

Gay Marriage: An Argument for Discrimination

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The Importance of Discrimination

Last Wednesday's legal decision against Proposition 8 and in favour of same-sex marriage in California has been met with great joy by many, who herald it as a milestone for necessary civil liberties for homosexuals. Even a number of people I know who disagree with homosexual practice on moral grounds have voiced support for the ruling, seeing it as a victory for equal rights. I was disappointed by the news, though not in the least surprised.

Few cases are less likely to receive a charitable hearing than an argument for discrimination, but that is what I intend to provide here. There was a time when discrimination was not the dirty word that it is today, a time when it primarily denoted the ability to make wise judgments, discerning fine but significant distinctions. This usage is maintained when we speak of such things as a discriminating palate. Recent decades have seen the term fall into opprobrium. The fact that certain acts of discrimination between groups or classes of persons are unjustifiable and morally reprehensible has often led us to eschew acts of discrimination altogether.

The denial of gay marriage is an obvious case of discrimination. For most people, this is enough: where discrimination exists, it must be uprooted. However, not all discrimination is without justification; certain acts of discrimination are necessary for the health of society. People of differing sexes, sexual orientations, nationalities, cultures, classes, ages, and various sorts of relationships are not the same, and occasionally their differences are relevant and important bases for discriminating between them in certain matters. For instance, when it comes to most sports, practicing segregation on the basis of differences in potential levels of performance of men and women is hardly a case of unfair discrimination. In such a case it is fairly apparent that differences between men and women have bearing and require that we discriminate.

The Right Being Denied

In the case of gay marriage, the argument is often advanced that the traditional form of marriage discriminates against homosexuals by not permitting them to marry. Strictly speaking, this is not true. In this respect, homosexuals have no more or less rights when it comes to marriage than straight people do: everyone has the right to marry someone of the opposite sex, and no one has the right to marry someone of the same sex. It is argued that homosexuals are discriminated against by not being permitted to marry the spouse of their choice, or by not being permitted to form marriage unions between consenting partners. However, no one has the right to marry the person that they want, and a number of forms of marriage unions between consenting heterosexual partners are forbidden.

Of course, the grievance can be expressed in terms of homosexuals not generally having the right to a form of marriage union that conforms to their sexual orientation. The question is whether this is really a meaningful 'right' at all. Although traditional marriage does give heterosexuals the chance to enter into heterosexual relationships, it is far from clear that such rights categories provide us with an appropriate handle on the institution of marriage. As an institution, marriage is largely indifferent to the demands and the desires of the individuals within it. The requirements of the institution do not exist to bestow rights upon certain sets of individuals, or to deprive others sets of individuals of them. As an institution, the purposes that marriage serves go beyond the individuals who enter into the state. This is why marriage gives people a chance to transcend themselves and enter into something greater. The institution of marriage has never existed to conform itself to certain forms of relationships, but to conform certain forms of relationship to marriage.

Understandably, none of this will sound satisfactory to homosexuals who feel alienated and marginalized by society's primary institution. Marriage as it currently exists obviously forms a barrier to the normalization of homosexuality, and to the full integration of homosexuality into the society. We must question whether a form of marriage that is exclusive to heterosexuals is contrary to a just and inclusive society.

Various possible courses are open to homosexuals and others wishing to overcome this state of affairs. The first possible course is that of demonstrating that homosexual relationships are, in fact, conformable to the relationship of marriage and that discrimination against them is unfair and unjustifiable. The analogy of the ending of restrictions against interracial marriages is often appealed to in this context. The second possible course is that of openly arguing for the dismantling, either entirely or merely partially, of the institution of marriage, moving towards a post-marriage society, with new institutions. The third course would be that of formalizing the deinstitutionalization of marriage within our society, withdrawing the privileges that the state bestows upon married couples, among other things. Further courses include the establishment of new institutional forms to accommodate homosexual unions, alongside traditional marriage, but distinct from it.

The discrimination associated with marriage is less directed against certain classes of persons than it is against certain forms of relationships (even heterosexuals are unable to consummate a marriage by means of acts of sodomy), although this discrimination is obviously far more restrictive for certain classes of persons than for others. More strictly speaking, traditional marriage is a positive discrimination in favour of a particular form of relationship. Indirectly it discriminates for and against other things, but this is its fundamental discrimination. Rather than assuming that this positive discrimination is unjust, it behooves us to determine the grounds of the discrimination. Once we have recognized these grounds we should be able to establish whether or not differences between committed relationships between homosexual couples and opposite sex couples are a valid basis for discrimination between the two.

The Framing of the Debate and the Decay of Marriage as an Institution

At the outset it is worth making some comments about the way that this debate is generally framed. Arguments against gay marriage often invoke moral judgments against homosexual practice as prominent bases of their claims. Opposition to gay marriage is commonly perceived to arise from religious grounds or unveiled homophobia, and is generally presented as such by gay rights campaigners. Although there are undoubtedly religious arguments that are brought forward against gay marriage, as an extension to religious opposition to homosexual practice, there is no reason why opposition to gay marriage can't co-exist with support for homosexual practice. By portraying opposition to gay marriage as motivated by religious concerns (which are presented as a diaphanous veil for homophobia), proponents of gay marriage have a convenient way of discrediting the arguments of their opponents. Opposition to gay marriage can be presented as irrational and bigoted. However, there is a clear case to be made against homosexual marriage that doesn't invoke such things as religious prohibitions on homosexual practice.

Arguments in favour of gay marriage have tended to focus on the equality of homosexuals to heterosexuals, their right to social approval and recognition of their relationships, and their rights to the happiness and security that such relationships offer. Others point to the greater integration into the shared social project of marriage that gay marriage would afford, and the manner in which it would enable homosexual couples to participate in something greater than their own immediate relationship, including homosexuals as active members of the broader community.

The latter argument, it seems to me, is the strongest, precisely because it goes against the general tendency of the other arguments to present the *telos* of marriage almost exclusively in terms of the happiness and fulfillment of the partners within the relationship. That said, I believe that this article will demonstrate that even such a position cannot be justified.

Marriage is frequently presented by gay rights arguments as something that exists almost wholly for the sake of the partners within it, rather than for broader social purposes. This privatization of marriage hardly originated with the gay community; heterosexuals have increasingly understood their relationships as close personal relationships, whose parameters are set purely for the sake of the partners within the relationship, rather than for broader social purposes. The loss of traditional social norms and community expectations surrounding marriage has led to the weakening of the institution.

In many respects what we have been witnessing over the last few decades has been the gradual decay of marriage as an institution. As an institution, marriage is a social form which provides norms, social purposes, structure, and permanence to a relationship between two persons. As an institution it transcends the intentions of the individuals that enter into it, and provides standards for their behaviour. However, the understanding of marriage as an institution seems to be receding in a society where people regard the norms of marriage as increasingly flexible, the primary determinant being the desires of the partners. The institutional dimension of marriage hasn't disappeared, of course. However, it is taken far less seriously. It is exceedingly unlikely that the admission of gay marriage will entail a resurgence of the institutional character of marriage, even in a reconfigured form ([the level of incidence of open relationships among homosexual couples](#) is hardly going to strengthen the marital values of fidelity and monogamy, for instance).

In its place marriage is increasingly perceived as being founded on the love of the marriage partners for each other, within a relationship whose parameters are determined by their consent, and involving no greater social goals than those chosen by the partners. Marriage involves society's bestowal of its imprimatur upon such relationships. Given such an understanding of marriage, the fact that society would deny its imprimatur to homosexual relationships seems quite unfair.

Rather than seeing marriage in such a manner, I suggest that the perspective of marriage as an institution is crucial. By framing marriage as the social imprimatur upon a close personal and sexual relationship between two persons, the notion that granting marriage to homosexual couples would harm marriage in general can easily be presented as ludicrous. How can permitting Mike and Simon to get married harm the marriage of Lucy and Jake? However, when we regard marriage in institutional terms, and especially in terms of the broader social purposes that it fulfills, the reasoning becomes far more clearly apparent. Permitting Mike and Simon to marry is only possible within certain understandings of the institution of marriage, and such understandings of the institution of marriage can have long term influences upon the shape and success of the institution as a whole.

Rather than focusing upon the rights of individuals, therefore, the focus of my argument will be upon the demands of the institution of marriage and the reasons for those demands. The following are some of the most significant differences between heterosexual marriage unions and homosexual unions and the reasons why they justify discrimination between the two.

The Qualitative Difference Between Homosexual Sex and Marital Sex

Traditional marriage provides a secure, committed and loving framework for the sexual act by which society reproduces itself. No matter how loving and committed a homosexual relationship

may be, homosexual sex is necessarily sterile. The equation of a naturally sterile form of sexual relationship with a naturally procreative form of sexual relationship should be questioned, and especially when we are dealing with public recognition, celebration, and subsidization of such relationships.

