscript{18} ‘der Mann […] sagen können: \textit{Wenn ihr mich gleich nicht liebt, so will ich euch zwingen mich hochzuachten}, und das Frauenzimmer […]: \textit{Wenn ihr uns gleich nicht innerlich hochschätzet, so zwingen wir euch doch uns zu lieben}.’

\textsuperscript{19} ‘eine einzige moralische Person […], welche durch den Verstand des Mannes und den Geschmack der Frauen belebt und regiert wird.’

\textsuperscript{20} ‘so ist eine Gemüthsart, je erhabener sie ist, auch um desto geneigter die größte Absicht der Bemühungen in der Zufriedenheit eines geliebten Gegenstandes zu setzen, und andererseits je schöner sie ist, desto mehr sucht sie durch Gefälligkeit diese Bemühung zu erwidern.’
nevolence for another human being – that is, practical love or active rational benevolence. In this context, love of beauty denotes a man’s sexual love for a woman in the broad sense, and hence the ‘Observations’ supports the basic claims of the chapter. There is a close connection between sexuality and beauty in terms of love: the beauty of women is grounded in the sexual impulse, and the love this beauty occasions is not merely animal mechanical self-love but a broader kind of sexual love of beauty.

In ‘Conjectural Beginning of Human History’ of 1786, we find an even stronger statement concerning the relationship between sexuality, love, and beauty. In a rather playful manner, Kant here imagines a possible developmental history for the human species, the beginning of which he models on the biblical account of Genesis – starting with the first human couple (8:110.11). In this early state of human existence, the impulses of animal mechanical self-love are in operation: ‘After the instinct of nourishment, by means of which nature preserves each individual, the instinct of sex is most prominent, by means of which nature preserves each species.’ (8:112.27–29)²¹ Kant’s story then begins to unfold as an account of the effect of reason on the foundational natural impulses or instincts. His description of the effect of reason on sexuality is particularly interesting. Reason marks a separation between the human stimulus to sex and the mostly periodic impulse found in animals. By means of reason and imagination, the human being can uphold sexual desire, which is something animals are unable to do. Kant appeals to the example of the use of fig leaves to cover genitalia to illustrate this point. When the sexual object is concealed (that is, when the genitals are covered with a fig leaf), imagination strengthens and prolongs sexual desire (8:112.31–113.3).²² Through concealing the sensory object and postponing immediate desire satisfaction, imagination and reason lead sexuality from mere animal mechanical sensibility to a level of rational ideality. Most importantly, and more specifically, they inform the transition from animal sexuality to love, and finally to the notion of beauty (even as detached from human objects):

Refusal was the first artifice for leading from the merely sensed stimulus over to ideal ones, from merely animal desire gradually over to love, and with the latter from the feeling of the

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²¹ ‘Nächst dem Instinct zur Nahrung, durch welchen die Natur jedes Individuum erhält, ist der Instinct zum Geschlecht, wodurch sie für die Erhaltung jeder Art sorgt, der vorzüglichste.’
²² As Wood correctly notes, Kant’s slightly satirical position seems to imply ‘that Adam and Eve first put on figleaves not out of shame but to excite one another’s sexual desires’ (Wood 2007, p. 161).
merely agreeable over to the taste for beauty, in the beginning only in human beings but then, however, also in nature. (8:113.7–11)

In the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, the sexual impulse is clearly distinguished from love. What is implied is that when reason and imagination operate on the sexual impulse, the resulting love must be differentiated from animal mechanical self-love. The ‘Conjectural Beginning’ does not make clear what this higher love is like, but we know it is occasioned by the working of reason on sexuality, and the overall context of the essay suggests that it is moral and, as related to sexuality, predisposed toward general species-level progress, ‘gradually from the worse toward the better’ (8:123.25). The ‘Conjectural Beginning’ also supports the idea that love of beauty is occasioned by sexual love. The trajectory above is from an animal impulse to love and from love to a taste for beauty, which in turn starts with human beauty but may then be somehow generalised to the rest of nature. The claim is obviously stronger than that made in the ‘Observations’, where sexuality is presented merely as the ground of female beauty; here, it is presented as the ground of the taste for both human beauty and non-human natural beauty. Based on the combination of the ‘Observations’ and the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, the naturalistic ground of beauty (that is, beauty in a quite general sense) is animal sexuality, and the transition between the two is mediated by reason and love. But there is an obstacle to this interpretation.

Kant’s most extensive discussion of beauty is located in the third *Critique*, where it forms nearly half of the entire work. At first glance, there seems to be a striking discontinuity between Kant’s discussion of beauty here and his earlier works. Even though 1) the division between the beautiful and the sublime is still in operation, 2) the ‘Analytic of the Beautiful’ [Analytik des Schönen] in the third *Critique* relates the beautiful to aesthetic pleasure [Wohlgefallen], and 3) Kant’s general idea is to show how the notion of the beautiful mediates between nature and morality, there is hardly any link between sexuality and beauty in the mature

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23 ‘Weigerung war das Kunststück, um von bloß empfundenen zu idealischen Reizen, von der bloß thierischen Begierde allmählig zur Liebe und mit dieser vom Gefühl des bloß Angenehmen zum Geschmack für Schönheit anfänglich nur an Menschen, dann aber auch an der Natur überzuführen.’
24 ‘vom Schlechtern zum Besseren allmählig’.
25 We hear echoes of Diotima’s speech in Plato’s *Symposium*.
26 Pluhar rightly warns that in the third *Critique*, *Wohlgefallen* simply means liking, and we should not attach special meaning to the word as such and should instead attend to the context (C3, 49fn.14). In particular, we should not assume that *Wohlgefallen* automatically denotes love of delight. Insofar as there are links between love and *Wohlgefallen* in the third *Critique*, these must be established via context-specific argument.
work. The paradigmatic case of the beautiful is aesthetic reflection of beautiful natural forms, and the notion of the beautiful is then secondarily applied to artistic works. We do find two statements that link aesthetic judgment concerning the beautiful to love, but they do not seem to provide the necessary connection with sexuality that we would expect, based on the earlier works. How can we reconcile this lack of sexual love of beauty in the third Critique with Kant’s pre-critical position and the position he continued to hold in philosophy of history, according to which beauty is based on sexual impulse?

