


The truth in diversity: every difference is different

Is there any standard for the healthily human?

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We are constantly asked to celebrate diversity, but if we talk too much about the ways human beings differ and why these differences are important, we are likely to be accused of stereotyping. Diversity is, or

at least so I have argued, [a false goddess](#). But human beings are nonetheless a diverse lot.

Every difference is different. Sometimes our differences are biological, sometimes they are chosen, and sometimes they are matter of social construction. The lines between these kinds of difference will always be contested. And since we are social beings, even socially constructed differences are in a sense natural. As Roger Scruton pointed out in his [Sexual Desire](#), the fact that a difference is socially constructed does not mean that it either can or should be abolished.

Sex is a natural difference if anything is. To deny its human importance would require us to ignore the social importance of sexuality and reproduction. Gay men and lesbians are different sorts of people in ways that lead to tensions between the two groups. (See Dudley Clenenden, [Out for Good](#), and Sarah Miles and Eric Rofes, eds., [Opposite Sex](#).)

As Aristotle made clear long ago, rare cases of chromosomal abnormality and anomalous genitals do not change the fact that we are a two-sexed species: dogs are four legged animals although there are three-legged dogs. Even post-operative transsexuals retain, in every cell of their bodies, the reminder that, biologically speaking, they are of the sex with which they were born. The sex war, though exaggerated by radical feminists, is not entirely a myth.

Gender on the other hand refers to the ways in which individuals and societies have understood and responded to the facts of sex difference (see my collection [Sex and Gender](#) with Celia Wolf-Devine). There are more of these than the [58 recognized by Facebook](#). The formula *LGBTQ +* opens up into an endless array of possibilities, including A

for adulterer, *F* for foot fetishist, *I* for intersex, *N* for narcissist, *W* for sex worker, and *P* for pedophile.

In our world, there are aggressively masculine, sometimes promiscuous men, women whose whole lives center on reproduction and childrearing, monogamous spouses of both sexes, some of them childless; self-described nymphomaniacs, asexual men, gay celibate priests, bisexual men who find happiness with a woman, lesbians who become heterosexual because they want children and a man to help care for them, heterosexual women who become lesbian for political reasons, family men who cheat on their wives with men, and many other possibilities besides. Which of these represent healthy human possibilities is an urgent question.

It is a mistake to speak of a gender, or to count genders, unless we are talking grammar. And nothing follows about which gender configurations are healthy and which ones are not. Gender ideology is an attempt to exercise the will to power, individual or collective, on the facts of biology, often sponsored by the same people who insist on the 'inconvenient truth' of climate change.

One diversity officer remarked that no one knows what diversity is, but racial diversity is at least unmistakable. But it is not clear what counts as a race. Are Hispanics a race? And if so are Cubans Hispanics? (See here for a [No](#) answer.) Are [Middle Easterners and North Africans](#)?

Is there a race of Asians that includes both East Indians and Japanese? Are there any answers to these questions beyond the dictates of the Census Bureau? According to one definition, a black person is someone insulted or discriminated against as black – a

principle that gives too much power to schoolyard bullies, who are capable of deciding that an eccentric student is gay though they know nothing about his sexuality.

It is shameful that people of all colors make much of so superficial a characteristic as pigmentation, but there are deeper issues just below the surface of racial issues. President Barack Obama failed to bring about a post-racial America. He himself was in an important sense not a black American, since he was not the descendant of American slaves. Even Liberians, who are descended from freed slaves settled in East Africa, are different from the people who are in old fashioned but accurate language called *Negroes*.

Who we are depends on what our ancestors, physical and spiritual were; their influence lives in the way we think, feel, and imagine. No one chooses his or her parents or ancestors, or the cultural influences to which he or she was exposed, especially before becoming capable of reflective thought. And even small differences are often a source of conflict.

Educated people need to know about the many different ways human beings have differed throughout history, and continue to do so. Yet near the core of diversitarian ideology is an attack on the idea of a normal human being, commonly pictured as a straight white male (usually a cultural Protestant). As [Alfred Adler said](#), "The only normal people are the ones you don't know very well."

The more we know about human difference, however, the more urgent becomes the question: beyond the transient mores of our society, and the agendas of people in power, is there any standard for what is healthily human? We need a concept of normality to keep us all from

flying off into space. And so we must reject the cult of diversity, just because human beings are so diverse.

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