



Letters to the Editor

Below are three letters to the editor that have all been submitted in response to a letter to the editor that was published on March 16. The opinions in all letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect those held by the Collegian or the University but as an editorial staff it is our job to let the voice of the student popluation be heard.

SUBMITTED BY EMILY NICHOLLS

To me, freedom of speech is one of the greatest liberties our nation has. I respect that people can make their voices heard, even when those opinions may be unpopular. I believe that it is through conversation and exchanging viewpoints that we as a society can continue to improve. However, I also feel that we not only have a responsibility to ensure that our own perspectives are well-informed but that we as people then present those opinions in well-constructed ways. By nature, an argument should have basis in logic and fact to be effective; such arguments are critical to a society founded upon reason. When I read “In Response to the Article Titled, ‘A Different Kind of Romance: St. Valentine’s Day Experiences in the LGBT+ Community’” I disagreed with the message but was also surprised by the weakness of the arguments presented. I felt that in many ways, the arguments were built on fallacies and came from a position of misunderstanding. I hope to address these issues while also presenting my own perspective on topics such as whether homosexuality is natural and the morality of the LGBT+ movement.

The second paragraph of the article addresses heteronormativity and concerns about it being seen as problematic despite heterosexuality being “natural” with the implication that deviations are not. It is true that heterosexuality is the most common sexual orientation; while estimations vary, a poll by Gallup in 2016 estimates that only 4.1% of the United States population identifies as LGBT+. From a biological perspective, it is easy to claim that heterosexuality is the only natural orientation because it is required for procreation. However, with “natural” being defined in the Oxford dictionary as literally, “Existing in or derived from nature; not made or caused by humankind,” the argument that other sexualities must be unnatural is simply untrue. Countless examples of homosexual activity have been observed in animal species from insects to mammals, with some examples being the result of trial-and-error (fruit fly mating) and others being prevalent throughout a species (such as with albatross, a species that mates for life). While the purpose of homosexuality in different species is still being explored, to argue that

it is unnatural is to ignore how nature works. If there was no benefit whatsoever to the behavior then it would disappear over time as the individuals expressing it die off. While speculative, some theories suggest that having members of a species that can aid in caring for offspring despite not producing their own can be beneficial as increased parental care (or in this case, care in general) consistently coincides with improved offspring success. In species where homosexuality occurs regularly (including humans) it is reasonable to predict that there may be an evolutionary purpose for it even if it is not yet understood.

The rest of the article deals heavily with questions of morality, but after several readings I still feel that what is meant by “moral” is not adequately defined. The only definition of morality given is that something is “...immoral” if it violates procreation.” I personally find such a black-and-white view of morality to be troublesome; if something can only be moral if it advances the goal of procreation, then is infertility immoral? Are sexual encounters in which consent is not given moral because such encounters may result in procreation? I would hope that other criteria are utilized in judging morality, but if so these criteria are not specified in the text. Personally, I judge morality using guidelines such as whether natural rights (life, liberty, and property) are being violated and whether undo harm is being caused when it could otherwise be avoided. To say that being LGBT+ is immoral is to deny someone the liberty to be with the person they love. The relationship between two people concerns only themselves and themselves alone – it has no significant impact on anyone else. A LGBT+ relationship violates no one’s rights nor does harm – thus, I fail to see the immorality of it.

The third paragraph of the article in particular is what initially compelled me to write my response. The argument is that under the philosophy of the LGBT+ movement, people should be able to marry whoever they wish as long as those involved are consenting adults; this is considered problematic because the implication is that bisexuals would therefore be in polygamous relationships since they are attracted to both men and women. This statement is a gross misunderstanding of both bisexuality and polygamy. The two are completely separate issues,

and the presence of one does not inherently include the other. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines bisexuality as “...Sexual or romantic attraction to members of both sexes,” and polygamy as, “Marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time.” Commonly, polygamy refers to any romantic relationship with more than two willing participants. Just because someone is attracted to both sexes does not mean that they therefore must be with both at the same time. This logic implies that a heterosexual man cannot be monogamous if he feels any level of attraction to more than one woman. Additionally, there are several examples of heterosexual polygamy; a popular one is TLC’s show Sister Wives in which the man is heterosexual but married to several women. If a heterosexual person can be polygamous, then bisexual people can just as easily be monogamous because sexuality and poly/monogamy are separate issues. The mindset that bisexuals are inherently polygamous due to their sexuality (and thus incapable of faithfulness in a relationship) is especially harmful considering that it is a stigma they face both from heterosexuals and, at times, within the LGBT+ community. The morality of polygamy is a hotly debated topic, especially in countries where religious views cause severe stigmatization. While it understandably would be difficult to handle legally since the rights of married couples would need to be adjusted to accommodate for more than two individuals, morally I feel that it can be justified. If all participants of the relationship are consenting adults that are aware and willing, then no harm is being done; it is only when the terms of the relationship are violated that it becomes immoral.