There is one passage in the third Critique that concerns human feminine beauty. When discussing the beauty related to fine art, Kant notes as an aside that judgments of beauty regarding certain animate objects of nature take their objective purposiveness into account. In such cases, the aesthetic judgment is grounded in a teleological one, as with women’s beauty: ‘Thus if we say, e.g., that is a beautiful woman, we do in fact think nothing other than that nature offers us in the woman’s figure a beautiful presentation of the purposes [inher-

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27 First: ‘The beautiful prepares us for loving something, even nature, without interest’ (C3, 5:267.35 – 36) / ‘Das Schöne bereitet uns vor, etwas, selbst die Natur ohne Interesse zu lieben’. This is neither about sexual love (since sexual love has an interest) nor, perhaps, even about loving the beautiful, and the love hinted at (but in no way elaborated) in this remark is probably some kind of love of delight toward other beings that neither reduces to self-interest nor takes an interest in the other’s well-being, but that acquires some sort of reflective quasi-moral status in disinterested pleasure. It may be possible to interpret the notion of being ‘without interest’ in terms of not involving an intention to use the love object (see MM, 6:443.2 – 9). Second, love of natural beauty may denote a direct, non-selfish interest in the existence of the objects in question, yet without assigning a purpose or an end to them. Someone who contemplates the beautiful shape of a wild flower, a bird, an insect, etc., out of admiration and love for them, and would not want nature to be entirely without them [...] is taking a direct interest in the beauty of nature’ (C3, 5:299.8 – 14) / ‘welcher [...] die schöne Gestalt einer wilden Blume, eines Vogels, eines Insects u. s. w. betrachtet, um sie zu bewundern, zu lieben und sie nicht gerne in der Natur überhaupt vermissen zu wollen, [...] nimmt ein unmittelbares und zwar intellectuelles Interesse an der Schönheit der Natur.’ According to Kant, this kind of directly interested love requires that one have a prior interest in the moral good, or at least a predisposition to it (C3, 5:300.35 – 36). Thus, in the third Critique, the experience of beauty in general does not necessarily imply love but may serve as preparation for a quasi-moral love (which does not hinge on sexuality). Moreover, the love of beauty directly addressed in this work rests on explicitly moral presuppositions about the agent. In her discussion of love of natural beauty in Kant, Baxley argues that natural beauty may be valued ‘both for its own sake [...] as well as for the sake of [...] the moral message we take from it’ (Baxley 2005, p. 42). I think this is correct, but Baxley does not problematise the status of the two seemingly different types of love at play: love without interest and directly interested love. This distinction is also not noted by Tomasi (2015). Unfortunately, I cannot provide a highly detailed investigation of this issue here since my chosen perspective focuses on the particular relationship between sexual love and love of beauty.
The purpose Kant has in mind here is undoubtedly the preservation of the species through procreation. Hence, in the case of women, their beauty remains grounded in the teleology of sexual desire, and we can at least say that there isn’t an absolute discontinuity between the earlier works and the third Critique. Unlike the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, however, this passage cannot be taken to suggest that sexuality is the foundation from which aesthetic judgments in general are ultimately derived. Furthermore, in a comment on the moral proof of God’s existence in the ‘Critique of Teleological Judgment’, Kant implies that historically, judging the beauty (of nature) was grounded on the existence of morally practical reason: ‘Indeed, it was in all probability through this moral interest that people first became attentive to the beauty and the purposes of nature.’ (C3, 5:459.1–3) There is no hint of beauty’s being generally grounded in sexuality in the third Critique. Did Kant change his mind on the issue in the late 1780s?

This is possible, and quite clearly the link between sexual love and love of beauty wanes towards the 1790s, as does the association between women and the beautiful. Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, published in 1797, does not discuss women in terms of beauty.³¹ Does this mean that Kant did not think that beauty was grounded on sexuality in the end? It seems to me that when Kant began his search for a priori foundations for judgments of beauty, he was forced to shift the focus of beauty away from women, who remained paradigmatically closer to empirical inclinations in comparison with men (even though arguably equipped with rational capacities). On the other hand, the critical distinction between the aesthetic and the teleological forced Kant to ground judgments of beauty on something other than the objective purposiveness of nature. Objective purposiveness (as in the sexual impulse) was now a matter of teleological judgment, not a matter of aesthetics. As noted above, in the third Critique the beauty of women is construed as an isolated special case of beauty that

\[2.1 \text{ Sexual Love and Love of Beauty}\]

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²⁸ ‘In einem solchen Falle denkt man auch, wenn z. B. gesagt wird: das ist ein schönes Weib, in der That nichts anders als: die Natur stellt in ihrer Gestalt die Zwecke im weiblichen Baue schön vor’.

²⁹ ‘Kritik der teleologischen Urtheilskraft’.

³⁰ ‘Auch wurde aller Wahrscheinlichkeit nach durch dieses moralische Interesse allererst die Aufmerksamkeit auf die Schönheit und Zwecke der Natur rege gemacht’. Note that the German is slightly ambivalent regarding whether die Schönheit refers to the beauty of nature or to beauty in general. Pluhar opts for the first alternative, which does seem more likely.

³¹ The anthropology lectures confirm this shift: the Friedländer notes from 1775–1776 treat beauty equally as a property of men and women (LA, 25:665), and in the Mrongovius notes from 1784–1785 we even find a startling Platonic claim, according to which beauty is essentially masculine (LA, 25:330.20–21).
is grounded in teleology. Importantly, however, the third *Critique* simply does not make specific conjectures about the possible arational foundation of beauty – a topic which was dealt with in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’. All in all, I don’t think it’s sufficiently clear whether Kant meant to renounce what he had previously said about the connection between the sexual impulse and love of beauty. I am forced to take the position that in the precritical phase and in the philosophy of history, Kant views love of beauty as grounded in the sexual impulse, but this picture is indeed blurred by the third *Critique* and the development of the anthropology. All we can say is that men’s moral sexual love of beautiful women (which I will call broad sexual love) is grounded in the objectively purposive sexual impulse (which I will term narrow sexual love). This finding on sexual love of beauty nevertheless supports the basic claims of the chapter: 1) Kant’s earlier works show a strong connection between sexuality and beauty in terms of love, and 2) sexual love can be plausibly said to divide into narrow and broad variants.