Societies and governments generally incentivize and subsidize marriage in various ways. If procreation were removed from the equation, however, it is highly unlikely that marriage would receive the benefits that it does. Married people are not merely privileged over homosexuals in committed and non-committed relationships, but over other heterosexuals in non-married relationships, and over single people. Marriage isn't privileged in order to make married people feel better about themselves, but because marriage serves the social purposes of the conceiving and raising of children in a healthy manner.

Religious and civil definitions and restrictions on marriage have traditionally tended, to some degree or other, to limit the access of couples who cannot procreate to the institution of marriage. For instance, there is the general traditional requirement that marriage be consummated by penile-vaginal intercourse, other forms of sexual intercourse not being sufficient to consummate relationships. Refusal to consummate, an inability to consummate on account of impotence, or some other condition existing at the time of the marriage, can be grounds for annulment.

The fact that marriage is ordered towards procreation by both religious and civil traditions is crucially important for our understanding of why marriage has been privileged over other forms of relationships by society. While it is obviously true that not all heterosexual marriage partners are fertile (couples who marry in old age, for instance), there are important distinctions to be observed between such marriages and homosexual unions. In the case of homosexual partnerships, sterility is universal; in the case of heterosexual marriages, childlessness is the exception, rather than the norm.

Furthermore, in the case of heterosexual unions, even where infertility exists, the union can be consummated in an act of sexual union that is naturally apt for reproduction, even though, by reason of extrinsic factors, it may not prove fecund in that particular relationship. Penile-vaginal intercourse is integral to traditional definitions of marriage, precisely because it is the form of sexual intercourse that is apt for reproduction (in most religious and legal traditions, homosexual marriages could not be consummated, as only penile-vaginal intercourse is sufficient to consummate such a union). The significance of the act of penile-vaginal intercourse is not shared by other classes of sexual acts (primarily, but not merely on account of its association with procreation) and so committed relationships in which such intercourse cannot or does not occur do not have the same privileges.

The requirement of penile-vaginal intercourse for valid marriage will almost certainly scandalize advocates of homosexual marriage. At first glance it may appear arbitrary, or grossly and unfairly discriminatory. It rules out homosexual unions from consideration as marriages at the very outset, arguing that homosexual marriages may not merely be inadvisable or impermissible, but may actually be impossible (even where homosexual unions exist they cannot be consummated, and so must belong to a different class of relationships from that of marriage), and presents forms of homosexual intercourse as somehow inferior to heterosexual marital union. This cannot be denied: it does all of these things. However, it is neither arbitrary – the connection between penile-vaginal intercourse and procreation sets that form of sexual union apart from others – nor is it unfairly discriminatory – it discriminates, but the discrimination is on the basis of an extremely pertinent difference.

Sexual intercourse and marriage are obviously about much, much more than reproduction, but reproduction can never be removed from the picture. Penile-vaginal intercourse has generally been

regarded as a *sine qua non* for normal marital union, in large part on account of this connection. The act of penile-vaginal intercourse has a symbolic and practical significance arising from this connection (though also from the peculiar physical compatibility in difference that it manifests) that homosexual forms of intercourse could never have.

The arguments against homosexual marriage on the basis of the connection between heterosexual union and procreation are often dismissed on the basis of an appeal to the case of infertile couples. This is a rather extreme case of missing the forest for the trees. Using a comparison between the universal and intrinsically infertile state of homosexual relationships with the extrinsically infertile state of certain exceptional heterosexual relationships as a basis for including homosexuals in marriage is poor reasoning. The comparison should not be between exceptional cases of one form of relationship and the universal case in another form of relationship, but between the two differing forms of relationship themselves. While the differences may not be immediately apparent when we place carefully chosen individual cases alongside each other, once we compare the forms of relationship and the manner in which they function in society, the differences are strikingly apparent. The appeal to the case of infertile couples is a sleight of hand, used to distract the attention away from contrasting forms of relationships and their markedly different effects upon society. Granting benefits and a status to committed relationships that involve such intercourse that are denied to committed homosexual relationships is perfectly commonsensical.

The discrimination is between forms of sexual relationship – between a fertile form and a sterile form – rather than between sterile and fertile individuals. On top of the host of practical reasons why it would be extremely difficult to exclude infertile couples from marriage, the crucial detail is that the form of the relationship between infertile heterosexual couples and fertile couples is exactly the same (although the same is not true in the case of unconsummated marriages). The fact that acts of penile-vaginal intercourse do not always result in conception (and in the case of certain relationships never will) does not empty the form of sexual relationship of those aspects of its significance that derive from the connection between it and procreation. Even where infertility rules out the possibility of offspring, heterosexual marriages enshrine the centrality of this form of sexual act and of the union of a man and a woman to human society.

The institution of marriage is not about ensuring that every single marriage produces children, on that every act of intercourse could potentially result in conception, but about ensuring that the form of relationship is one that is apt for the conception and raising of children, in addition to serving the partners and society in other respects. To this end it upholds a form of relationship, rather than rigorously checking every couple entering into the state to ensure that they will effectively procreate within the form of the relationship. This form of relationship serves society on many levels, most notably in procreation and raising children. If marriage involved the requirement of prior fertility tests for couples, it would not merely be impractical, but would involve an intrusion upon the form of the relationship, potentially subordinating the form (which serves multiple purposes) to just one of its functions.

Marriage privileges a certain form of naturally fertile sexual union over forms that are essentially, inescapably, necessarily and intrinsically infertile. No number of appeals to exceptional cases can undermine this fundamental truth. Even if some were to claim that this reasoning cannot justify the inclusion of infertile couples in marriage – though their inclusion is quite justifiable – they are still left with the question of why society should give the same benefits and status to forms of sexual relationship that are intrinsically sterile that are given to forms of sexual relationship that are intrinsically procreative.

From a social perspective the subsidizing, incentivizing and general privileging of marriage would make considerably less sense if procreation were disconnected from sexual intercourse. At the heart

of the equation of heterosexual marriage with homosexual marriage is the implied claim that penile-vaginal intercourse is no more socially significant an act than anal or oral sex, for if such intercourse were socially significant to a degree that homosexual intercourse were not, the notion that there was no basis to discriminate between same sex and opposite sex couples when it came to the public social recognition of marriage would collapse.

The Public Nature of Heterosexual Marriage

The connection between the procreative character of the sexual union it enshrines and the public recognition of heterosexual marriage does not exist purely on account of the fact that procreation is necessary to society's survival. Procreation renders heterosexual intercourse a public matter. As [Robert Jenson remarks](#), 'however private the act of sexual union may indeed be, its existence and character is vital public information.... [T]he union of man and woman is the community on which all community depends.' The same does not hold in the case of homosexual intercourse. Although lovers of any sexual persuasion will generally and quite naturally want to express their love for each other publicly, homosexual relationships simply do not have the public import that heterosexual relationships do.

The connection of heterosexual intercourse with procreation renders the existence of a sexual relationship between heterosexual partners a matter of public significance. The public recognition and celebration of the sexual character of the relationship between a married couple needs to be regarded in this light. Apart from gossip, prurient interest, and perhaps understanding the surface dynamics of relationships in which the partners are involved, why should society have an interest in the private act of sexual union that occurs between a couple? Why should the occurrence of this private sexual union be regarded as so important to the public recognition of the relationship that public recognition can frequently be withdrawn or denied in its absence? Precisely because the most private act of heterosexual marital union is an act which has potential consequences that are inescapably public.

As Jenson observed, the private union between a man and a woman is the union that lies at the source of all society. The private union of heterosexual marriage is publicly acknowledged chiefly because it is the means by which a new public will be formed. While discrete instances of infertile relationships obviously exist, the fact remains that the act of heterosexual intercourse is responsible for the conception of virtually every human being that has ever lived and homosexual intercourse is not responsible for a single one of them. The difference between heterosexual union and homosexual union is stark in this respect. Even though the partners might wish to express publicly their love for each other, there is no reason why the existence of a sexual relationship between a same sex couple should be seen as a fact that is of 'vital public information'. Despite the romantic understanding of marriage that is prevalent in our culture, the institution of marriage does not exist primarily as a means by which persons can express publicly their love for each other and have society pat them on the back.

This is one of the reasons why the deinstitutionalization route is so difficult. Marriage is institutionalized within our society on many levels, not least through the status that it is given by religious communities, and within the law. Marriage is politically and legally empowered and regulated because it is a form of relationship that naturally renders itself public. The institutionalization of marriage is bound up with the connection between marriage and the family, which is in turn bound up with the relationship between heterosexual intercourse and procreation. Due to the relationship between marriage and the family, it is exceptionally difficult for marriage to be reduced to the realm of a mere private arrangement between two parties. By virtue of the family marriage renders itself public.