The fourth paragraph suggests that America is being subjected to LGBT+ propaganda that would encourage others to also become LGBT+. Examples of said propaganda are not given aside from a quote from Ashland University’s LGBT club stating that they believe receiving support at school helps people “come out” because, for many, it is their first time away from their families. The implication is that anything in support of the movement must be propaganda with the overall argument being that exposure to pro-LGBT+ messages will encourage others to become part of

the LGBT+ community. From a logical standpoint, this makes no sense – if being immersed in a heteronormative society does not stop people from having other sexualities, then why would being exposed to LGBT+ messages make someone identify as LGBT+? Furthermore, research in recent years has increasingly demonstrated that sexuality is largely biological and not a controllable choice. Attempts to address sexuality as a behavioral issue through means such as conversion therapy have been catastrophic failures that are actively harmful rather than simply ineffective. To justify the stigmatization of certain sexualities by claiming it is a choice is to willfully ignore the growing evidence otherwise. To claim that it is immoral despite the inability of people to choose their sexuality is to argue that people should be

stigmatized for factors they cannot control and which harm no one (in which case, why should eye or hair color be any different?). An easy way to experiment with the idea of sexuality being inherent rather than behavioral is for someone to test themselves – as a heterosexual, can one force themselves to feel attraction to someone of the same sex? The mindset that any pro-LGBT+ message or action is automatically an attempt to “convert” members of society to becoming non-heterosexual is, aside from illogical, also harmful in that it adds to the stigma that LGBT+ people face. People make assumptions on incorrect information that only further the stigmatization the LGBT+ community already faces.

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SUBMITTED BY JACOB NESTLE

I’m proud to be an Eagle today. It is fantastic to see that the Collegian and the Ashland University community have been dedicated to and practicing some of our most basic rights: freedom of speech and the press. Recently, Ben McClay sent you a letter in response to one of your own articles. I feel that letter needs a response of its own.

My goal is not to attack the particular arguments Ben made, but to provide my own feelings about the larger issue at hand. Liberty itself is at stake here. As President of Young Americans for Liberty here on campus, that’s near and dear to my heart.

Ben, I respect that you cared deeply enough about an issue to get your opinion published. Using your right of free speech to argue for what you believe in is always admirable in itself. So thank you, Ben, for that willingness to debate.

I would also like to say that the response to his letter has been better than I could have ever expected. His opinions are controversial, and the topic of sexuality is one many people care deeply about, whether members of the LGBT community or not. And I have never been prouder to be a part of the Ashland community than in the moments after his article was published. Many would probably respond with hate in response to that letter. But the LGBT community and allies, though standing up for themselves and their identities, did not simply strike back with hatred. Many responded well and re-

spectfully. Reading their responses made me happy to be an Eagle.

One stood out for its thoroughness. Christian “CJ” Schneider wrote a post on Facebook that was a point-by-point disagreement with Ben’s article. Again, I won’t get into the weeds here, but one quote stood out. CJ stood firmly for LGBT rights and inclusion, saying “Spoiler alert: IT’S OKAY TO BE WHO YOU WANT AS LONG AS YOU DON’T HARM OTHERS.”

That’s the sentiment I believe in wholeheartedly: self-ownership, self-determination, self-government. The debate over ethics in the realm of LGBT rights is a discussion that will likely go on for some time. But CJ’s sentiment is the one I’ll champion.

LGBT individuals have every right to be who they are when they aren’t hurting anyone by it. If we really believe in individual rights and individuality, we stick to that principle.

That’s liberty. We can talk about the details, but we have to accept the principle first.

I’m so glad to see that the AU community has. At Young Americans for Liberty, we try to have those kind of conversations.

We remember that the people we disagree with are just that – people. They’re more than the positions they hold.

As long as they respect my liberty, they’re free to hold whatever views they want – they’re free to self-govern. That’s what true liberty is all about.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The views expressed in the columns do not necessarily reflect the views of *The Collegian* or Ashland University.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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