

June 8, 2004

Dear Editor,

Consider the emotional and visceral response that the prospect of gay marriage evokes in so many people, especially those of a traditional religious persuasion. Where and why do these passionate reactions originate? Next consider how much our personal and social attention is focused on human sexual reproduction. In fact, our gossip, humor and fears are almost obsessively fascinated with these details in our selves and others. Why is that?

Perhaps if our ancestors, not only as a species, but also as social groups, were not so focused and driven by these deeply and strongly held emotions, reinforced by social taboos and other conventions, they would not have successfully reproduced the descendents, that we ourselves are today! In other words although every single one of our ancestors managed to reproduce before they died, the same cannot be said of every human being that ever lived to reproductive age.

And, of course, we inherit the very genes and social norms that our ancestors passed on to us, by virtue of them being successful in their reproductive efforts. On the other hand, think about this- historically, any behavior that limits human reproduction, be it gay marriage, contraception or abortion, is genetically and socially detrimental to the often unstated and unconscious goal of out-reproducing the competition, be they mosquitoes or rival human social groups.

I suggest that these ideas might explain the fervent and zealous reactions that the issue of gay marriage raises in so many people. Now finally, I ask you to consider the possibility that, perhaps as members of a civilized, technological and educated species, we can quite effectively survive and compete with the ideas in our heads, as opposed to merely with the emotions "via" our loins.

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