### 2.2 Narrow and Broad Sexual Love

In this section, I hope to illustrate in further detail how Kant’s notion of sexual love indeed divides into *narrow and broad sexual love*. As we’ve seen, the basic idea behind this interpretative distinction is that narrow sexual love consists merely in the animal impulse of procreation, whereas broad sexual love combines sexual inclination with moral love in the context of heterosexual marriage. I will establish this claim by analysing how the word ‘love’ operates in Kant’s discussions of sexuality, first from the perspective of nature, then from the perspective of morality and marriage right, and finally from the perspective of teleology. If we look at the various passages in which Kant addresses this topic, we see that the relationship between the two variants of sexual love is both additive or accumulative and transformative. In other words, it seems to me that when animal sexuality unites with morality in marriage, the rudimentary form of sexual love both remains in place and is transformed into something more tender and compassionate. When the operation of pure practical reason imposes restrictions on animal desire and other kinds of demands on how the agent acts within the interpersonal relationship originally founded on the natural impulse, the resultant love is reminiscent of both the original sexual instinct and the kind of practical love of neighbour that one may also express towards strangers. But the loves are different: broad sexual love is milder than sheer lust or animal craving for sex and more intimate, more caring, than beneficence simply from rational benevolence.
2.2.1 Narrow Sexual Love

Is there really such a thing as narrow sexual love in Kant? The literature in this area is scarce. Of the few who have touched on the topic, Langton most clearly perceives that Kant does use ‘sexual love’ for ‘sexual desire’ (Langton 2009, p. 325)\(^\text{32}\), but on the other hand Wood holds that for ‘Kant, sexual desire is not a form of love, because love seeks the good of its object whereas sexual desire does not.’ (Wood 2008, p. 225) A position like Wood’s is certainly not an absurd position to maintain, and we should carefully put together a more comprehensive picture of the evidence before deciding on the matter. In the Collins notes on ethics, which Wood cites, Kant does state the following: ‘But if he loves them merely from sexual inclination, it cannot be love; it is appetite.’ (LE, 27:384.22–23)\(^\text{33}\) Indeed there is further evidence for his position in the Mrongovius notes on anthropology, in the ‘Conjectural Beginning’, and in The Metaphysics of Morals. In the Mrongovius notes, sexual inclination is distinguished from ‘genuine love’ [eigentliche Liebe] (LA, 25:1361.6–7), and as we saw in the previous section, the ‘Conjectural Beginning’ contrasts ‘animal desire’ with love (8:113.7–11). Finally, from The Metaphysics of Morals we learn that sexual inclination does not belong to love’s general division into love of benevolence and love of delight: ‘it cannot be classed with either the love that is delight or the love of benevolence’ (MM, 6:426.26–28)\(^\text{34}\).

But even though this may seem like a lot, it is hardly the complete picture of the evidence, and if we investigate further we find that there is more to be said for the view that does include sexual inclination or the natural sexual impulse in the general concept of love. Let me rehearse the evidence for the existence of narrow sexual love discussed thus far, connect it with further evidence, and then try to provide a balanced summary of the overall situation.

Recall the passage on animal mechanical self-love in the *Religion*:

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\(^{32}\) Interestingly, Langton speaks of an ‘optimistic’ and a ‘pessimistic’ Kant in the context of sexual love (Langton 2009, pp. 320–321, cf. 325–326). It seems to me that Kant’s ‘pessimistic’ remarks on sexual love relate to moral problems in the context of what I would call ‘narrow sexual love’, whereas the ‘optimism’ that Langton also sees in Kant is close to my ‘broad sexual love’ (the difference is that Langton emphasises the similarity between sexual love and friendship in describing Kant’s ‘optimism’ (Langton 2009, pp. 320–321, 327, 363), whereas I emphasise love of benevolence in my description of ‘broad sexual love’).

\(^{33}\) ‘Allein wenn er sie bloß aus Geschlechts-Neygung liebt, so kann dies keine Liebe seyn, sondern Appetit.’

\(^{34}\) ‘Sie kann [...] weder zur Liebe des Wohlgelassens, noch der des Wohlwollens gezählt werden’ (cf. LE, 27:417.27–28).
1. The predisposition to ANIMALITY in the human being may be brought under the general title of physical and merely mechanical self-love, i.e. a love for which reason is not required. It is three-fold: first, for self-preservation; second, for the propagation of the species, through the sexual drive, and for the preservation of the offspring thereby begotten through breeding; third, for community with other human beings, i.e. the social drive. (R, 6:26.12–18)

In the Religion the sexual drive is clearly a form of love. It belongs to ‘animal mechanical self-love’ and is therefore part of love’s overall concept. Remember also that in the ‘Observations’, Kant used the word ‘love’ to describe something felt by a man who only wants to use women for his own pleasure (2:208.3–5). In *The Metaphysics of Morals*, we encounter the claim: ‘Sexual inclination is also called love (in the narrowest sense of the word)’ (MM, 6:426.20–21). Against this, one could argue that Kant’s use of the passive voice means that what he is addressing is not in fact his own view but a view generally held by other people. Yet the fact that he concedes that what is at issue is the ‘narrowest meaning of the word’ seems to imply that it is a use that he accepts – for why else would he use the word ‘narrowest’ [engsten]? Further evidence for narrow sexual love can be found in *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*: ‘The strongest impulses of nature are love of life and sexual love, […] Love of life is to maintain the individual; sexual love, the species.’ (AP, 7:276.28–33) And finally, once more from *The Metaphysics of Morals*: ‘Just as love of life is destined by nature to preserve the person, so sexual love is destined by it to preserve the species; in other words, each of these is a natural end’ (MM, 6:424.12–14).

If we now weigh the evidence, we see one published and two unpublished instances that detach sexual inclination or animal desire from love or ‘genuine love’, one published instance that detaches sexual inclination from love’s general division, and five published instances that explicitly connect the sexual drive, sexual inclination, or the sexual impulse to love’s overall framework. It seems to me that a balanced interpretation has no option but to hold that there is such a

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35 ‘1. Die Anlage für die THIERHEIT im Menschen kann man unter den allgemeinen Titel der physischen und bloß mechanischen Selbstliebe, d.i. einer solchen bringen, wozu nicht Vernunft erforderd wird. Sie ist dreifach: erstlich zur Erhaltung seiner selbst; zweitens zur Fortpflanzung seiner Art durch den Trieb zum Geschlecht und zur Erhaltung dessen, was durch Vermischung mit demselben erzeugt wird; drittens zur Gemeinschaft mit andern Menschen, d.i. der Trieb zur Gesellschaft.’

36 ‘Die Geschlechtsneigung wird auch Liebe (in der engsten Bedeutung des Wortes) genannt’.

37 ‘Die stärksten Antriebe der Natur […] sind Liebe zum Leben und Liebe zum Geschlecht; die erstere um das Individuum, die zweite um die Species zu erhalten’.

