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Sex and Relationships

John Corvino, “We Shouldn’t Even be Having this Discussion”

Essay Questions

Could it ever be wrong to have a moral debate? That is, could it ever be *so* clear that something is morally okay (or morally wrong) that we shouldn’t even discuss it anymore? If so, can you give some examples? What do they have in common? Why are topics like these off the table? And if you think it’s *always* fine to have a moral debate, why do you think that? What’s John Corvino’s view here, and what do you think about it?

A good essay will:

- Include a thesis that’s focused and appropriate given the assignment.
- Clearly and succinctly state the main argument for the thesis.
- Correctly identify and defend the argument’s controversial premises using sound reasoning, well-chosen examples, insightful analogies, etc.
- Explain Corvino’s position on whether “obvious” moral truths should be up for debate and respond to his position.

In his essay, John Corvino discusses the importance of assessing something’s merits and faults in an informed way. That’s why his essay contains a number of personal anecdotes. In your essay, explain Corvino’s defense of first-person accounts in some ethical debates. Then respond to the following, “Are there any cases where first-person accounts would make it *harder* to make an ethical assessment?” If so, offer an example and explain the risk. If not, explain why first-person accounts are always important.

A good essay will:

- Recreate and explain Corvino’s position in favor of offering first-person accounts in the context of the homosexuality debate.

- Either argue that there are at least some moral arguments where first-person accounts are unnecessary for coming to a conclusion on the subject, explaining at least one example.
- Or, argue that there aren't any moral arguments where it's unimportant to learn from first-person accounts when making a moral assessment.

In the section, “Why Argue?,” John Corvino discusses the way that he thinks about morality. In your essay, explain what he means when he uses the word “morality.” Then, offer an argument in favor of, or against, this way of talking about morality.

A good essay will:

- Reproduce and explain Corvino's description of the term “morality.”
- Either argue that this is the right way to think about morality and ethics.
- Or, argue that this is a flawed way of thinking about morality and ethics.

Quiz Questions

- 1) What does Corvino say about his relationship to Glenn Stanton, an evangelical Christian and defender of the religious right?
 - a) They are professional rivals
 - b) They are enemies
 - c) They are friends**
 - d) They are married
 - e) None of the above

- 2) *Corvino offers a description of the term “morality.” Which of the following does NOT fit Corvino's description?
 - a) Morality is quintessentially a matter for public concern
 - b) Morality is about how we treat each other
 - c) Morality is about the kind of society we want to be
 - d) Morality is essentially a private matter**
 - e) None of the above

- 3) * Corvino affirms that there is no relationship between morality and the law.
- a) True
 - b) False**
- 4) Corvino believes that the claim that “we ought not judge one another” is misguided. Which of the following is NOT one of his reasons why?
- a) It is politically misguided because prosecution requires judgment**
 - b) It is rhetorically misguided because it makes liberals seem as if they have conceded “moral values” to the other side
 - c) It is morally misguided because the moral tone of society is everyone’s responsibility
 - d) It is logically misguided because it is self-refuting
 - e) None of the above
- 5) * Which of the following explains how Corvino thinks about gay people’s ability to make arguments on homosexuality?
- a) No one should be having moral arguments about this discussion at all
 - b) Only gay people can speak with authority on homosexuality; they know it firsthand
 - c) Some gay people can be trusted to put bias aside when making arguments, but not all
 - d) One’s sexual orientation doesn’t affect the soundness of that person’s arguments**
 - e) Gay people can’t be trusted to assess their own experience
- 6) * Which of the following is Corvino’s positive case for homosexuality?
- a) Same-sex relationships are a human universal
 - b) Same-sex relationships make some people happy**
 - c) Same-sex individuals are morally good people
 - d) Same-sex relationships are necessary for a healthy society

