

Philosophy of love and sex



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This paper is concerned with discussing the concept of human sexuality as it pertains to polyamory. In their article Polyamory-what it is and what it isn't, authors McCullough and Hall discuss the liberating experience that comes with the lifestyle of polyamory as well as dispelling negative uninformed conclusions that are not a definition of polyamory. The article examines the inept description of the negative stereotype of the practice and makes a compelling argument of the practice promoting acceptance rather than rejection. McCullough and Hall's review on polyamory sheds light on the discourse and practice of polyamory as loving more than one person within the realms of integrity and honesty. It is the notion of having multiple committed relationships with more than one person at a time with consent to knowledge with all the parties involved. Presently, other relationship alternatives i. e. polyamory are slowly gaining a modicum of acceptance because of blanket assumptions that have diminished the sanctity of monogamous unions. Despite this apparent crisis within our society, most people desire monogamy and choose to be monogamous for the purpose of deepening of bonding into a lifelong commitment. The longer you maintain and grow with an individual in a committed relationship, the longer and stronger the bond. The notion of how natural, innate and viable polyamory is assumed to be, is debatable. Furthermore, the exponentially complex structure of a polyamorous union makes for a much more complicated relationship than monogamy. In relation to other forms of relationships, monogamy is currently the only acceptable, valid and highly recognized structure of human sexual relationships. Most people's beliefs are a

hodgepodge of various philosophies and practices that they found to have worked for them. In this paper, I argue against polyamorous relationships as a rationalized model of human sexuality that adds a dimension of complexity to the dynamics of a relationship.

The authors in their article present an argument for polyamory being a celebration of the human nature to want to enjoy intimacy through physical and emotional bonding without restriction in the unnatural social system of confining oneself to a relationship with just one partner. Polyamorous relationships are thought to be natural and are supposedly found throughout the universe. However, natural does not necessarily translate to better or superior. Polyamory is an individual's expression of the preference to not stay monogamous, rather than a natural instinct. Generalizations perpetuated about monogamy as being unnatural and against our human nature are imprecise. Rising above nature is not synonymous with shaming personal preference. Imposed personal preferences in favour of polyamory being more inclined with our human nature has deemed monogamy unnatural and insurmountable, when the choice to practice either or is really a matter of preference. Furthermore, the authors assert that the western stereotype of monogamy symbolizes confinement, which is against our human nature. The authors challenge monogamy and demonstrate that this constructed image of the West serves to restrict and confine individuals into a relationship that is not necessarily the most ideal, given evidence such as high divorce rates. The evidence given by the authors to support polyamory emphasize the nature of this practice that is not only found in humans, but in 95% of other species as well. However, animals do not possess a conscience

like human beings do. Their motive for being polyamorous is an instinct necessary for bonding and survival. Despite how natural to humanity polyamory might seem, it is a lifestyle prone to problematic complications. It is my contention that when love is divided and scattered even with the best of intentions, there is bound to be a cost and a loss. As far as the human race goes, most individuals have the preference of being the sole crowning jewel in their partner's eyes, the being the only focus of their lover's attention. Completely free and unbridled love can be dangerous, indecent and even irresponsible. We cannot allow ourselves to love frivolously, in any way that feels good, without any thought to the consequences that may be dismal. A relationship is much more fulfilling when you find one person whom you can give your full being and attention to. The true test of commitment is when you choose to dedicate your attention to one person in multiple ways, instead of availing yourself to multiple people. The human race is not wired to be naturally secure. We possess traits that make us egotistically insecure. To a certain extent, we are a species that exhibit a degree of possessiveness and jealousy. We are not wired to consent to sharing especially when it pertains to the object of our affection. By virtue of these traits, it is not in our nature to be polyamorous.