As far as public recognition and acknowledgement is concerned, there is no more reason for a homosexual couple to be recognized as a partnership by society than other forms of long term committed cohabiting couples (e.g. two brothers, a disabled person and their carer, two platonic friends – about a quarter of non-married people co-habit in the UK). The fact that the partners have had or are having sex together is completely unimportant as far as wider society is concerned (which is one reason why civil partnerships, at least in the UK, do not have requirements for consummation, which are incredibly detailed in the case of marriage). The public significance of the fact that a sexual union exists between a man and a woman is categorically different from the public significance of the fact that a sexual union exists between two men.

Perhaps this is one of the reasons why sterile forms of sexuality – both heterosexual and homosexual – are almost wholly responsible for the flaunting of sexuality that we witness in so many quarters of our culture. A heavily sexualized culture is almost invariably a largely impotent culture. Marriage presents sexuality as a secret shared between only two persons. Of course, people know that the marriage partners are heterosexual, but the heterosexuality of the marriage partners is not generally paraded, as it is in the case of macho and hook-up culture, for instance. In a fertile relationship, one's sexuality does not have to parade itself publicly or engage in social or political activism to achieve powerful public results. The sexuality of the marriage partners declares itself to the world in the form of the family. No one needs to own up publicly to the fact that they are straight for us to know that there are heterosexuals among us.

The power of heterosexuality in marriage culture is immediately apparent, even though the sexuality itself remains a secret between two partners. Such an approach is only possible for a sexuality that isn't impotent. In macho and hook-up culture, by contrast, one's heterosexuality must be rendered overt, because when one rejects marriage and the family as the means by which one's sexuality can achieve a powerful public effect, one must resort to rendering sexuality itself explicit in order to assert its power. The fact that homosexuality lacks the ability to exert clear public power by means of private and secret sexuality is a possible reason why so many homosexuals feel the need to parade their sexuality, to put it in society's face, and form a homosexual lobby.

The restrictions that the institution of marriage places upon sexual activity within marriage, especially in terms of the traditional requirements of fidelity and monogamy and the requirement of consummation, depend upon the connection between marriage, procreation, and family for much of their cogency. Certain forms of sexual behaviour are regulated or proscribed because the relationship between the partners is a relationship that provides a context for other relationships, and has public significance. Infidelity is not merely cheating on your partner, but undermining the stability of the family.

Contraceptive views of sex encourage the notion of sex divorced from public consequences. Coupled with the emotional prophylactics provided by the hook-up culture, sex is frequently presented as being an act with no necessary meaning beyond the pleasure of the moment. Sex is repackaged as an act freed from its natural potential consequences – like Coke Zero promises the Coke taste without the calories – both men and women are freed to engage in more 'irresponsible' sexual activity (i.e. absolved from any responsibility for the act actually leading to conception or other future consequences). This repackaging of sex encourages the greater cultural detachment of sex from the contexts within which it was historically socially countenanced. Both men and women are now freed to treat sex like a gun which is almost certainly unloaded, rather than as something to be treated carefully primarily within the context of marriage, as the place where the sexual act can be undertaken responsibly. Those of us who refuse to engage in sexual intercourse outside of the bond of marriage are presented as repressed, unbalanced, or otherwise abnormal.

Where sex is disconnected from procreation, and seen as an act undertaken purely for pleasure, attempts to legally or culturally restrict or curtail people's sexual freedom will be regarded as oppressive and intrusive. The sterile and contraceptive views of sex that came with sexual liberation were accompanied with a drive to privatize and deregulate sexual behaviour (I will go on to argue that, perhaps counterintuitively, the deregulation of sex goes hand in hand with political tyranny).

The idea that society has the right to expect lifelong fidelity and monogamy from a married homosexual couple (even though there are plenty of homosexual couples that do wish to uphold lifelong monogamy in their own relationships) is not something that will be welcomed by gay marriage advocates in general. Homosexuals will protest that, as their sex is without public consequences, society has no right to police it, or expect it to conform to values and standards that transcend the consenting partners. In this protest they expose the weakness of their claim to marriage: if homosexual sex is indeed without public consequences – in contrast to marital sex within heterosexual relationships – then what right do they have to expect their sexual unions to receive public acknowledgement, recognition, and celebration?

Outside of marriage, such a sterile and contraceptive view of sex is dangerous enough to society – it is such a view of sex that has hastened the breakdown of society in many areas of the underclass, where illegitimacy, single motherhood, fatherlessness and promiscuity have become the norm, and the abuse of partners and children rampant. However, tolerating the contraceptive and sterile view of sex within the bond of marriage itself will have a devastating effect upon the institution. We should not kid ourselves: sterile and unpoliced sex is the homosexual norm and the heterosexual 'breeders' who submit to the norms of public sexual morality demanded by marriage in order to enjoy the bourgeois respectability that it offers can often be spoken of as if they were a different species entirely. While recent decades have seen many quarters of the gay movement seek to distance themselves from the sexual outlaw status by which the movement previously characterized itself and claim the socially respectable status that comes with the normalcy of marriage, the view of sex that is central to the movement is still radically and necessarily contrary to the view of sex that undergirds traditional marriage. The movement towards gay marriage is a movement that generally seeks respectability without the submission to the sexual norms of society enshrined in traditional marriage. In fact, these norms may well be treated with even greater hostility when homosexual couples find themselves directly subject to their demands.

Considering homosexual unions as marriages will tend to encourage the deinstitutionalization of sexual intercourse within marriage in general. Marital sexual intercourse is only institutionalized because it is of public import, because the manner in which consenting married couples use their bodies in the privacy of their own homes has bearing upon wider society. This empowers but also regulates the sexual partners. Not only will the deinstitutionalization of sex threaten the integrity of the family (while an open marriage between two homosexuals poses no immediate threat to society's fabric, open marriages between heterosexuals undermine the stability of the family), it will also take away from the power of marriage as an institution.

Society subjects marriage relationships to certain norms because of the manner in which marital intercourse can render itself public. The removal of the sexual norms of marriage can only occur at the expense of bond between procreation and childrearing. By refusing to approach sex as an act with public consequences and hence subject to public norms, we absolve ourselves of the responsibility for any public consequences that might arise. The deregulation of sex is bound up with the family's forfeiting of control over childrearing.

Regarding homosexual unions as marriages hastens the sterilization of our concept of marital sex. Consummation of marriage in the form of a reproductive act is obviously impossible in the case of homosexual unions and cannot be demanded. Sex within marriage will increasingly be presented as

a matter that purely concerns the partners themselves, and which cannot be made subject to the institutional or legal requirements, or demands of public morality that transcend the parties within the relationship. The downplaying of the ideal of sex as an act undertaken within the context of a lifelong exclusive commitment, subject to social standards of behaviour, and attended with the possibility of conception and the weighty responsibilities that that entails could have serious consequences. As the homosexual lobby attacks the ways in which society renders the sexual activity between two married partners a matter subject to public judgment and norms, the bond between parents and their children will be further weakened.

The Shifting Ethos of Marriage

[Roger Scruton](#) observes:

Marriage has been treated, in our society, as a sacrament, whereby two people consecrate their lives not just to each other but to the family that will spring from them. In no sense is marriage, so conceived, merely the rubber-stamping of a sexual contract. It marks an existential transition, a move away from the concerns of one generation towards a concern for the next. It is not an act of gratification but an act of renunciation, the beneficiaries of which are not the spouses themselves, but their future children. Without marriage, as we are beginning to see, societies do not reproduce themselves. Hence to treat marriage as a human toy, that can be redesigned at will and for the pleasure of the merely living, is to jeopardize the rightful hopes of those unborn. Even if gay marriage does not involve perversion, therefore, to defend it is surely perverse.

The last few decades have witnessed a reorientation of marriage that has led to its being presented as an institution almost purely for the sake of the marriage partners. [Douglas Farrow](#) writes of the close personal relationship model that is increasingly the conceptual model for marriage – whether heterosexual or homosexual – in our society:

It emphasizes emotional attachment more than the permanent bonding of lives, a feeling of intimacy above chastity or faithfulness, and sexual pleasure over procreation. It interests itself in gratification not renunciation. In short, it offers a radically different account of the nature and function of marriage, and so also of the politics of marriage.

When marriage is designed primarily for the movement from one generation to another, lifelong monogamous commitment becomes very important. Such a commitment provides for security and continuity. In a marriage culture that adheres to such values, children can trust that, no matter how difficult it might be for their parents to stick together, they will do it, not primarily on account of their own happiness, but for the sake of their children's future, and on account of the commitments that they made to each other and to the wider community.