38 ‘So wie die Liebe zum Leben von der Natur zur Erhaltung der Person, so ist die Liebe zum Geschlecht von ihr zur Erhaltung der Art bestimmt; d.i. eine jede von beiden ist Naturzweck’.
thing as narrow sexual love. It is also very important to see that, more generally, the existence of narrow sexual love supports the view that even though the general division of love into love of benevolence and love of delight is a powerful key for understanding much of what Kant says about love, on the whole his conception of love is irreducible to the general division. The sexual impulse belongs to love but remains outside the grasp of the framework of love of benevolence and love of delight. But to account for the contrasting evidence presented above, it must be noted that narrow sexual love is love only in a highly restricted sense; it is non-rational and sometimes distinguished from love. It denotes merely ‘the strongest possible sensible pleasure in an object.’ (MM, 6:426.21–22)

### 2.2.2 Broad Sexual Love

I will now move on to showing how the broader notion of sexual love accumulates on top of the narrow. As noted above, broad sexual love is essentially the non-rational sexual inclination united with moral love in the context of heterosexual marriage. In the recent literature, Kant’s ‘philosophy of marriage’ has been strongly criticised. Scholars often speak of things like Kant’s ‘steely cynicism on the subject of marriage’ (La Vopa 2005, p. 1), or argue that even at its best Kantian marriage is ‘a system of mutual exploitation’ (Wood 1999, p. 257), or that it marks ‘the self-destruction of the categorical imperative’ (Schröder 1997, p. 282). I think these kinds of views are unnecessarily one-sided and are largely due to lack of analysis of the concept of love within the context of marriage. For instance, the view that Kant conceived of marriage as merely mutual exploitation is, I think, a distorted position that results from placing improper weight on his discussion of marriage right (the tone and vocabulary of which is at least in part set by its necessarily legalistic context) and from neglecting his discussions of the duties of the spouses and how love operates in relation to those duties. I argue that if sexual love in marriage is analysed in terms of the broader notion of love I call ‘broad sexual love’, many pessimistic readings of Kantian marriage will thereby be mitigated.

Now it is true and generally well known that sexual desire or narrow sexual love is morally problematic for Kant. For instance, Kant compares the satisfaction of the sexual appetite to sucking the juice of a lemon and then throwing it away: ‘As soon as the person is possessed, and the appetite sated, they are thrown away, as one throws away a lemon after sucking the juice from it.’

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39 ‘die größte Sinnenlust, die an einem Gegenstande möglich ist’.
He speaks of sex as being like eating roast pork (LE, 27:386.35–36) or even like cannibalism (MM, 6:359.33–360.7). Since we know that the sexual impulse is, at bottom, a non-rational animal instinct, we may say that sexual desire on Kant’s view, in its natural crudity, operates completely irrespective of the humanity and the personhood of the other agent. The desire may not even require the concept of another human being to yield enjoyment or fulfil its purpose (see R, 6:26; cf. 2:208.1–15). As such, the impulse does not take into account that the other human being to which it is directed has a capacity to set ends and make moral choices. However, as an inclination directed towards a particular human other, the sexual inclination has a profound connection to the person or the personhood of both parties. Kant emphasises that sexual desire itself is not directed to the humanity of the other; it is not a desire for a human ‘qua human’ [als Menschen] (LE, 27:385.16) but rather a physical or animal desire for the other’s sex [Geschlecht] (LE, 27:385.15–22; 27:386.36–37; 27:387.28–29; 27:637.37–638.2; 27:638.10–20; see also MM, 6:277–278). However, Kant thinks that it is precisely through this base mechanism that the humanity or the person of the other is possessed, enjoyed, or used as a thing (LE, 27:384.30–31; 27:385.23–35; 27:386.30–39; 27:387.25–29; MM, 6:426.1–15). For Kant, sexual desire is directed to a part of the human being, the use or enjoyment of which implies the use of the whole human being: ‘a person is an absolute unity’ (MM, 6:278.4–15)\(^4\), and ‘if someone concedes a part of himself to the other, he concedes himself entirely’ (LE, 27:387.29–31\(^3\); see also MM, 6:278.32–279.12; Herman 1993, p. 55). In this way, desiring a part comes to mark the enjoyment of the whole. As Langton puts it, ‘the extensional object of sexual desire is in fact a person [...] but the desire is for that person qua body’ (Langton 2009, p. 368). Since

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\(^{40}\) ‘So bald sie nun die Person haben, und ihren Appetit gestillet so werfen sie dieselbe weg, eben so, wie man eine Citrone wegwirft, wenn man den Saft aus ihr gezogen hat.’

\(^{41}\) \textit{Pace} Korsgaard, who asserts that for Kant the object of sexual desire is a person \textit{qua} person, even though she also sees Kant as ‘sometimes changing his ground’ (Korsgaard 1996, pp. 194, 214). In support of her claim, she quotes the Collins notes: ‘They themselves, and not their work and services, are its [sexual desire’s] Objects of enjoyment’. (LE, 27:384.3–5; cited in Korsgaard 1996, p. 194; see also Langton 2009, p. 367) However, the construction ‘they themselves’ is a peculiarity of the translation Korsgaard is using and is not at all contained in the original German. The German speaks of man’s desire as immediately directed to ‘other human beings as objects of his enjoyment’. This phrasing of course requires interpretation. ‘Der Mensch hat eine Neigung die gerichtet ist auf andre Menschen, nicht, so ferne er die Arbeit und die Umstände anderer genießen kann, sondern unmittelbar auf andre Menschen als Objecte seines Genußes.’ (LE, 27:384.3–5)

\(^{42}\) ‘Person [...] eine absolute Einheit ist’.

\(^{43}\) ‘wenn der Mensch einen Theil von sich dem andern überläßt, so überläßt er sich ganz.’
the person is used as an object of enjoyment, and since this does not involve consideration of the higher ends of humanity (since what is at issue is merely the satisfaction of an animal impulse), the person becomes a thing. Because ‘each partner dishonors the humanity of the other’ (LE, 27:385.31–32)\textsuperscript{44}, the same happens to both parties. In this way, sexual desire turns both the self and the other into mere objects or things from which sensual pleasure is derived. Kant therefore holds that sexuality is morally degrading. One both makes oneself an object and fails to treat the humanity of the other as an end in itself, rendering that other a mere means. However, it must still be emphasised that, contra certain interpreters, it does not follow that Kant thinks ‘that by its very nature sexuality is bad’ (Singer 2009, p. 377). For Kant, the sexual impulse remains predisposed to the good. In The Metaphysics of Morals, the proper natural end of the sexual impulse is even more crucial than self-preservation. It is ‘an end even more important than that of love of life itself, since it aims at the preservation of the whole species and not only of the individual.’ (MM, 6:425.3–5)\textsuperscript{45}

From the perspective of love, however, what is most important in this context is that throughout his writings Kant holds that the sexual impulse can unite with neighbourly, other-regarding love: ‘The sexual inclination can admittedly be combined with love of human beings, and then it also carries with it the aims of the latter’ (LE, 27:384.34–36)\textsuperscript{46}. Interpreted in the light of Kant’s later discussions of love of human beings [Menschenliebe], the love in the above quotation from the Collins notes on ethics is most likely the rational love of benevolence as found in the general division of love and developed as practical love in the ‘Doctrine of Virtue’. It is active rational benevolence by which one adopts the ends of another as one’s own. The roots of this idea trace back to the precritical ‘Observations’, which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter: ‘the more sublime a cast of mind is, the more inclined it also is to place the greatest goal of its efforts in the satisfaction of a beloved object, and on the other side the more beautiful it is, the more does it seek to respond to this effort with complaisance.’ (2:242.18–22)\textsuperscript{47} It is not the case that Kant held a cynical view concerning the possibility of moral sexuality. The sexual end of humanity is ‘to preserve the spe-

\textsuperscript{44} ‘einer entehrt des andern seine Menschheit’.

