

## About LGBTQ+

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There are men and women whose attraction is to the same sex, who just get on with their lives, often with the support of others of the same disposition, and in many cases living chastely. This essay is not about them. Rather, it is about those who have an ideological agenda. Yet, in either case, people who identify as LGBTQ+ are owed the respect that is due to everyone on the basis of being human beings. So, I ask: is it in their best interests to define themselves by their sexual variations?

There are those who try to persuade us all that gender is only a “social construct”; that it is independent of biological sexuality; that chromosomal variations mean there are more than two sexes; that there are genders in between male and female; that gender can be “fluid” and changeable, etc. These claims are sometimes made for the well-intentioned purpose of safeguarding the health and well-being of young people experiencing unease or dissatisfaction with their gender (dysphoria), and a praiseworthy desire to assure them that they are OK. In this sense, at least, these claims are agenda-driven.

But it can also be useful to look to what the human sciences are generally agreed on: that some young people do experience dysphoria; that this is more often temporary and that after puberty most of them are comfortable identifying with their biological sex; that sexual differentiation is reinforced during growing-up years through the experience of male-female socialising; that a more deep-seated attachment to the same sex is also a reality for some; that this can result from genetic and hormonal factors even before birth, or from trauma (sometimes during very early childhood); that the first sexual experience can have a deep and lasting impact on one’s orientation; that there are other conditions that originate very early – even before birth – including heart defects, spina bifida, Down syndrome, brain damage (due to a mother’s drug or alcohol intake), dyslexia, autism, allergies, etc. It is a blessing that medical science is able to correct some of these, sometimes even while the child is still in the womb.

So, we can acknowledge that some conditions are “on a spectrum”, and that some conditions originate from genetic or hormonal variations. But it is not necessary to affirm that all these conditions are somehow equal in order to assure people they are OK – people are already OK because their dignity, worth and equality is based on the simple fact of being a human being, not on any other characteristics.

An incident during a visit to the Vatican by the British comedian Stephen Amos illustrates the point: he had been concerned that the Pope might not accept him because he was gay. He said to Pope Francis: “So me coming on this pilgrimage, being non-religious and looking for answers and faith; but as a gay man I don’t feel really accepted”. The Pope responded that placing more importance on being gay than on being human was a mistake. “We are all human beings and have dignity. Whoever we are, and however we live, we don’t lose our dignity as human beings.” Amos said he was “blindsided” by the Pope’s response; “and so I was in full respect of the man.”

In other words, people are not defined by any of their characteristics or conditions or orientations. They are first and above all else human beings, and that is the basis of their worth and dignity – not the presence or absence of various conditions.

The real problem derives from society losing sight of this basis of human dignity and equality. Prenatal screening is done often with a view to terminating the life of children who have disabilities or defects before they are born. A society that does that no longer regards the status of being a human

being as paramount; it can be overridden by lesser considerations. Such a society robs itself of the very basis on which the absolute equality and worth of every person depends – regardless of other conditions and variations.

Consequently, because the paramount dignity of being human has been eclipsed, and in order to establish the equal dignity and equality of people who happen to be LGBT, activists claim equality for the different sexual and gender variations. But that agenda can be self-defeating and lead to some very silly claims: eg that “all are born perfect” (yeah, right); that binary gender is “an invention of recent years” – (so what were the male and female pronouns referring to all those hundreds of years before that and probably for as long as there has been language?) Do we honour what is properly distinctive of feminine identity (or male identity), by thinning identity out into something, somewhere on a spectrum, not necessarily related to sexual identity, or something that we create for ourselves?

Respectful, intelligent discussion on this is often disrupted by confusion over what is “being judged”. It is not for us to judge other people, but we may, and sometimes must, judge others’ actions. For example, to say that “rape is wrong” is a judgment! Nor is it enough to say that sexual activities only need to be “consensual and safe”. After all, that could be true of promiscuity and marriage infidelity.

Sooner or later, we need to look to sexuality’s purpose and meaning. This leads us to recognise two purposes that are entwined and come together uniquely in marriage: they are sexuality’s potential for deeply nurturing the love of two people and in a way that is also designed to generate new life as the fruit of their love. And because new life needs to be protected and nurtured, the child’s parents need to be in a relationship that is stable, committed and faithful. Psychologists also speak of children’s need to experience both maternal and paternal love.

Removed from its context, sexuality is removed from its meaning, and removed from its meaning, ultimately anything goes.

We need not be naïve about attempts to give sexuality different meanings. There have been strong, organized and determined cultural movements whose agenda has been to “liberate” sexuality from all previous restraints. We look back incredulously to the 1960’s through 1990’s when some activists described themselves as ‘victims’ of harsh laws aimed at preventing “man-boy love”; and children as ‘victims’ because harsh parents didn’t want their children to have that kind of loving care!! “Inter-generational sex” and “man-boy love’ were euphemisms intended to make acceptable what society calls pederasty. Even though by the 1990’s those movements had mostly lost their credibility, the underlying ideologies have a way of re-surfacing.

Whatever one’s sexual orientation or gender, chastity is for the protection of all. Chastity is the virtue that applies self-respect, restraint and respect for others, to sexuality. Unchastity and self-indulgence can lead to violence – whether inside or outside of marriage – as the expression of unrestrained determination to get what one wants.

Modesty is the virtue that protects chastity. It is an aspect of care and respect for others – which is not at the forefront of people’s minds who are concerned mostly about their own rights – real or perceived.

As the basis for affirming the dignity and equality of everyone, there is no substitute for the simple fact of being a human being. Anything else that one happens to be, or not be, is no match as a basis for affirming the dignity and equality of all. So, it is the fundamental dignity of being human that needs to be affirmed, and not subordinated to any other consideration.