Not only has sex increasingly come to be regarded as a sterile act, unions are far less likely to last, and even while they last do not provide the assurances and security that marriage was traditionally expected to provide. When marriage becomes oriented to the desires of the marriage partners, permanency becomes negotiable. The rise of divorce culture is a symptom of this shift in ethos. If partners agree that the spark has gone out of their marriage, they can consent to go their own separate ways. The idea that marriage entails a solemn duty to remain with and remain faithful to each other until parted by death runs radically contrary to the contemporary ethos. The perception is that the institution of marriage does not primarily exist for the sake of children, and for the sake of providing a secure and loving setting in which they can be nurtured, but for the sake of the parent's

pleasure. When marriages cease to be enjoyable for the partners, it is the children who must pay the greatest price.

Unlike traditional marriage, homosexual relationships are almost entirely oriented towards the present desires and emotions of the parties within the relationships. In contrast to the place of intercourse in marriage, which involves openness to the future gift of life and to all that that entails, the sexual intercourse in homosexual relationships is invariably and necessarily sterile and detached from the future. There is a significant disconnect and indeed tension to be observed between homosexual patterns of relationship and the notion that marriage involves making potentially costly sacrifices, limiting one's pleasure, and forging lifelong commitments that may run radically contrary to the desires of both parties in the future. Such a notion only makes sense within a relationship that is structured in a manner that primarily serves the needs of people beyond the two partners.

The homosexual marriage model tends to stress the emotional bond between the two partners as its basis. The question arises: what happens if and when this emotional bond ceases to exist? Do the partners have the duty to remain together for life, irrespective of the existence of an emotional bond, as in traditional marriage (obviously with the duty to work to re-establish such a bond), or can they amicably go their separate ways? Traditional marriage is founded on the firm footing of a lifelong commitment, to which an emotional attachment is the servant, but never the master. The commitment of marriage transcends an emotional bond that may or may not exist between the partners.

Gay marriage accomplishes no movement from one generation to another. The union more or less terminates on the desires, emotions, and needs of the two partners. To establish gay marriage would be to institutionalize the close personal relationship model of marriage, which would hasten the rot of traditional marriage values. In particular, it would encourage the removal or compromising of those aspects of marriage culture and law that orient the union towards the needs of children, and others beyond the marriage partners. For those who enter into marriage as something that is about little more than the satisfaction of their desires and the public recognition of an emotional bond that they have with another person, the values of traditional marriage will be regarded as constricting.

When the values of traditional marriage pull one way and the strong consenting desires of gay couples pull another, will they forfeit their desires and submit to the norms of marriage? While heterosexual married couples obviously have similar moral dilemmas, and often make the wrong choices, the self-denying and renunciatory values of marriage receive their rationale from the fact that marriage transcends the marriage partners and are designed to serve others beyond them, primarily on account of procreation, and cannot therefore be reduced to a private arrangement with flexible parameters. Once reproduction is made purely incidental to the institution of marriage, as the establishing of gay marriage will tend to make it, we should expect a further reconfiguration of marriage culture, redirecting it away from the needs of any but the marriage partners themselves, in a way that renders children increasingly vulnerable as the assurances of the security of the marriage bond are stripped away.

It would be naïve to think that the gay rights movement, having achieved the status of marriage, will make peace with its traditional virtues of lifelong faithfulness and exclusiveness. The idea of marriage as an institution, with values, expectations, and requirements that transcend individuals is generally contrary to the gay marriage ideal and so the institution of marriage will be attacked, even while the privileges and honour accorded to its status are being enjoyed.

The subtle redefinition that lies beneath many, probably most, arguments for gay marriage is the idea that marriage is primarily about emotional attachment, that reproduction is entirely incidental

to the purpose of marriage, and that love is all that is needed to make a family. With such a definition, the bond of marriage will be rendered increasingly fluid and porous in character, as the form of emotional attachments shift and develop, and as the traditional limitations arising from the orientation of marriage towards reproduction are removed. As the institution of marriage comes to be understood as a public rubber-stamping of a relatively freeform private arrangement between two parties (I have already observed the open character of a significant percentage of gay relationships), the door is opened for even further radical reinvention.

Polygamy and the Cultural Achievement of Heterosexual Monogamy

Remove the *sine qua non* of penile-vaginal intercourse, sexual complementarity of the marriage partners, and orientation towards procreation of heterosexual marriage and even the dyadic character of marriage will come to be regarded with a degree of ambivalence. While many think of the old patriarchal form of polygyny when they think of polygamy (which within modern society would only find support among more patriarchal societies, which are quite marginal), polygamy is far more likely to come primarily in the form of polyamorous relationships – *ménage à trois* type unions (though there is no reason why it must be limited to three partners) and the like. Such unions will almost invariably involve a mixture of heterosexual and homosexual pairings, and would be especially suited for bisexuals, who haven't really been represented in the marriage rights debate yet.

At this point it would be helpful to make clear the distinction between homosexual marriage and traditional forms of polygamy. Polygamy is often brought forward as proof of the cultural specificity of the form of marriage that conservatives defend today, and its existence in the recorded history and religious texts of the major religions, when viewed in light of the current strong resistance that they commonly manifest towards it, is presented as evidence of the arbitrariness, inconsistency, and lack of natural and traditional support that their model of marriage actually has.

First of all, we must recognize that the traditional form of polygamy is overwhelmingly that of polygyny. Polygyny is quite a 'natural' form of marriage. It is, in many respects, even more strongly oriented to reproduction than the monogamous marriage and nuclear family are. It recognizes and provides for men's tendency towards polyamory, and also the desire of women to align themselves with the most powerful and the richest men in society. It ensures that the genes of the most successful and virile will be passed on, while the genes of the weak will be swiftly weeded out. In this respect, polygynous relationships have a clear claim to be 'natural' in a sense that homosexual relationships do not.

We must also recognize that polygyny and many traditional forms of homosexuality are about an uncompromising defense of the power and dominance of alpha males in society. The women in polygynous relationships, while being economically empowered, do not have clear claims upon the affections and fidelity of their spouse in the manner that a wife in a monogamous relationship does. Although polygyny benefits many women economically, it does this at the expense of the gross reduction of the status of the wife, frequently to the level of chattel. Women in such relationships will rarely have the right to take multiple husbands for themselves, or to enter into relationships with each other. A serious imbalance between the sexes is built into the polygynous model of marriage.

While serving the needs of alpha males and giving females more access to rich men, polygyny operates to the detriment of the vast majority of men, whose access to women decreases. Such men are socially disempowered. The polygynous model of marriage is based upon dominance – the dominance of men over women, and the dominance of alpha males over all other males.

Consequently, a polygynous society will tend to exhibit gross social inequality and oppression of the weak.

In most traditional or ancient societies homosexual relationships are or were entered into alongside marriage relationships, rather than representing an alternative to such relationships. Most individuals engaging in homosexual intercourse would also form relationships with women. In traditional and ancient societies, homosexual relationships are almost invariably tied up in some manner or other with the patriarchal ideals of domination over others, whether men forming bonds among themselves to facilitate their shared domination over women, or men seeking domination over other men, especially older men over younger men.

Although polygynous marriages retain the notion of different sexual needs of men and women, and the absolute priority of reproduction to the institution of marriage – and are thus natural in a sense that homosexual marriages can never be – they are ‘natural’ in a deeply inhumane manner, encouraging a Darwinian model of society where sex is about dominance over others. Although patriarchy and alpha male dominance may be ‘natural’ in the Darwinian sense of the word, it is hardly ‘natural’ in the sense of embodying the behaviour that is most fitted to the flourishing of our nature. The monogamous nuclear family and the prohibition on homosexual relationships are about ensuring the humane relationship between the sexes, stressing their mutual dependence. The natural order is recognized, but negative tendencies are humanely curbed.

It should not be forgotten that the ideal of marriage as a loving bond between a man and a woman is something of a novelty in historical terms. The notion that love and companionship and the form of equality that they produce ought to be central features of the union of marriage does not naturally arise in a society that practices polygyny and follows the dominance model of relationships. The notion that the partners in a relationship should all enjoy the full expression of their personhood, and the manner in which relationships where such a union is unlikely (e.g. relationships in which deep age, educational, cultural, and economic imbalances exist) are frowned upon, discouraged or prohibited owes much of its cultural strength to the defeat of polygyny.