When examining the level at which one can be open in a relationship in polyamory, we need to truthfully expound on the level at which an individual can be realistically be an open book to their partners specifically pertaining to sexual intimacy. Intimacy is a powerful thing when shared between two individuals and can create feelings of jealousy and insecurity when shared with more than two. Perhaps the notion of no jealousy in polyamorous

relationship is a forcefully learned comportment under the guise of being secure and tolerant. Trust and completely open lines of communication may be compromised in this union, resulting in competitiveness and difficulty in communication, for fear of hurting your partners with absolute honesty. It may lead to internal conflict of how much honesty can be handled versus sparing your partners' feelings. According to the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, "there are many strains that accompany the keeping of so large and important a secret. There is the fear of being discovered and shunned by people who might disapprove. There is the stress that comes along with the lack of recognition of one's partners: for example, the partner who is not invited to family gatherings and office parties may feel excluded and devalued. If the polyamorous individual has children who are not aware of the arrangement, there is the need to arrange a time and place to meet in private, rather than in the comfort of one's home (NCSF, 2010)."

Polyamorous relationships take an infinite variety of configurations connected together for various purposes. The constellation of relationships in a polyamorous arrangement creates the complication of not having a mutual boundary. It takes a lot of time and energy to reach an agreement on what boundaries are agreeable for the relationship. It requires constant negotiation and communication. Being able to be integrated into the flow of constant love and attention may be satisfying but can also be deeply frustrating. This brings up the question of authenticity in polyamorous unions. A significant relationship should have the look and feel of solidity, security, and safety. Monogamy offers a sense of permanence in this regard. The security of knowing that the object of your affection will not be tempted

and swayed by someone who can offer something different and new is an added advantage to monogamy. If we do not pathologize and make this notion of security wrong with respect to monogamy, we can appreciate the ingredients that feed this sense of security. Truth telling, reliability and disclosure in monogamy contribute to true solidity and security. The antecedent to the problem of defining polyamory is the lack of proper definition in these arrangements. In my opinion, it is essentially no different than dating. The pattern in polyamorous relationships is quintessential to the monogamous tradition of dating before finally settling on one partner whom we make a commitment to. Therefore, a polyamorous relationship does not promote longevity and commitment, it is essentially long term dating. I believe those who choose to engage in a polyamorous relationship are optimistic that eventually they may perhaps form a bond that might lead to exclusivity. This was evident in former polyamorist and author Jessica. “ On the other hand, sometimes I wonder if maybe I wasn’t waiting for that very thing. Not consciously. I was very happy with my partners, and hadn’t really thought about giving them up, but I did have a certain desire for a deeper connection, which might have planted the seed in my mind. I think poly might have been a phase for me. Maybe all I can really take away from my experience is that you just never know what’s going to stumble into your life and change it completely. I never expected to become this conventional, but I also never expected to be this happy (Ebacher 2014).” Being monogamous is being involved. Being polyamorous is synonymous with long term courting. The authors mention in their article the “ Cultures of multiple fathers” study which revealed that the “ children of women who had sexual relationships with many men had better survival rates – because of “ potential” paternity,

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they were less vulnerable (Hall, McCullough 2003)”. Although the paternity ensures less vulnerability and more survival rates, the downfall is the lack of stability and continuity in having to keep up with the different or new partners during the course of a polyamorous relationship. More people implies more caretakers for the children, however, the caretakers do not necessarily have to comprise of individuals intertwined in a complex and convoluted union of polyamory.

A healthy dose of jealousy and vulnerability are necessary in any relationship. The essence of being vulnerable is real courage. You have to risk projected rejection every step of the way. This is a vital part of a relationship that lacks in polyamorous unions and is present in monogamy. Granted, the people we are in a relationship(s) with are more tolerant of us than we are.

People in a poly union may surface project you but it's the projected rejection that is internalized. When we internalize rejection, fear comes in. We hide more and sense more, to protect ourselves. We then tip toe around so many issues to avoid rocking the boat. The impact is impoverished lives and relationships. It takes a lot of self-knowledge and insight to look reflect on the things that make you jealous. Without vulnerability, there is no intimacy. A monogamous relationship recognizes healthy jealousy as a tool that promotes open and honest communication which facilitates growth in the relationship.