\textsuperscript{45} ‘Zweck der Natur [...] noch wichtiger, als selbst der der Liebe zum Leben ist, weil dieser nur auf Erhaltung des Individuum, jener aber auf die der ganzen Species abzielt.’

\textsuperscript{46} ‘Die Geschlechts-Neigung kann zwar mit der Menschenliebe verbunden warden, und denn führt sie auch die Absichten der Menschenliebe mit sich’. Translation modified.

\textsuperscript{47} ‘so ist eine Gemüthsart, je erhabener sie ist, auch um desto geneigter die größte Absicht der Bemühungen in der Zufriedenheit eines geliebten Gegenstandes zu setzen, und andererseits je schöner sie ist, desto mehr sucht sie durch Gefälligkeit diese Bemühung zu erweidern.’
cies without forfeiture of the person’ (LE, 27:391.23–24). The aim of this resultant, broader notion of sexual love is thus not only procreation or sensible pleasure but also the happiness of the other human being. This point is confirmed in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, where sexual inclination is distinct from, but may unite with, moral love: ‘this ardor has nothing in common with moral love properly speaking, though it can enter into close union with it under the limiting conditions of practical reason’. (MM, 6:426.29–32) The properly moral love of *The Metaphysics of Morals* is at least the practical love of benevolence, but it might also refer to intellectual love of delight, the attributes of which I will elaborate on in the chapter on love of neighbour. For Kant, the way sexual inclination and moral love can be united is through marriage. In other words, marriage occasions the transition from narrow to broad sexual love.

It seems that the moral love Kant is speaking about is really a husband’s love for his wife; Kant never explicitly considers wives as loving their husbands in the moral-practical sense of active rational benevolence. Furthermore, as feminist scholars like Hannelore Schröder (1997) have argued, there do seem to be restrictions to women’s moral personhood that become apparent in the context of marriage. The most charitable recent interpretation of Kantian marriage in this regard, by Mari Mikkola, asserts that Kant’s ‘entire account of marriage is aimed at safeguarding women so that they are not reduced from persons to things.’ (Mikkola 2011, p. 106) There is much to be said for Mikkola’s view. As already noted, as such, human heterosexuality is directed only at the use of the sexual attributes or the sexual organs of the other human being, but since Kant views persons as essentially indivisible wholes, he thinks that the use of the sexual organs implies the use of the whole person (LE, 27:387–388). As constitutive, rudimentary parts of one’s nature on the animal level, sexual organs are essential components of one’s overall personhood. The justification of their use in marriage relies on the condition that both parties acquire the lifelong possession of (or right to use) the sexual attributes of the other. Because use of the sexual attributes implies use of the whole person, a default consequence of marriage is that all property rights that the spouses have prior to marriage become correspondingly mutual (even though the spouses may decide otherwise with a separate contract) (LE, 27:639–640). In line with the egalitarian foundations of his mature moral philosophy, Kant rejects polygamy, concubinage, and morganatic marriage on the grounds that these arrangements place women in an inferior po-

48 ‘die Erhaltung der Arten ohne Wegwerfung seiner Person’.
49 ‘das Brünstigsein hat mit der moralischen Liebe eigentlich nichts gemein, wiewohl sie mit der letzteren, wenn die praktische Vernunft mit ihren einschränkenden Bedingungen hinzu kommt, in enge Verbindung treten kann.’
sition: in polygamy, wives possess only a fraction of the husband; in concubinage, only the prostitute is possessed; and in morganatic marriage, property rights remain unfairly on one side (generally that of the man). (MM, 6:278–279) These moral and legal restrictions on the sexual contract clearly support Mikkola’s view, or at least the view that Kant is not insensitive to the protection of the personhood of women and their rights (see also Korsgaard 1996, p. 195). It is the mutuality of possession in marriage that supposedly secures the personhood of the parties: ‘while one person is acquired by the other as if it were a thing, the one who is acquired acquires the other in turn; for in this way each claims itself and restores its personality.’ (MM, 6:278.10–13)⁵⁰ The basic set-up of marriage right thus clearly assumes the personhood of both sexes.

With this said, the status of women’s personhood in Kantian marriage is more ambiguous than Mikkola’s proposition implies. A closer look at Kant’s doctrine supports a less charitable view. What we are dealing with is rather a nominally equal arrangement that constitutes what Jane Kneller aptly calls an ‘illusion of equality’ (Kneller 2006, p. 468). The relevant paragraphs in the ‘Doctrine of Right’ [Rechtslehre] suggest that even though possession is mutual and equal in marriage, it is really the men who possess the women. First of all, in the opening clause regarding this question, Kant unambiguously declares that ‘a man acquires a wife’ (MM, 6:277.3–4)⁵¹. The point about possession’s being mutual appears only later, as if justifying the first clause. Further, in response to the immediate criticism launched against his views (see La Vopa 2005, pp. 8–9; Rauscher 2012, ch. 5), Kant objects that ‘if I say “my wife”, this signifies a special, namely rightful, relation of the possessor to an object as a thing (even though the object is also a person).’ (MM, 6:358.31–33)⁵² The ‘wife’ is mentioned here just as an example, but it is telling that Kant does not think of constructing the relationship the other way around. Most importantly, Kant does seem to hold that in marriage, natural equality is not in conflict with the masterhood of the man:

If the question is therefore posed, whether it is also in conflict with the equality of the partners for the law to say of the husband’s relation to the wife, he is to be your master (he is

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⁵⁰ ‘indem die eine Person von der anderen gleich als Sache erworben wird, diese gegenseitig wiederum jene erwerbe; denn so gewinnt sie wiederum sich selbst und stellt ihre Persönlichkeit wieder her.’ Barbara Herman’s interpretation of this is eloquent: ‘Perhaps it goes this way: I give myself (or rights over me) and you give yourself; but since you have me, in giving yourself to me you give me back to me.’ (Herman 1993, p. 60)

⁵¹ ‘Der Mann er wirbt ein Weib’.