This humane curbing of the dominance model of sexual partnerships to favour the asymmetric mutuality model of the lifelong loving monogamous binding of a man and a woman in marriage – one of the greatest but most difficult achievements of Western civilization – is unsettled and threatened by homosexual marriage, which removes the requirement of the balance of the sexes in marriage. When society’s central institution of marriage no longer embodies the value of equality between the sexes, but legitimizes unions of two men or two women as equal to that of a husband and wife, male power and female power become gradually unraveled from each other and become more likely to be locked in a struggle for dominance.

This can already be seen in the strong connection between feminism and lesbianism, which is often seen as an expression of the fact that women don’t need men. Societies in the past have also witnessed masculinist homosexualities, as men have rejected the perceived weakness of the female sex and sought to express a male power over against the feminine realm, idealizing male bonding in shared male power, while disassociating from women. A not too dissimilar ideology can be found in the Nietzschean sentiments and homosexuality that accompany such cultures as that of body-building. The ideal is that of the physically powerful male, emotionally detached from women and the perceived uxoriousness of monogamous marriage. Male identity is to be sought in isolation from women and the monogamous relationship of marriage. Polygyny could often encourage such an ideal, and openness to homosexual relationships to foster male identity and bonding was a natural concomitant in some societies, producing a homoerotic marriage culture, in which the relationship of marriage was often reduced to an emotionally detached relationship. Seen against such a background, the prohibition on homosexual relationships served to raise the status of women

and mollify the battle between the sexes, as the emotional bond between a husband and wife gained greater prominence. Through this change, a man's identity was more firmly situated in his relationship with his wife, and male power was no longer permitted to shore itself up against women by the forming of sexual bonds with other men, or the usurping of the primacy of the emotional bond between the husband and wife through an extreme homosociality.

In the light of all of this, we should we quite prepared to admit the cultural specificity of the form of marriage that we are defending. However, we must stress that this form of marriage is not an arbitrary imposition, but represents a profound cultural and civilizational achievement, which will be dispensed with at our peril. Like polygyny, it recognizes the natural tendencies of men and women, but unlike polygyny it curbs these tendencies, directing them towards the flourishing of the nature of men, women, and society in general. It serves to defuse the war of the sexes, idealizing the close emotional bond between the sexes and thus fostering the equality of love that arises from that. It attacks masculinities, both homosexual and heterosexual, that idealize homosociality to the marginalizing of the bond between the sexes. This balanced relationship between the sexes enshrined in marriage is threatened by a society that gives homosexual relationships equal status.

Although the 'slippery slope' argument, which presents gay marriage as a step towards polygamy, is frequently attacked as mere scare-mongering, most of the arguments that are advanced for gay marriage are just as serviceable for the case of polyamorous group marriages (and there are a [number of proponents of gay rights who point out this fact](#)). Furthermore, groups favouring polyamorous unions are following in the wake of the gay marriage activists ([polyamorous civil unions have already occurred in the Netherlands](#), following a similar route to homosexual unions). The rationale is practically the same – consenting adults should be permitted to marry the people that they love, and sexual orientations should be permitted to enjoy forms of marriage appropriate to them. Furthermore, when sex is understood in a non-procreative fashion, there is no reason whatsoever why a group of three people can't engage in an act of sexual congress together. One suspects that the main reason for denying the connection is strategic. Manifesting the natural affinity between the arguments for homosexual marriage and the arguments for polyamorous marriages would not help the same sex marriage movement. The public can only take one bite at a time.

The Breaking of Natural Bonds

The fundamental antagonism between heterosexual marriage and homosexual marriage arises from the desire for constructivist will to triumph over the natural order and it is this that renders homosexual marriage such a dangerous prospect. Heterosexual marriage involves the joining together of a sexually compatible pair in a bond of exclusive and lifelong loving commitment, and their participation in a reproductive-type act. It involves the recognition of the bond between this pair and their offspring, who are conceived through a natural act of loving sexual union between their parents, and whose lifelong commitment will provide security for them as they mature within the enfold of the relationship between their parents. It entails the protection of the natural bonds of blood. The fact that marriage is based upon natural bonds – the bond of attraction between a sexually compatible pair (which connects sexual desire with mating), the physical bond formed between them in a reproductive-type act, the bond between parents and their biological children – and provides for the natural movement from one generation to the next, cannot be stressed enough.

The centrality of these natural bonds to the institution of marriage provides the reason why marriage is fundamental to society, why it is so highly favoured by society, and also why it will always precede and exceed society's regulations. Marriage is undoubtedly socially constructed in many respects, but the union that it protects precedes society, and provides the soil from which society

grows. The same cannot be said of homosexual unions. Although homoerotic desire undoubtedly occurs in nature (it is obviously 'natural' in this sense), and psychiatry is clear in denying that it is a mental illness, it is far from clear that it is 'natural' in the sense of conforming to the ideal form of human physical and psychological make up (in the same way as forms of colourblindness are contrary to the ideal form of human eyesight, even though they have a genetic basis and may even confer advantages under certain circumstances). None of this necessarily justifies making a moral judgment against those who have and act upon homoerotic desires, but it does entail a distinction between homoerotic desire and heteroerotic desire in terms of their normalcy. The orientation of sexual desire towards acts that are sexually reproductive is normal in a manner that the orientation of sexual desire away from such acts is not.

Homosexual union does not provide for the establishment of the natural bond between the sexes. Marriage brings together the sexes on many levels, expressing our need of the other sex to complement us, not merely occasionally providing us with physical or emotional satisfaction, but depending upon each other as we journey through life and engage in the most important acts within it, such as child-rearing.

Marriage is founded upon the sexual and emotional complementarity of men and women. The campaign for gay marriage involves the egalitarian assumption of the interchangeability of men and women, husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. If important physical, psychological, sexual and biological differences really do exist between men and women then we are deluding ourselves if we think that a relationship fitted for an opposite sex couple will be suited to a same sex couple in the same way. The differences between homosexual and heterosexual couples do not merely involve the obvious and significant differences between the character of their sexual acts, but also the fact that homosexual couples involve sexualities of just one of the sexes, whereas heterosexual unions involve both male and female forms of sexuality. Given that men are biologically disposed to be polyamorous to a degree that women are not, and that marriage's curbing of this natural tendency has much to do with its regard to the needs of security for women and children, why should we expect gay unions to manifest the same monogamy and permanence?

Empirical evidence would suggest that gay relationships are less likely to exhibit monogamy, for instance, than heterosexual marriages are (the fact that lesbian relationships are considerably more likely than gay relationships to be monogamous suggests that differences between the sexualities of the two sexes is an important contributory factor here). More importantly, there is a high likelihood that monogamy won't even be upheld as a virtue for the relationship. Even though many married heterosexuals commit adultery, monogamy is overwhelmingly upheld as a value to aspire to in marriage. While homosexuals are obviously excited about the public status that marriage would give to their unions, the values of monogamy and fidelity that are crucial to the health of heterosexual marriage are not as popular. The sexually exclusive character of the marriage relationship and the requirement of lifelong fidelity are not values that receive the same support or adherence among homosexual married couples as they do among heterosexual married couples.

Even where the 'forsaking all others' ideal of monogamy is ostensibly upheld, on closer analysis it can often be seen to be watered down (e.g. to serial monogamy or 'emotional' monogamy), or involve casuistic distinctions between different sorts of sexual acts that can be performed outside of the relationship. Sex, as in the hook-up culture, can be systematically compartmentalized and distinguished from the emotional attachment that is supposed to constitute marriage. Marriage is about emotional closeness, rather than about sex. Provided that sexual acts performed outside of the relationship are engaged in in an emotional detached fashion, monogamy can be seen to be upheld. Hence the claim that one encounters from certain supporters of homosexuality that we should not automatically subject committed gay relationships to the same norms of monogamy as are applied to heterosexual relationships, as the two forms of relationship are not isomorphic (which naturally calls into question the claim that there is no basis on which to discriminate between gay marriages and heterosexual marriages).

Of course, many gay relationships will and do exhibit complete and unqualified sexual exclusivity. However, my point is that the concepts of monogamy that exist among homosexuals are nowhere near as clear and established as they are among heterosexuals. More importantly the rationale for monogamy is largely absent. The need for monogamy is lessened as children are generally out of the equation, and its occurrence will decrease in a setting where only male forms of sexuality are being expressed. Flexibility is introduced into the understanding of monogamy, permitting

couples to define the concept to suit themselves. When long term gay relationships claim commitment and monogamy for themselves these terms will often not be used to mean what heterosexuals understand them to mean, although the mistaken assumptions that heterosexuals bring to such claims can prove quite convenient.