McCullough and Hall in their article contend the notion that monogamy stipulates polyamory is unnatural and sinful. Polyamory is unnatural because

monogamy is the only valid and highly recognized structure of human sexual relationships; it is sinful because it is a moral state not approved by God and stigmatized by society. Lack of recognition is partly due to polyamory not having the benefit of appropriate scripts to turn to for details on how to properly interact within this lifestyle, resulting in role conflict. Nature has naturally predisposed rational human beings to want to develop continuing and enduring exclusive sexual relationships in the form of marriage for the purpose of sexual bonding and reproductive success. The moral argument against polyamory is that sexual intimacy should be reserved for those in a committed long term relationship (i. e. marriage) and the notion that it is acceptable to share intimacy with more than one person fall outside the confines of a marriage, and thus qualify as immoral (adultery). Polyamory is a static state that removes the “ old” label of traditional relationship values and encourages evolution that is much more about being fluid and open and exploring what is possible outside the realms of monogamy. This threatens to destroy the domestic and traditional structure. We are designed for pair bonding when it relates to intimacy, and to achieve a deep, meaningful relationship, partnership is critical. The union of a man and woman allows for a greater sense of intimacy that is shared when a covenant is made between two individuals only. Author Vincent Punzo in his work on morality and human sexuality stated that “ a man and woman engaging in sexual intercourse have united themselves as intimately and as totally as physically possible for two human beings. Their union is not simple a union of organs, but is as intimate as total a physical union of two selves as is possible o achievement. A total commitment to another means a commitment to him in his historical existence. Such a commitment is not simply a matter of words

or feelings, however strong. It involves a full existential sharing on the part of two beings of the burdens, opportunities, and challenges of their historical existence (Punzo, 2002).” It is taking responsibility and choosing to be accountable to one another for the duration of your existence together. According to David Hume, “ there must be a union of male and female for the education of the young, and that this union must be of considerable duration (Hume, 2009)”. Monogamy offers an ideal relationship model that is of considerable duration with a lower turnover rate of partners, which gives an example to children of the benefits and success of monogamy. There are not many relationship models for polyamory as compared to monogamy. The justification of high divorce rates in comparison to monogamy gives the impression that polyamory is without its limitation. Polyamory, just like any other relationship has its own share of relationship issues irregardless of whether this type of union is solidified in marriage. It is interesting to note that polyamory liberates and encourages freedom to express and experience love without the confines of marriage or commitment to just one person. It should also be noted that monogamy offers the same freedom of experiencing love in a multitude of ways, with just one partner. McCullough and Hall reach the conclusion that we ought to consider the happiness of our partner before our own by allowing someone else to fulfill their needs, not as a symbol of our inadequacy, but as a means to share in the responsibilities of ensuring the happiness of those we love. It should also be obvious that the very qualities which attracted you to your partners are seen as desirable by someone else therefore it should come as no surprise when someone else seeks the attention of your partner. If we adopt this line of thinking, we are accepting the notion of infinitely pursuing every individual we will ever find

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attractive. Given this thought process, it is important to note that attraction to another individual other than our only object of affection in monogamy is inevitable. Nonetheless, we are very capable of curbing our desire to want to pursue the object of our attraction romantically. You can place an incalculable and inestimable value on the person you share an exclusive relationship with, by respectfully honouring them and exercising moral virtue.

In conclusion, we can choose to transcend the hypothetical idea that we are naturally inclined to be polyamorous and have multiple relationships. We have a conscience, something animals do not possess, therefore this comparison is invalid. Conscience could never evolve because it is not genetic. We have the capability to control our impulses by not acting on them, as it relates to attraction to other people. The richness of a relationship gets diminished when we include more than two people in a union. Faith and trust in a monogamous relationship means that you will respect each other in this sacred union despite what attraction you might feel for someone else. It is very possible to curb our appetite for unhealthy food to prevent obesity and promote healthy eating habits. By the same token, we are able to resist the urge to want to be with other people simply because we find them attractive. Monogamy has a healthiness to it that enhances life expectancy and happiness. It has to be maintained and constantly developed to enjoy the benefits of longevity and healthy lives for those involved. When you minimize it, you lessen its value and decrease the likelihood of all potential gain that comes with it. We live in a different time

where several factors have unhinged us from the somewhat misacted evolutionary biology that stipulates we are a non-monogamous species.

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