⁵² ‘Sage ich […]: mein Weib, so bedeutet dieses ein besonderes, nämlich rechtliches, Verhältniß des Besitzers zu einem Gegenstände (wenn es auch eine Person wäre), als Sache.’
the party to direct, she to obey): this cannot be regarded as conflicting with the natural equality of a couple if this dominance is based only on the natural superiority of the husband to the wife in his capacity to promote the common interest of the household [...]. (MM, 6:279.16 – 25)³³

In the *Anthropology*, as to who has supreme command in the household Kant writes: ‘there certainly can be only one who coordinates all transactions in accordance with their ends.’ (AP, 7:309.28 – 30)³⁴ Even though it seems possible that Kant leaves room for cases where the husband is not naturally superior in the sense required for legal dominance, Kant’s naturalistic vocabulary appears to support the notion that he does not view the legally subordinate status of women as merely contingent. This is corroborated by the essay on ‘Theory and Practice’³⁵ (1793), where the natural requirement for being a citizen (or eligible to vote) is not being a child or a woman (8:295.14 – 15). By implication, women are naturally not citizens (cf. Mikkola 2011, p. 101).³⁶ As Schröder puts it: ‘Men are both the owners of women and yet their equal partners.’ (Schröder 1997, p. 294) Kantian marriage is not just about safeguarding the personhood of women; it also affirms the dominance of men. It is precisely this that has led scholars to describe marriage as ‘a stress point’ (La Vopa 2005, p. 5) or as constituting a ‘deep tension’ (Kneller 2006, p. 469) in Kant’s ethical system. I agree with the critical voices that despite the nominal equality of the marital relationship, there is an inconsistency or insoluble tension between the universalistic notion of personal autonomy and Kant’s *de facto* doctrine of women. For Kant, women are quasi-persons, subordinate to their husbands, and the publish-

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³³ ‘Wenn daher die Frage ist: ob es auch der Gleichheit der Verehlichten als solcher widerstreite, wenn das Gesetz von dem Manne in Verhältniß auf das Weib sagt: er soll dein Herr (er der befehlende, sie der gehorchende Theil) sein, so kann dieses nicht als der natürlichen Gleichheit eines Menschenpaares widerstreitend angesehen werden, wenn dieser Herrschaft nur die natürliche Überlegenheit des Vermögens des Mannes über das weibliche in Bewirkung des gemeinschaftlichen Interesse des Hauswesens [...] zum Grunde liegt’.

³⁴ ‘denn nur Einer kann es doch sein, der alle Geschäfte in einen mit dieses seinen Zwecken übereinstimmenden Zusammenhang bringt.’ Translation modified. The Louden translation speaks of a single end, whereas the German is in the plural. The syntax implies that the ends might be ‘his’ [Einer], but it’s also possible that the *seinen* refers back to the ‘household’ [Haus] mentioned in the previous sentence, and I’ve tried to preserve this ambiguity. It is unclear to me what the function of the *dieses* in the construction is.

³⁵ ‘Über den Gemeinspruch: Das mag in der Theorie richtig sein, taugt aber nicht für die Praxis’.

³⁶ In the Vigilantius notes, however, the wife’s belonging to the husband in servitude ‘is due merely to her lesser ability to provide for herself’ (LE 27:642.20 – 21) / ‘so rührt dies blos von deren Schwäche, sich selbst zu erhalten, her’.
ed evidence would seem to suggest that he viewed this not as a contingent fact but as natural.

2.2.3 The Teleology of Sexual Love

To conclude the argument of this chapter, especially regarding the distinction between narrow and broad sexual love, I turn finally to the question of teleology. As I noted in the beginning, in the *Religion* Kant holds that the non-rational animal impulse of sex (narrow sexual love) is somehow predisposed to the good. But what does this mean? How is sexual love predisposed to the good, and what is the status of sex difference in this respect?

There are basically three ways to understand what Kant might mean by ‘good’ here. It might mean the moral good, it might mean the physical good as sensible happiness, or both. With all its dangers in terms of sensible happiness, sexuality can be viewed as being conducive to the physical good to the extent that it produces the strongest possible sensible pleasure in an object. The context in the *Religion*, however, suggests that Kant is talking about the moral good, or good in both senses (see ch. 1.1). But how can the crude physical impulse of sexuality be a predisposition [*Anlage*] to moral goodness? I think there are two possible answers to this question. First, we can take a weak notion of *Anlage* and hold that the impulse is predisposed to the moral good merely in the sense that it is a necessary condition of the continued existence of the species. The sexual impulse works to preserve the species, and in this sense it enables moral progress in the long term. On the other hand, we may take a stronger notion and suggest that there is something in the sexual impulse that, despite its non-moral character, is still somehow conducive to moral goodness, perhaps in the sense that it serves to occasion moral love between the sexes. In other words, narrow sexual love is predisposed to the good in the sense that we may judge that it leads to broad sexual love.

Most likely, all of the above is the case, even though Kant does not elaborate on the connection between sexuality and the good in much detail. In this respect, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) is a key source.⁵⁷ In

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⁵⁷ For scholars seeking a charitable interpretation of Kant’s views on sexuality or sexual difference, one method is to reject or ‘bracket’ the anthropological remarks altogether, as they do seem to conflict with Kant’s mature moral universalism. This is the strategy taken, for instance, by Mikkola (2011, p. 105). But most of what Kant says about sexual difference is actually contained in the anthropological discussions, and if this evidence is ruled out there is not much left to interpret. Kant did teach an anthropology course every winter for twenty years (so it is
the chapter ‘On the Highest Physical Good’ in the *Anthropology*, sexual love is associated with progress towards species-level happiness in the physical sense. There, love of life (self-preservation) and sexual love represent God’s ‘reason [...] that provides generally for the highest physical good’ (AP, 7:279.29 – 30)\(^{58}\), irrespective of human reason. I believe the passage is a remnant of an earlier period in Kant’s philosophy, where he had not yet worked out the critical notion of teleological judgment. The statement regarding God’s role seems too strong in the light of the third *Critique* (see C3, 5:447 ff.; see also my ch. 1.1), but the point must at least be that love of life and sexual love provide the species with sensuous happiness. In the same passage, however, Kant seems to go slightly further, connecting sexual love and cultural progress:

> For by means of the general mixing of the sexes, the life of our species endowed with reason is *progressively* maintained, despite the fact that this species intentionally works toward its own destruction (by war). Nevertheless, this does not prevent rational creatures, who grow constantly in culture even in the midst of war, from representing unequivocally the prospect of a state of happiness for the human race in future centuries, a state which will never again regress. (AP, 7:276.33 – 277.4)\(^{59}\)

We know from Kant’s philosophy of history that the kind of progress described above must involve a moral element and that, in fact, the proposition of cultural progress cannot even be understood as a merely descriptive prediction of how things will work out. ‘The prospect of a state of happiness’ is a regulative ideal, approximation to which requires moral striving on the part of human agents. Kant is not naïve about progress. It is of course possible to provide a clearly a part of his thinking). He also authorised the publication of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, which was put together from his own notes and for which he also wrote a preface – even if his mental powers were already weakening at that time. Because of this, and because we can follow the development of Kant’s anthropology through the lecture notes of the 1770s and 1780s, I take it that its published form is a real source and ought not to be bracketed off, at least when one’s goals are exegetical. The *Anthropology* does of course contain a lot of material that we would call *precritical*, but then the proper approach is to read it cautiously, together with other sources, when seeking an overall interpretation of Kant’s position on a given question.