This, of course, is a common ploy of the gay rights lobby: differences are disguised by using common terms in a way that subverts assumed meanings, disguises unwelcome ones, or diverts attention away from the features that render homosexual relationships markedly different from heterosexual marriages. For instance, the word 'sex' disguises the difference between acts of sodomy and the form of sex involved in procreative intercourse. Words such as 'marriage', 'commitment' and 'monogamy' are all further examples of terms that are used to obscure difference. Confronted with a class of heterosexual marriages in which the partners entered into the relationships committed to only ever engage in sodomistic acts (let alone a relationship in which sexual acts were permitted outside of the relationship, provided that they were undertaken in an emotionally detached fashion), most heterosexuals would probably be appalled, regarding it as a perversion of the union of marriage. Quite apart from anything else such marriages would be unconsummated (as only penile-vaginal intercourse can consummate marriage) and could be annulled. However, the same people can strongly support homosexual marriage, as it is couched in such terms as 'loving partners', 'loving sexual relationship', 'commitment', and the like, disguising the hidden equation that is being made.

If only on account of the differences between male and female sexuality, gay marriage will fuel attempts to undermine the necessity of fidelity and monogamy, and to push for easier and less costly divorce. This will weaken marriage for everyone; as history has shown, removing legal any other impediments to divorce hastens the collapse of marriages. Such a shift of values is very concerning.

Homosexual union does not provide for the natural and reproductive bond of penile-vaginal intercourse. The bodies of a couple of the same sex are not naturally adapted to each other in the manner that an opposite sex couple's bodies are; they can stimulate each other sexually, or parody reproductive-type sexual intercourse, but they can never mate. Sexual union is about more than the mutual ability to produce orgasms.

One could argue that other forms of sexual union may serve the unitive purpose of sex, even if they cannot serve the procreative purpose. That said, the equality of different sexual acts in this regard could be disputed, given the fact that homosexual sexual intercourse does not manifest the sort of biological compatibility that heterosexual penile-vaginal intercourse does (especially within the Christian scriptural tradition, where one-flesh union is clearly founded on the compatibility of the sexes, and the blessed character of the marriage state is clearly related to its representing an entry into the blessing of fruitfulness upon the first couple). Although I may use the word 'union' on occasions to refer to homosexual acts in this article, the notion that two men engaging in such acts with each other accomplishes a 'union' in any sense remotely comparable in significance or potency to the physical, emotional, and spiritual union that brings together the two halves of the human race, a union that can yield new life to which the genetic information of the two partners is passed on and create bonds of blood, is absolutely ludicrous. The unitive purpose of sex can not be so easily separated from the procreative purpose: children are perhaps the most powerful form of union between two parties accomplished through sexual union. The fact that the form of heterosexual intercourse is bound up with and open to this further union bestows a deeper unitive power to the act than homosexual forms of intercourse could ever have.

Homosexual marriage does not provide for the natural bond between children and their biological parents. Perhaps the most significant consequence of this development will be the gradual detachment of children from their biological parents. As the conception of sex within marriage is increasingly conformed to the norm of an essentially sterile act, private and unregulated, shorn of responsibility or consequences, and marriage and the family come to be viewed as primarily legal constructs, the bond between marital sex and the family will come under threat in various ways.

Homosexual couples can adopt children, or come into their relationships with children from a previous heterosexual relationship. However, the bond between such couples and their children can

never be ones of blood relationship. The relationship that they bear with their children will always be extrinsic to their sexual union, and at least one of the partners can be no more than a legal parent. The natural state of children being raised by parents of opposite sexes will be lacking, or will necessitate an external supplementing of the relationship.

Of course, it can be protested that adoptees in heterosexual families have no biological relationship to their new parents. This is true. However, it must first be recognized that adoption is the result of a pre-existing bad situation, and it is neither normal nor desirable that children should need to be adopted. Furthermore, it must be recognized that heterosexual families provide a situation where the normalcy of a child's relationship with a parent of each sex is maintained even when they do not have a relationship with their natural parents. Homosexual relationships do not and cannot provide this in the same way.

With their inclusion in the institution of marriage comes the expectation that nature's prejudice against homosexual unions should be overcome through reproductive technology, surrogacy and adoption. In redefining marriage in such a manner we undermine the significance of biological reproduction and parenthood. Reproductive technology is obviously very significant for homosexual couples. Reproductive technology provides an alternative to heterosexual intercourse and a way in which to avoid participating in natural intercourse. Nature must be bypassed because it doesn't happen to be as politically correct in the distribution of its gifts as it is thought that it ought to be.

Such forms of reproductive technology fundamentally shift our understanding of children and of the bonds that exist between them and their parents. In place of the child as gift understanding, we move in the direction of the child as 'right' position. This is particularly significant in the case of homosexual relationships. Where nature will never bestow the gift of children, the gift must be pried from nature's hands by technological means, or the state must compensate for nature's intransigence in the face of our politically correct demands.

On account of the fact that abortion, modern contraception, and reproductive technology give us unprecedented control over reproduction, the concept of the 'wanted' child is encouraged. The fact that natural engagement in sexual intercourse apart from such things limits the degree of control that we have over reproduction presents us with children as something that we can't demand, predict, or easily refuse. Such an approach requires openness to children, even when steps are taken to discourage conception. The limitations of control surrounding the birth of children highlight their gift character. The openness to the existence of the child involved in this approach is not unrelated to the posture that makes healthy relationships between parents and their children possible. Parents who respond to our existence with hope and openness – who dismiss the categories of 'wanted' and 'unwanted' altogether – rather than by trying to ensure that their offspring become their perfect child or seeking to have complete control over every aspect of their formation, are parents who can come to appreciate their children's differences, and continue to love them, even when they don't become the people that they had hoped that they would.

Such a shift in our understanding of children is concerning. Instead of children tracing their origins to an intimate private act of sexual union between the parents who are rearing them, the approaches to children within homosexual relationships will invariably leave children with complicated or confused origins. What was once accomplished as the overflowing of a loving act of intercourse into new life, is now achieved by means of instrumentalized actions, economic exchanges in the marketplace, employment of technology and science, and by means of individuals exchanging reproductive material in manners that necessitate significant degrees of emotional detachment.

Children in such relationships will be confronted with the fact that at least one of their biological parents may be thoroughly indifferent to or even unaware of their existence, uninvolved in their rearing, absent from the ‘family’ that they are being raised within, or has cultivated an emotional detachment from them, merely regarding their role as the provision of necessary genetic material or a womb for a short time. Children are the pawns who will be most harmed in this social experiment (as they are in our experiments with abortion and no-fault divorce).

In all of these respects homosexual marriage seeks to overcome the natural order of relationships in order to assert its own validity and equality to heterosexual marriage. Even though such language is clearly strong and emotive, it is on account of its consistent breaking of natural bonds that homosexual marriage can fairly be termed a *perversion* of marriage. It is a parody of marriage, a legal creation representing the triumph of the will over all of the impediments of nature, and the assertion that we can consistently go against the grain of nature and still claim equality with those who adhere to natural forms. The gay marriage debate is not really about whether to permit gay marriage. Permitting gays to marry is like permitting men to get pregnant. The real debate is whether to allow the state to create a parody of marriage.

Homosexual Marriage and Tyranny

Homosexual relationships do not protect the natural bonds of heterosexual marriage, and in fact militate against them, denying the normativity and superiority of the natural bonds between sexual desire and sexually reproductive acts, the mutual dependency of men and women, two partners of the opposite sexes, the bonds between the bodies of those two sexes, between sex and reproduction, the superiority and normativity of the bonds of blood, and the bonds between children and parents of both sexes. Each of these bonds is, in its own way, denied or undermined by those campaigning for homosexual marriage, which is one reason why homosexual marriage can never be permitted.

Heterosexual marriage is founded upon these natural bonds, which are recognized, protected, and supported with a marriage culture by society. As already argued, heterosexual marriage renders itself public, where it is adumbrated by laws and customs. In contrast, homosexual marriages must render themselves public by means of political and legal fiat. Homosexual marriages cannot appeal to the natural bonds that heterosexual marriage has as its basis and rationale. However, homosexuals wish to claim the equality of their relationships to heterosexual marriage. Consequently, the natural foundation of marriage must be denied or attacked, while presenting marriage purely as a social construct, which can be reformed in a more inclusive form.

As I have argued, in the case of homosexual unions, the public character of the union arises purely from legal causes; they are not the sort of relationships that are of ‘vital public information’. The bond between children and their ‘parents’ in such a relationship is one that is primarily a legal creation, and necessitates the prior breaking of one or more natural bonds: the bond between the child and at least one of their parents, the bond between sex and reproduction, the bond between two heterosexual partners, and the bond between the child and one of the parental sexes that would have provided for their socialization. In the place of the broken natural bonds, we have a legal construct, a creation of legal and political will over nature (the argument that children are better off with a loving homosexual couple than with a bad heterosexual couple is obviously a bad one – comparing the best of one form with the worst of another in such a manner is a poor way to make a case).