- e) Same-sex individuals make positive contributions to society
- 7) What does Corvino have to say about the role of sex in relationships?
- a) Sex is pleasurable, and pleasure is the source of *all* value, including the moral value of relationships
 - b) Physical intimacy is *always* connected to other forms of intimacy
 - c) Sex, whether it is had in the context of homosexual or heterosexual relationships, only has moral value in long-term relationships
 - d) Sex does not really play an important role in relationships, even romantic ones
 - e) **There are good reasons to doubt that one can remove the sexual aspect of relationships and have all others remain the same**
- 8) What does Corvino have to say about the question, “Where does morality come from?”
- a) **The question is ambiguous**
 - b) The question must be answered to resolve the homosexuality debate
 - c) The question has an obvious answer
 - d) The question is nonsensical
 - e) None of the above
- 9) * Corvino argues that there is a straightforward and simple way of explaining where moral truth comes from.
- a) True
 - b) **False**
- 10) Corvino suggests that there are moral arguments that should not be dignified with a response.
- a) True
 - b) **False**

Media Links

Conversation Stoppers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9D6IDPaR70>

Where Does Morality Come From?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_iQT-vs_X4&list=PLsolewfmUXE9fkKyw1PQN9UWe4K16zF2c&index=4

Loving My (LGBT) Neighbor (Glenn Stanton)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H572QLqz9S8>

Nicole Dular, “The Ethics of Ghosting”

Essay Questions

Nicole Dular talks about men’s response to women’s rejection in dating as one instance of misogyny. In your essay, explain what she means by “misogyny” and identify another example of misogyny in action. Given what Dular thinks about ghosting, what might she say about how women should respond to your example? Be specific, drawing from parts of Dular’s essay to address the situation you’ve identified.

A good essay will:

- Reproduce and explain Dular’s definition of the term “misogyny.”
- Offer an example that accurately fits this definition of misogyny, and that is not simply another instance of men responding to women’s rejection in the context of dating.
- Successfully apply at least one of the concepts that Dular introduces in her essay to the problem that the author has identified in order to show how such a response would combat this instance of misogyny.

Nicole Dular says: “It is morally permissible for someone to take actions that would prevent them from experiencing undeserved harm.” In your essay, come up with a case that might pose a problem for this claim. How would the claim need to be qualified to deal with your case? Then, explain how Dular might respond to this objection.

A good essay will:

- Successfully develop and defend an objection to the claim that “It is morally permissible for someone to take actions that would prevent them from experiencing undeserved harm.”
- Outline a response to this objection that serves as a defense of Dular’s position.

Nicole Dular argues that ghosting as silence can act as a way of blocking misogyny. In your essay, explain what “blocking” means and why Dular argues that it can be a morally

praiseworthy act. Do you agree that blocking is “crucially important as a response to bigoted speech?” Why or why not? Develop an example that supports your argument.

A good essay will:

- Reproduce and explain Dular’s definition of the term “blocking.”
- Either argue that blocking is a crucial response to bigoted speech.
- Or, argue that blocking is not a crucial response to bigoted speech.
- Offer an example that helps to illustrate the author’s argument.

Quiz Questions

- 1) *Which of the following best captures Dular’s thesis?
 - a) Ghosting is always morally impermissible
 - b) Ghosting is always morally permissible
 - c) Ghosting is permissible when certain conditions are met
 - d) It is morally permissible for women to ghost men**
 - e) It is morally permissible for men to ghost women

- 2) * Dular proposes three common responses that men have to women’s rejection. Which of the following is NOT one of those responses?
 - a) Physical violence**
 - b) Guilt Tripping
 - c) Denigration
 - d) Argumentation
 - e) None of the above

- 3) * Which of the following is the definition of “misogyny” that Dular employs in her essay?
 - a) Historically, a system of domination where women used to suffer because their rights were restricted