\(^{58}\) ‘das physische Weltbeste allgemein besorgende Vernunft’.

\(^{59}\) ‘da dann durch Vermischung der Geschlechter im Ganzen das Leben unserer mit Vernunft begabten Gattung *fortschreitend* erhalten wird, unerachtet diese absichtlich an ihrer eigenen Zerstörung ( durch Kriege) arbeitet; welche doch die immer an Cultur wachsenden vernünftigen Geschöpfe selbst mitten in Kriegen nicht hindert, dem Menschengeschlecht in kommenden Jahrhunderten einen Glückseligkeitszustand, der nicht mehr rückgängig sein wird, im Prospect unzweideutig vorzustellen.’
weak interpretation of the passage: sexual love is merely the necessary enabling condition for any kind of future for the human species. We may, however, be reminded of the passage in ‘Conjectural Beginning’ (8:113.7–11), where animal desire gives rise to a higher kind of love, which in turn brings about a general appreciation of beauty, which again (as we know from the third Critique), is closely linked to morality or even functions as a bridge between nature and the moral good. A thorough investigation of the Anthropology reveals that even though we do not find an explicit link between sexuality and beauty, there is indeed a kind of quasi-moral aspect involved in the way sexual teleology is discussed.

In the chapter on ‘The Character of the Sexes’ [Der Charakter des Geschlechts], Kant assigns a specific teleological role to women, and only women, in the moral progress of the species. Kant holds that if one wishes to characterise women or their role in species-level progress, one must rely on considerations of natural teleology rather than considerations of morality or virtue: ‘One can only come to the characterization of this sex if one uses as one’s principle not what we make our end, but what nature’s end was in establishing womankind’ (AP, 7:305.29–32)60. Nature’s purpose or end [Zweck], which Kant also describes in terms of nature’s wisdom [Weisheit] concerning womankind, is twofold: ‘(1) the preservation of the species, [and] (2) the cultivation of society and its refinement by womankind.’ (AP, 7:305.35–306.2)61 The first purpose is familiar from the context of narrow sexual love. Given this purpose, nature instils in women a fear that something will happen to the foetuses they carry in their wombs. Thus the first purpose makes women seek male protection out of fear of physical injury. The second purpose assigns women a place in the moral development of men. Kant thinks that the sexual union generally requires that each partner be in some way superior to the other – otherwise, the self-love of each would bring about mere ‘squabbling’ [Zank] (AP, 7:303.14–19).62 While men are superior in physical strength and economic status, women rule men through controlling male desire by demands of ‘gentle and courteous treatment’ (AP, 7:306.14)63.

60 ‘Man kann nur dadurch, daß man, nicht was wir uns zum Zweck machen, sondern was Zweck der Natur bei Einrichtung der Weiblichkeit war, als Princip braucht, zu der Charakteristik dieses Geschlechts gelangen’.
61 ‘1. die Erhaltung der Art, 2. die Cultur der Gesellschaft und Verfeinerung derselben durch die Weiblichkeit.’
62 What this boils down to is characterised by Kant in terms of a distinction between dominating [herrschen] and governing [regieren]. According to Kant, ‘inclination dominates, and understanding governs’ (AP, 7:309.32–33) / ‘die Neigung herrscht, und der Verstand regiert.’ The wife dominates the household, but only insofar as the governing husband approves.
63 ‘sanfte, höfliche Begegnung’.
Women therefore lead [bringen] men, ‘if not to morality itself, to that which is its cloak, moral decency, which is the preparation for morality and its recommendation.’ (AP, 7:306.16 – 18)

It is unclear what exactly this means, but the idea is probably that because women are equipped with ‘finer feelings [...] of sociability and propriety’ and tend to express ‘modesty’ and ‘eloquence’ in comparison with men (AP, 7:306.10 – 11), men are more prone to adopt behavioural patterns appropriate to these kinds of ‘feminine’ traits when associating with women within various social contexts.

In his recent criticism of Kant’s sexual teleology, Inder Marwah suggests that Kant’s teleological view of sex difference ‘requires women to adopt an explicitly non-moral character’ and that women are therefore reduced ‘to the status of means’ in the moral development of humanity. (Marwah 2013, p. 559) The first question to ask is of course: if women are reduced to means for the moral development of the species, who or what is using them as means? Possible answers to this question include men as individuals, men as a group of individuals, and nature itself. The context suggests that, since the natural purposes here are not about what ‘we make our end’, the ‘agent’ responsible for using women as means can only be ‘nature’. Regardless of the stance one takes toward this question, I do think there is a sense in which Marwah is correct. First, the teleological role of women is primarily a supportive function: by protecting and nurturing children, women promote the physical existence of the species. Second, through the procreative sexual bond, women serve to make men more moral. It is telling, though, that the role seems to be only preparative: real morality is something men must accomplish for themselves. There is no clear prescription or teleological judgment in Kant to the effect that women should or will attain a proper moral status, even though Kant does not seem to suggest that they in principle lack the requisite rational structures.

In the teleology of sexual love, women’s

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64 ‘wenn gleich dadurch eben nicht zur Moralität selbst, doch zu dem, was ihr Kleid ist, dem gesitteten Anstande, der zu jener die Vorbereitung und Empfehlung ist’. The Mrongovius notes on anthropology make the same point more bluntly: ‘The female sex is for the cultivation of the male sex’ (LA, 25:1394.12 – 13) / ‘Das weibliche Geschlecht ist zur Cultur des männlichen’.

65 ‘die feineren Empfindungen [...] der Geselligkeit und Wohlanständigkeit’ / ‘Sittsamkeit’ / ‘Bebedtheit’. Note how the word feinere carries with it an allusion to the ‘finer feelings’ of beauty and sublimity in the early ‘Observations’.

66 I thank Alix Cohen for posing this question to me.

67 Admittedly, the evidence in this area is ambiguous and inconclusive. Kant doubts women’s capacity for principles (2:232.2 – 3; LA, 25:722.23 – 25) but also views them as being capable of morality (LA, 25:705.16 – 27) and recognising moral worth (C2, 5:153.19 – 23.). In the essay ‘An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment’ [Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung] (1784), we can plausibly read Kant as saying that ‘the entire fair sex’ [das ganze schöne Ges-
ends are subordinate to the moral progress of men. In this sense of sexual teleology, women are means.