Gay marriage has been propagated chiefly by means of litigation and political pressure. Once we appreciate the manner in which gay marriage advocates seek to deny the normativity and superiority of the natural bonds enshrined in marriage, to claim as their right the same privileges that

heterosexual married couples enjoy from the hand of nature, and to replace the normativity of a blood relations understanding of family with an understanding of family as a legal construct, we should be extremely worried. One requires some fairly big guns to wage the war against nature, which is one reason – though not, as we shall see, the only one – why sexual liberation from the natural order goes hand in hand with tyranny. Gay marriage can't render itself public in the natural way that heterosexual marriage can, and so it must use the law and the state in order to achieve this.

Once the state has determined that a sexual relationship between a same sex couple is completely equal to a sexual relationship between an opposite sex couple, and ought not merely to be tolerated, but to be celebrated and privileged to exactly the same degree, where do we draw the line regarding the degree to which political agitators and litigious minorities can impose their vision upon society? When the state gives so little attention to the immense weight of millennia of tradition throughout human cultures and the order of nature in asserting the will of a vocal group upon society, we should all fear for our freedoms. When the state has arrogated to itself the right to define marriage and the family as it pleases, apart from reference to natural forms that it must recognize and uphold, have we not arrived at a position where the state regards society purely as its own creation, and thus subject to its domination, rather than as involving inviolable bonds and forms that pre-exist it?

If, rather than the laws surrounding marriage and family being ways to protect the substantive realities of blood relationships, marriage and family increasingly come to be regarded as legal constructs, detached from such underlying reality, the state gains increasing control over children and marriage is pushed into the private realm. Once we accept the normativity of a sterile understanding of sex, and a model of family increasingly detached from blood relationship, the state gains incredible power to reorder human society. As the recognition of the bonds connecting parents with their children are weakened, we give the state an ever-growing capacity to intervene in the upbringing of our children. When sex is no longer conceived of or engaged in as responsible behaviour that is open to potential consequences that may exert their effects for a very long period of time, any consequences that do arise will tend to become the responsibility of some other party, almost invariably the state. Where marriage and sexual intercourse within it are not entered into with a commitment to or expectation that one should be expected to shoulder the responsibilities attending conception and child-rearing, children will gradually come to be treated as if they were primarily wards of the state.

Gay marriages do not produce children, yet children are essential for the implementation of the vision of those who wish to maintain the equality of homosexual unions to heterosexual marriages. Homosexuals need access to children, both as badges that demonstrate the fact that their unions are completely equal to heterosexual marriages, and also as means by which to shape the society of the future. As homosexual relationships do not produce children, they must gain access to children by other means. The strong bond of blood that exists between parents and their children is a threat to homosexuals, as it limits their access to the next generation. Consequently lengths must be undertaken to undermine and weaken this bond.

State intervention is the primary means by which gay marriage advocates have pushed their agenda. In addition to using the power of government and the law to force people to accept their unions, government and the law are used to limit the rights of agencies and individuals to discriminate against them when it comes to such things as adoption. Gay marriage advocates won't be satisfied with the fact that many adoption agencies will be happy to place children with gay couples; they must press to ensure that no agency can operate on the belief that a heterosexual married couple can offer things to a child that a homosexual couple never could. The powers of the legal system and the police powers of the State will be marshaled against any who might act on such a conviction. Convictions that arise from deep within our engagement with the world, our personal histories, and our cultural and human traditions are incredibly hard to eradicate. The belief that it is natural for a

child to have a mother and a father, and that any departure from this norm is undesirable and not to be encouraged is one such belief.

The power of a belief is directly proportional to the degree of force and intrusive social engineering required to deprogramme it, which is why the doctrines of modern egalitarianism, feminism, and gay rights have needed to throw such great weight behind a movement of oppressive political correctness. Political correctness cannot easily tolerate and respect the existence of vocal public opposition. The more contrary to commonsense and natural reason a particular view is, the more rigorously its proponents will have to suppress any opposition. Permit the opposition clear public expression of its convictions and it is rendered vulnerable and exposed. The gay marriage position involves several claims that run strongly counter to commonsense – the parity of homoerotic desire and heteroerotic desire, the equality of homosexual forms of intercourse to penile-vaginal intercourse, the disconnection of sex from reproduction, the interchangeability of men and women, the dispensability of the roles of husband, wife, father, and mother, the family as primarily a legal construct, rather than a bond of blood, etc. For this reason, political intimidation, government propaganda, militant litigation, smear campaigns, vicious attempts to discredit opposition, and attacks on academic and press freedom have been and will always be primary weapons in the armoury of gay marriage advocates. All criticism or voicing of opinion that displeases the gay lobby can be labeled as intolerant and homophobic, and anyone who dares voice public opposition can expect to be targeted and hounded out of public office, academic respectability, or have their voice silenced by the media.

Although gay rights advocates can undoubtedly point to the manner in which the power of the state has been wielded against them in the past, my point here is that there is, by the very nature of things, a close natural alliance and affinity between soft totalitarianism and a movement that denies so forcefully convictions that have underlain human societies for most of history, and which relies upon government and the law to render itself public. The same natural alliance and affinity with oppressive state power does not exist in the case of heterosexual marriage.

Government and the law are also used as means to indoctrinate the youth. People that naturally have no children will seek to wrest control over the children of others in order to shape society according to their vision. It is for this reason that homosexuals who have no children of their own have an extremely high interest and desire to shape the education of other's people children, and to limit the rights of parents to remove them from the desired indoctrination. It should not be a surprise to us that those who stand most opposed to the traditional structures surrounding reproduction in our society will often be the parties that invest the most effort in seeking to shape and control the education of our children and almost always the ones who are most in favour of limiting the control that parents have over their children's curricula.

It has long been recognized that a strong family is the primary basis for a free society. However, a strong family is the greatest threat to the achievement of equality for homosexual relationships. Although it trumpets itself as a movement for sexual liberation, the gay marriage movement – and the gay rights movement more generally – will, by the very nature of the agenda that it seeks to advance, be one of the most powerful driving forces towards totalitarianism. Through state education and other means governments have already gone far in the direction of weakening the natural bond between children and parents in order to strengthen its grip on public society. Gay rights advocates provide governments with a natural and invaluable ally in this struggle against the natural bonds of the family, pushing towards the position when all children are regarded as essentially wards of the state.

Xon Hostetter, in private correspondence, expresses the society to which such an approach tends in the following manner:

We can all picture what the “privatization” of marriage would mean in the absence of Judeo-Christian values about the natural bonds that hold people together. We would essentially be in Plato’s Republic, where children are raised communally and taught all the “proper” things to believe as wards of and future cannon-fodder for the state. Only the right sorts of people are allowed to mate at all. As to how the adults group themselves together for paying bills and having a few thrills, of course, we would be an entirely “libertarian” society. Everyone can group themselves however they want, because no sexual bond matters more than any other. The social integrity simply doesn’t regard any of them. They are all “private,” all irrelevant to public purpose and thriving as a society. Thus, they are also completely irrelevant to the raising of children, which is why it will be done by “experts” off in some artifice (definitely the right word, no?) constructed for the purpose.

The movement towards gay marriage is one of the movements within our society that is most antithetical to liberty. For this reason alone it must be firmly opposed. If homosexuals are to be the friends of liberty, they must recognize and submit to the extreme limitations that their refusal to engage in traditional marriage places upon their ability to form society and shape the minds of the future, to recognize that, by their very character, recognized or not, their relationships are largely powerless in the public realm. Of course, the naturally unenfranchised character of homosexual relationships will condemn homosexuals to a marginal and alienated status when compared to married couples (those of us who are single find ourselves in a [similarly disadvantaged position](#), probably even more disadvantaged in certain respects).

Conclusion

The general face of gay marriage in the media is that of smiling couples, declaring their love for one another and their wish that society would acknowledge that love. Most of us have homosexuals among our acquaintances, friends, and relatives and will recognize that the desire that they have for public recognition of their relationships is genuine. Their sexual orientation is not something that they have chosen, and they merely desire the freedom to have what they perceive to be normal relationships without judgment from society. There is not some grand plot to which homosexuals are generally party, aiming to overturn marriage and destroy the foundation of society. While the homosexual community has lots of activists, the majority of homosexuals merely want to live their lives in peace, like everyone else. The hostility and frequent demonization that they face in seeking to gain society’s approval for relationships that to them are purely about love and a deep emotional attachment to another human being are undoubtedly perplexing to them, as they know full well that they have no malicious intent.