- b) The belief set that men are biologically superior to and morally better than women
 - c) An idea created by feminists that helps to explain the problems and injustices that women currently experience
 - d) Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women
 - e) **A system that functions to uphold male dominance by punishing women who violate patriarchal norm**
- 4) What does “objectification” mean?
- a) A person is treated as an object, in the sense that they are viewed as having the same moral status as inanimate entities
 - b) **A person is treated as an object, either in the sense that they can be used to satisfy others’ desires or that they have no desires of their own**
 - c) An object is treated as a person, in the sense that it is seen as having equal or greater value than a human being
 - d) Some object or person is used for the sole purpose of bringing pleasure to the person using that thing or person
 - e) The expression of something abstract, like sounds or images, in a concrete form
- 5) When a man demands emotional labor from a woman, this is an example of _____:
- a) Denigration
 - b) **Guilt tripping**
 - c) Physical violence
 - d) Objectification
 - e) Argumentation
- 6) Dular argues that ghosting can be seen as a form of what two things?
- a) Denigration and objectification
 - b) Blocking and gaslighting
 - c) Empowerment and coalition building
 - d) **Self-protection and resistance**
 - e) Empowerment and resistance

- 7) * Dular suggests that there is an analogy between ghosting and _____:
- a) **Getting a vaccine**
 - b) Inflicting a wound
 - c) Carrying pepper spray
 - d) Calling for help
 - e) Riding a stolen horse
- 8) * If someone were to want to engage in the linguistic act of blocking after hearing, “I’ve named this horse James Bond,” which of the following would be an act of blocking?
- a) Simply saying, “No”
 - b) Forwarding a logical argument against that claim
 - c) **Shaking one’s head**
 - d) Asking that the speaker repeat themselves
 - e) All of the above
- 9) Dular argues that there are cases where a speaker’s remarks are not even deserving of a response.
- a) **True**
 - b) False
- 10) Dular argues that in a perfect world, ghosting would be an accepted part of dating relationships.
- a) True
 - b) **False**

Media Links

What Psychologists Can Tell You About Ghosting

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QW7rPif2RBQ>

What is the Deal With Ghosting?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSuOzhUmj7o>

Why People Ghost — And How to Get Over It

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/smarter-living/why-people-ghost-and-how-to-get-over-it.html>

What Does Misogyny Look Like?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/08/style/misogyny-women-history-photographs.html>

Confessions of a Soft Ghoster

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-gb/2019/09/8446769/soft-ghosting-dating-trend>

C. E. Abbate, “Racial Preferences in Dating”

Essay Questions

Imagine a case where a Black woman swipes left on the profiles of all white men. What would Abbate say about this way of using a dating app? Be sure to draw from Abbate’s essay when defending your argument.

A good essay will:

- Craft and defend a thesis that applies Abbate’s moral arguments to the case of Black people refusing to date white people.
- Successfully apply the relevant portions of Abbate’s argument, perhaps especially drawing from her explanations of discrimination, *The Equal Inherent Value and Worth Principle*, and the history of interracial relationships.

Abbate says that some instances of discrimination are more wrong than others. Do you agree that it’s wrong, even if only a little, to refuse to date people who are unattractive—as she suggests? Why or why not? When defending your position, consider including examples of other preferences that Abbate doesn’t consider, such as a refusal to date unintelligent people or wealthy people. What does Abbate’s position commit us to when it comes to the ethics of considering romantic partners?

A good essay will:

- Craft and defend a thesis that responds to the claim, “It’s wrong to refuse to date unattractive people.”
- Likely include an example of discriminating based on other preferences that Abbate doesn’t explore in her essay, such as the preference not to date unintelligent or wealthy people.
- Explore what kinds of commitments Abbate’s position leads to when it comes to the ethics of dating in general.

Toward the close of her essay, Abbate says that people may have a right to act viciously or immorally. In your essay, explain what it means to have a right to do the wrong thing. Then, consider how we might encourage virtuous and moral action even in cases where people have the right to act poorly. What kinds of steps can we take to discourage bad actions that people have the right to perform?

A good essay will:

- Explain Abbate's claim that people may have a right to behave immorally, ideally by providing at least one original example.
- Explore how some person or group might encourage moral action on an issue where others have the right—perhaps a legal right—to behave immorally.