But are women mere means? Did Kant view them as ‘natural serfs or animals’, as Schröder suggests (1997, p. 296)? Or did he see them as belonging to humanity’s moral development ‘in the worst sense of the word’, as Marwah proposes (2013, p. 564)? In this chapter, I have argued that if the notion of sexual love is accounted for in the broad sense, the picture of Kantian sexual relations is much less grim than commonly thought. From the precritical ‘Observations’ up until the final published version of the Anthropology, Kant maintains that if there is to be marital love in the broadest, proper meaning, it is the happiness of the wife that the husband must make his principal aim. The earlier works make the same point by making use of the concept of the ‘finer feeling’ of love of beauty. From this perspective, to love the beautiful, be it in woman or non-human nature, is to experience non-instrumental delight [Wohlgefallen], which prepares one for virtue. The comprehensive notion of teleology, which includes the highest good as the moral happiness of rational creatures, must also include the happiness of both men and women. The highest good cannot involve the misery of either sex. In the Mrongovius notes on anthropology, for instance, we encounter the statement: ‘Nature wanted the happiness of both sexes.’ (LA, 25:1392.24) And if women are to participate in happiness, they must also be capable of virtue (but Kant never directly addresses this point). The Anthropology confirms that women’s happiness is principally achieved via their husbands’ making their happiness their primary aim: ‘The husband’s behavior must show that to him the welfare of his wife is closest to his heart.’ (AP, 7:309.33–310.1) This clearly includes the general principle of practical love [Liebe des Wohlwollens] on the part of the husband: the husband must adopt his wife’s ends as his own. Therein lies the teleological function of broad sexual love: it aims at the happiness of women. Even though Kant does give women a subordinate role in his sexual teleology, the broader notion of love that Kant consistently insists on ensures that women are not mere means but also ends in themselves.

chlecht] is in a state of ‘self-incurred minority’ [selbst verschuldete Unmündigkeit], which implies that in principle they might in the future mature and come to use their own understanding without external direction (8:35). I thank Martin Sticker for convincing me of this last point over the course of several informal discussions.

68 ‘Die Natur hat die Glückseeligkeit beyd Geschlechts gewollt.’

69 I thank Jens Timmermann for bringing this to my attention.

70 ‘Das Betragen des Ehemanns muß zeigen: daß ihm das Wohl seiner Frau vor allem anderen am Herzen liege.’
In this way, the transition from morally problematic narrow sexual love to broad sexual love, which acknowledges and promotes the happiness of women, can also be seen to provide what Langton calls ‘an escape from solipsism’ (Langton 2009, p. 321), even if, in this case, only from a male perspective. Perhaps broad sexual love could be generalised so that it involves a reciprocal and equal relationship of love and respect between the spouses (or lovers in general), and the relationship based on sexual love would then actually be a relationship of friendship. Ideas along these lines have been presented in the literature, and writers like Korsgaard and Langton have rightly pointed out the similarity between some of Kant’s discussions of sexual love and friendship in the Collins notes, in terms of the reciprocity of ‘self-surrender and retrieval’ (Korsgaard 1996, p. 195; see Langton 2009, pp. 319, 363). In both marriage and friendship, one yields oneself to the other and gets oneself back through the other (LE, 27:388.23–37; cf. 27:423.37–424.6). As Langton shows (2009, p. 320), in his correspondence Kant speaks of both marital love and love in friendship as assuming ‘the same mutual respect’, writing that this virtuous love common to both ‘wants to communicate itself completely’ (11:331.31–332.2).

On the other hand, Denis (2001b) has listed six ways in which marriage and friendship differ from each other in Kant: 1) the basis of marriage is more sensuous and less intellectual than that of (moral) friendship; 2) marriage requires a relation of dominance in which husbands are ultimately superior to their wives; 3) women are generally inferior to men; 4) because of this, reciprocity in mutual disclosure is less likely between husband and wife than between friends (and women can’t really keep secrets); 5) the proper distance required for respect is unlikely in marriage; and 6) friendship is more loving than marriage. (Denis 2001b, pp. 13–16) Denis’s aim is to revise Kantian marriage into a ‘moral marriage’ on the basis of a Kantian model of friendship, and for the most part her characterisation of Kantian marriage is accurate. Yet her sixth point, the point about love, paints a picture of Kantian marriage nearly exclusively in terms of narrow sexual love, and while she acknowledges that ‘marriage promises partners some measure of practical love’ (Denis 2001b, p. 16), she mostly neglects the passages on which my notion of broad sexual love is based. Friendship is indeed not the same as sexual love or marriage, and my aim here is not to venture beyond Kant but merely to do him justice. From this per-

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71 ‘gleiche gegenseitige Achtung’ / ‘will sich gänzlich mittheilen.’ For a dramatic story about the correspondence between Kant and Maria von Herbert, which also illuminates the relationship between various aspects of Kant’s life and his philosophy, see Langton’s ‘Duty and Desolation’ (in Langton 2009, pp. 197–222).

72 See AP, 7:304.1–2.
perspective, broad sexual love may provide us with further resources when it comes to seeing the ‘optimistic’ Kant described by Langton (Langton 2009, p. 321). This optimism is missing from Denis’s characterisation of Kant’s (non-revised) account of love in marriage. However, if we are to generalise the notion of broad sexual love such that it operates symmetrically between the sexes, the basic premise we would need to add to Kant’s framework (in a much more powerful way than he does) is that women and men are equal. Only then would something like ‘sexual friendship’ be possible in Kantian terms. But this is beyond the scope of my present work.

It is true that Kant’s views on women are generally not very enlightened, even by the standards of his day. It is particularly true that Kant was opposed to women’s higher education, and that the role he saw for women was a domestic one. The problem was, and is, that he could not see that women’s happiness might reside outside the domestic sphere, in the public – in practicing science or striving for moral self-perfection based on principles. The distinction I have drawn between narrow and broad sexual love reveals a Kant who is by no means a feminist but whose views on sexuality are not as cynical or negative as is often thought, and who clearly reserves a place for loving morality and loving affection within the sexual sphere. The ascent of sexual love can thus be said to mark a transition from narrow to broad sexual love, from the merely natural to the natural-moral. The Mrongovius lectures on anthropology summarise this idea:

as long as it [sexual inclination] is brutal and aims merely at enjoyment, it is only animal instinct. – But as soon as it is connected to benevolence and aims at the happiness of the other, it becomes genuine love. It must not be like love of roast beef, which one devours. (LA, 25:1361.4–8)\(^\text{73}\)

\(^{73}\) ‘sie ist nur thierischer Instinkt so lange sie brutal ist und bloß auf den Genuß geht – Sobald sie aber mit Wohlwollen verbunden ist und auf die Glückseeligkeit des andern geht; so wird sie eigentliche Liebe. Sie muß nicht sein wie Liebe zum RinderBraten den man destuirt’.  

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2.2 Narrow and Broad Sexual Love