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LOVE IS LOVE, OR IS IT?

by Adam Tucker

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We constantly hear the mantra that love is love, but what exactly *is* love? Today, many think “love” means to affirm the beliefs, desires, and even behaviors of a given person. According to this view, one must validate and positively state that same-sex attraction, or one’s desire to become the opposite sex, are good in order truly to love someone with such desires. Therefore, those who do not positively state that such desires are good are accused of “hate speech,” “intolerance,” being “unloving,” or worse.

This idea is seen in the movement of various schools and businesses to qualify as “safe zones” for those of differing sexual desires and identities. According to Campus Pride, “safe zones” are needed because “LGBT students need to know who on campus is safe and supportive.”¹ Wesleyan University in Connecticut has a building called Open House to serve as “a safe space...[for] generating interest in a celebration of queer life from the social to the political to the academic.” In other words, being “safe” equals *affirmation* and *celebration*, affirmation equals love, and loving others is good.

But why should we think that love equals affirmation, and why is it good to love others in the first place? No doubt true hate speech exists, and it is an evil thing. But without an objective (i.e., true for all people regardless of one’s opinion or feelings) standard of what constitutes good, there is no way truly to say that “hate speech,” or anything else, is actually evil. Classically understood, *good* is that which fulfills the end/purpose of some *thing* according to its nature (i.e., what some thing is). A thing is good to the extent that it is perfect, and a thing is perfect to the extent that it lacks nothing it should have according to its nature (i.e., a good eye is one that sees well since an eye is the kind of thing directed toward seeing). Goodness becomes the moral type because we are rational beings capable of knowing what constitutes our good, and we choose to pursue what is actually good for us or not.

Why should we be rational, and thus moral? Because like our other faculties, our intellect and will are directed toward their own ends, namely the pursuit and attainment of the true and the good respectively. To disagree with this basic point (i.e., saying it is false) is actually to confirm it, since you would be demonstrating the fact that you only want to believe what is true. From this view of reality, one can reason to the fact that it is objectively good to respect all people and not interfere with their rights entailed by these same arguments.

This is the *natural law* view of morality argued for by such thinkers as Thomas Aquinas and Martin Luther King, Jr. A large portion of our culture (including the church), however, rejects the view that there is such a thing as *human nature* which we all share. Such a view ultimately elevates man's will above reality and removes any firm foundation from which to form moral judgments, ultimately ending in relativism (i.e., the good is whatever an individual person desires it to be).² If such a view is true, then there is nothing *actually* wrong with hate speech, bigotry, or intolerance. But as I would argue, we *do* share a human nature in common, and we *can* know it is objectively good to love others. But what exactly is love?

Love cannot simply mean affirming someone's beliefs, desires, or behaviors, since that would lead to absurdity. Moreover, those holding such a view think it is wrong to affirm things they deem objectively evil, such as hate speech. Thus, they either do not think it is good to love everyone (which is contrary to what they say) or they do not actually believe what they are saying when it comes to defining what love is.

Love certainly *involves* affirmation, but what exactly should one affirm? Ultimately, love is to will the good of another, hence, one should only affirm the good. What is the good? As has been said, it is that which fulfills the ends/purposes of some thing according to its nature. One's feelings about the good can be wrong, and everyone has desires on which they ought not act. One's will should follow his intellect, and his emotions should be based on what he knows. He can know what the good of human sexuality, for example, is, and he should therefore pursue that good and help others do the same.

Does this understanding of love lead others to kill or harm themselves due to a lack of affirmation of their disordered desires? There is *nothing* that should drive people to the point of harming themselves. True bullying, abuse, and other injurious behaviors are always wrong. There are usually other factors co-occurring, however, that would cause people to harm themselves even if that is manifested in one particular feeling or behavior. In fact, Dr. Paul McHugh, psychiatrist-in-chief at John Hopkins, stopped performing sex-change operations years ago because most of his patients still suffered from the same social and emotional problems they had preoperatively.³

Furthermore, people are *not* their desires, and the reason for those desires makes no difference as to their goodness or badness. It is the planting of the false seeds of thinking that people are merely what they desire, and that those who do not affirm those desires do not love and accept the one with those desires as a valuable person, that is leading people to harm themselves.

Not only are humans not their desires, they are also not merely their bodies. A human being is a body/soul composite creating a complete person, and to deny the truth of one's body or the truth of one's rational soul would be to deny the truth of what makes a human a human. The reality is, if one has the body of a male, then he is by nature a man. The same holds true for females and female bodies. Thus, the good of one's sexual faculties as man or woman is determined by one's nature. The fact that some people desire the same sex and some people do not desire sex at all is completely irrelevant to what one is by nature. If one's feelings or desires do not match what he is by nature, then those feelings are simply misdirected and do not correspond to reality. For me to pretend that someone's misdirected feelings or desires do correspond to reality, when in fact they do not, is not to love that person or will his good. In fact, to pretend that his misdirected desires are good would be effectively to will his annihilation (willing him to be something he is not), but that would be hate, not love.

What about those born intersexed with no clear answer as to their sex? First, while those born truly intersexed make up about 0.018 percent of the population, they are still valuable and loved human beings.⁴ The fact that some people are born intersexed, and thus present a more complicated scenario regarding the good of their sexual faculties, does nothing to the argument laid forth any more than people born blind (or with no eyes at all) entails that we cannot know that the purpose of eyes, and thus what constitutes their good, is seeing. Generally speaking, truly intersexed individuals are genetically either male or female even when their physical characteristics are ambiguous.⁵ Hence, the problem in this case is an epistemological one (i.e., the ability of one to *know* the particular sex) rather than a metaphysical one (i.e., one *being* either male or female). Genetic disorders happen, but this does not mean that we should pretend that human beings do not exist as either male or female and ignore the fact that these genetic disorders truly are *disorders*.

Notice that this argumentation does not rely on quoting Bible verses. The truths above can be known by simply examining reality, and it gives us insight as to why God says what He does about human sexuality. As the One who sustains us in existence as the kind of things we are, God, being Goodness itself, can only ever will what is good for us. While one does not need to be a Christian in order to understand and accept the above argumentation, in the end, Christians do need to understand that all of their personal interactions with those whom they disagree should be true safe zones.

Believers should obviously not bully or hate any person for any reason, but should be willing the good of others and thus loving them. But our critics need to understand that love does not equal affirmation. A truly safe place is one where people genuinely love others, which means they will what is *actually* good for someone while speaking the truth in love. There is little doubt that those leading the “safe zones” initiative are fueled by compassion, but it is a misdirected love that promotes man’s will over reality. That is not safe, nor is it genuine love. — *Adam Tucker*

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NOTES

- 1 <https://www.campuspride.org/resources/the-importance-of-safe-zone/>.
- 2 Robert Reilly, *Making Gay Okay: How Rationalizing Homosexual Behavior Is Changing Everything* (Kindle Locations 783–84, 924). Kindle Edition.
- 3 Paul McHugh, “Transgender Surgery Isn’t the Solution,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 12, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/paul-mchugh-transgender-surgery-isnt-the-solution-1402615120>.
- 4 Leonard Sax, “How Common Is Intersex? A Response to Anne Fausto-Sterling,” *The Journal of Sex Research*, August 2002, http://homes.chass.utoronto.ca/~sousa/teach/PHL243-06.MAIN_files/20065_phl243h1f_archive/SAX-on-Intersex.pdf.
- 5 Ibid.