It is easy to believe in the complicity of all homosexuals in a massive and evil gay conspiracy when one has no actual contact with any in their day to day lives. Much opposition to homosexuality arises out of such bigotry, which can often make those of us who find the blind hatred and double standards of such bigots repugnant reluctant to express opposition to same sex marriage in a way that would lead to us publicly being aligned with them. In most cases the thing that strikes one about homosexuals when one meets them is their sheer normality and innocence of a clear culture-destroying agenda. In fact, most homosexuals will regard their quest for gay marriage as a profoundly culture-affirming gesture. They wish to normalize their relationships, and to be accommodated within society’s existing structures, to live respectable and upstanding lives in the heart of society, rather than living its seedy margins. It is not surprising that the fact that marriage is generally denied to them will strike most of them as a product of homophobia (which it definitely is, in part – many people’s opposition to gay marriage rests more upon homophobia than it does upon any reasonable basis).

Although a number of homosexual activists seek to unravel marriage culture, and some regard homosexual marriage as a step towards such an end, none of what I have said to this point should be taken to suggest that homosexuals generally seek this. The motivations of the majority of homosexuals are for the most part perfectly understandable and relatable and their ambitions seemingly modest. The reason why I have so forcefully opposed homosexual marriage in this article has nothing to do with the imputation of a vicious intent to the homosexual community. The real enemies of marriage are generally heterosexuals, whose movements towards sexual liberation, infidelities, divorce culture, and contraceptive view of sex have wreaked untold damage on the institution, often driven by an open contempt or ridicule of its values. In contrast to this devaluing of marriage by heterosexuals, homosexuals can often seem naively positive in their appreciation of the institution.

Homosexuals who seek marriage do not seek to damage and undermine marriage – far from it – but this is the effect that their inclusion in marriage will have. The fact that gay marriage is being granted in so many quarters is a result of a massive sea change in heterosexual understandings of marriage. It is only because heterosexuals gradually lost sight of the purpose and character of marriage through their contempt of the institution that homosexual unions started to seem to make perfect sense. Those who support gay marriage are for the most part innocent of the full knowledge of what their position entails and implies and so it should also not be assumed that the heat of my uncompromising attack upon the position corresponds to the level of culpability that I believe that they bear for holding it. Contemporary gay marriage advocates are enemies of marriage, but they are generally unwittingly so, unlike the heterosexuals that paved the way for them.

The basis of my opposition the gay marriage lies in the complete incommensurability of gay ‘marriage’ and traditional heterosexual marriage, and in the serious potential consequences for society in equating the two. The lack of evil intent on the part of homosexuals seeking marriage is no assurance whatsoever of the benignity of this social experiment, and we would do well to not permit the non-threatening face of gay marriage to distract us from the deep questions that must be asked of the movement. The danger of the movement is more or less entirely independent of the intentions of its advocates. The blind sentimentalism that drives much of the support for the same sex marriage agenda is no less pernicious in its own way as the hateful bigotry of some of its most venomous opponents.

In recognizing this, I trust that the anger, hatred, distrust, and animosity that exists between the parties in this cultural dispute can be diminished and a conversation can begin (not much of a debate is occurring at the moment). The viewpoint of gay marriage advocates should be understood, and a degree of sympathy for the motivations driving their concerns should be encouraged. We should make clear that, in attacking gay marriage, we do not mean to attack homosexuals as persons; this further separation between the consequences of the position and the people holding the position should make such a distinction easier. From the perspective of homosexuals, opposition to gay marriage should not be seen to be driven by hatred of homosexual persons. For those who feel sympathy for the position that homosexuals are in, and disgust at some of the vicious rhetoric directed at homosexuals by some of the opponents of same sex marriage, it should be clear that such a position is not at all inconsistent with fierce resistance to granting marriage status, and that sentimentalism can be dangerous when it distracts us from reason. Opposition to gay marriage need not arise from demonization of homosexuals, or from the imputation of malign intentions.

In conclusion, I believe that there are very clear reasons to strongly discriminate in favour of heterosexual marriage and to deny homosexual unions the same status. Although advocates of homosexual marriage claim that homosexuals have a ‘right’ to enter into such unions, I argue that no such right exists.

The difference between heterosexual marriage and homosexual unions will be distorted by those who focus on exceptional cases of the former in order to demonstrate that the universal state of the latter is no impediment to recognition as marriage. I argue that the recognition of marriage is inseparably bound up with the form of union that it maintains, and the effectiveness of this form of union in serving social ends that transcend the parties within the union.

The necessarily and universally sterile character of homosexual sex when contrasted with the procreative form of sexual union that is the *sine qua non* of heterosexual marriage is one of the primary reasons why homosexual unions do not merit the support, incentivization, recognition, and celebration that heterosexual unions do. By protecting and privileging the reproductive form of sex in marriage and providing a committed setting in which a loving sexual union between two heterosexual partners can grow into the involvement of biological parents in the lives of children, heterosexual marriage serves valuable social ends that homosexual marriages can never serve. The social power and influence enjoyed and granted to marriage is inseparable from the procreative character of the union. It is unjustifiable to grant homosexual 'marriages' the same social powers even though they are neither oriented towards nor serve the same social ends. Not merely would homosexuals be largely free riders on the privileged institution of marriage, recognition of their unions as marriages would also threaten the institution in numerous ways.

Heterosexual marriage involves a union that will generally naturally manifest itself as public, in a manner that homosexual relationships cannot. This character of heterosexual union renders the sexual union between a man and a woman a matter of 'vital public information' in a manner that homosexual intercourse will never be. The admission of homosexual relationships as marital will tend towards the privatization and deinstitutionalization of sex in general and disenfranchise marriage.

The establishment of homosexual marriage encourages a denial of the traditional ethos of marriage, privileging the present emotions and desires of the couple, over the requirements of a stable institution for the sake of children and society. It recreates marriage as a more selfish, insular, and present-oriented form of relationship. Children will suffer through the weakening of the family that will result in this shifting of the marriage ethos.

Lest we forget, the drive towards gay marriage is all about rejecting limitations on homosexual behaviour and the freedom of homosexuals to enjoy and receive public acknowledgement of the forms of relationships that they want. There is absolutely no reason to expect that this drive to reject limitations on consensual behaviour will end once the status of marriage is granted. The impetus to reject institutional limitations on consensual behaviour, the assertion of the freedom to form whatever relationships you want with others, and the manner in which the inherent form of marriage is eviscerated by gay marriage, paves the way for further reinventions of marriage, not least in the shape of polyamorous relationships. It also puts certain of the costly cultural gains of the monogamous heterosexual marriage over traditional polygamy in jeopardy.

Homosexual marriage involves the attempt to break, deny, undermine, or resist the normativity and superiority of the natural bonds between the sexes, between sexual desire and reproductive forms of sexual intercourse, between the bodies of opposite sex couples, between sex and reproduction, between reproduction and child-rearing, between children and their biological parents, and between children and the parental influence of both sexes. The gay marriage case represents a rebellion against the natural form of sexuality, reproduction, marriage, and family.

Finally, there is a natural affinity between the gay marriage agenda and state tyranny. The instrument for the propagation of gay marriage values and redescription of reality is the oppressive

arm of the state. In order to resist the natural order and overcome its impediments considerable legal and political force must be exerted, and extreme anti-discrimination laws must be imposed on any who might disagree with those who claim equality to marriage for gay unions. The anti-liberty character of the gay marriage movement is especially seen in its attempts to weaken the bond between parents and their children, in order to have more influence over the minds of the future. It ended by insisting that any liberty-loving homosexuals must resign themselves to a significant degree of cultural impotence when compared to married heterosexuals, recognizing that apart from the use of political and legal force homosexual unions will never be public, nor have cultural traction to the degree that the institution of heterosexual marriage has.

Given the *sui generis* character of homosexual relationships, some might argue for a new institutional form that gives them a 'separate, but equal' status to heterosexual marriages. From all that has been said above, I think that it should be clear that such a position should be denied. Although persons in homosexual relationships are equal to people in heterosexual relationships, and both are equal to single people, homosexual relationships are *not* equal to heterosexual relationships. The differences between them are of immense significance and import and a very clear distinction between the relationships must be established, even though society may develop forms for the recognition of homosexual relationships.

Society as a whole grows out of the union between a man and a woman. On account of its significance to society, and its preservation and deepening of natural bonds, this relationship should be encouraged and protected and set apart from all other forms of sexual relationship. Homosexual marriage is a state-sponsored parody of the real thing. While homosexuals must be accorded respect and dignity to no less of a degree than married persons, as a parody of the natural order of things, homosexual marriage merits not merely our political and social resistance, but also our moral repugnance and revulsion. For this reason, we must resist it without compromise, and firmly discriminate in favour of heterosexual marital union. On this upholding of this discrimination hangs much of our freedom.