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## **What's Wrong With Homosexuality?** John Corvino

For the last twenty years, John Corvino--widely known as the author of the weekly column "The Gay Moralist" --has traversed the country responding to moral and religious arguments against same-sex relationships. In this timely book, he shares that experience--addressing the standard objections to homosexuality and offering insight into the culture wars more generally.

Is homosexuality unnatural? Does the Bible condemn it? Are people born gay (and should it matter either way)? Corvino approaches such questions with precision, sensitivity, and good humor. In the process, he makes a fresh case for moral engagement, forcefully rejecting the idea that morality is a "private matter." This book appears at a time when same-sex marriage is being hotly debated across the U.S. Many people object to such marriage on the grounds that same-sex relationships are immoral, or at least, that they do not deserve the same social recognition as heterosexual relationships. Unfortunately, the traditional rhetoric of gay-rights advocates--which emphasizes privacy and tolerance--fails to meet this objection. Legally speaking, when it comes to marriage, "tolerance" might be enough, Corvino concedes, but socially speaking, marriage requires more. Marriage is more than just a relationship between two individuals, recognized by the state. It is also a relationship between those individuals and a larger community. The fight for same-sex marriage, ultimately, is a fight for full inclusion in the moral fabric. What is needed is a positive case for moral approval--which is what Corvino unabashedly offers here.

Corvino blends a philosopher's precision with a light touch that is full of humanity and wit. This volume captures the voice of one of the most rational participants in a national debate noted for generating more heat than light.

## **What's Wrong With Homosexuality? Details**

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## From Reader Review What's Wrong With Homosexuality? for online ebook

### Fred Kohn says

When I saw this book sitting on the public library shelf, I almost passed it up, thinking, "What more could possibly be said about the subject?" Nevertheless I found myself picking it up and leafing through it. When I saw that the author was a philosophy professor who happened to be gay, and that the few passages I happened upon seemed to be fairly insightful and original, I decided to take the plunge. Alas, those few passages were not representative of the entire book. Don't get me wrong: the writing is clear and the logical argument is sound. If you are one of those who has been living under a rock for the past decade and needs an introduction to the standard anti-gay arguments and their debunking, this is a very fine book indeed.

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### Taryn says

[This review can also be found at Bookwanderer!]

I would have subtitled John Corvino's What's Wrong with Homosexuality? "How to Argue with a Homophobe--And Win!." At its core, this nonfiction treatise on gay rights outlines the most popular arguments against the gay rights movement, and dismantles them handily.

Corvino is a professor of philosophy, and it shows in his writing. He is careful, logical, and successfully follows arguments to their root by asking "why?". (It should also be said that this book is very, very readable--Corvino's style is more conversational than formal!) His approach appreciated the nuances of each argument against gay rights, including "it's not natural" and "the Bible says it's bad, so it's bad," and addressed each one from a moral standpoint. I found his arguments against biblical condemnation of homosexuality perhaps the most interesting and the most helpful, as it seems to be one of the most pervasive strains, at least in U.S. discourse. I have a very limited knowledge of Christian texts, and Corvino's ability to cite from and analyze Biblical passages was extremely helpful. One very telling part of the chapter has Corvino providing more than 10 different translations of the same passage about Sodom and Gomorrah, both showing the way the language evolves (as the translators become more and more modern) and how it can actually be quite difficult to pin down definitive definitions of certain words.

Corvino is also careful not to demonize (a word he feels strongly about) the opposition. He considers Glenn Stanton of Focus on the Family a friend, and can have civil debates with him. This absolutely boggled my mind. Not to get political, but...I'm about to get political, so look away if politicking talk makes steam shoot out of your ears. (Sorry I'm not sorry!) I consider myself a progressive liberal, and it is very, very hard for me to separate my political beliefs from my personality and identity. I do not have very many Republican or conservative friends, and those who I do have are friends from childhood whose Facebook posts I hid on my newsfeed long ago. I feel that our values differ too substantially for any sort of close or personal relationship to exist. But Corvino is somehow able to remain friendly with people who literally think he is following the will of Satan, and presses them in their beliefs without being condescending or incredulous. Corvino is a stronger person than I. Pretty sure if someone told me to my face that I deserved to burn in hell, I wouldn't be too civil in my response...

This was "only" a four star read for me because I felt that race (and racism) were not treated with the same depth and respect as gay-rights supporters and the same-sex marriage struggle were. Admittedly, these were

not the foci of the book, and Corvino says as much; he also explains that the book is not meant to cover the struggles of the entire LGBTQ community. And yet...I suppose it's a bit essentialist of me, but some things are always, always wrong. Sure, you can try to be sympathetic, to understand the cultural context and the societal mores of the time, but to attribute casual racism in the United States to "a blind spot" is bizarre. It's apologist, frankly, and Corvino's attributing of these views to his grandparents seems to ignore the fact that institutional and other forms of racism still exist. From an author who otherwise seems very sensitive and progressive, this "blind spot" was a hard pill to swallow.

For a well-reasoned and deeply-researched text on the moral arguments for marriage equality, What's Wrong with Homosexuality? more than fits the bill. I think it's an essential read for anyone who considers themselves allies of the gay rights movement, and a morally-imperative read for those people who think homosexuality is wrong/a choice/unnatural. I myself would definitely read more of Corvino's clear and concise philosophical arguments in the future.

I received What's Wrong with Homosexuality? free for review from publisher Oxford University Press through Netgalley. It will be published March 1, 2013.

Bookwanderer Rating: Four out of five stars

Bookwanderer Tagline: "When a taboo interferes with people's happiness with no apparent justification, it is probably time to rethink it. Traditions have value, but do too does the process of ongoing moral reflection."

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## **Mack says**

Informative book that takes a step-by-step approach in refuting many of the most common and (perceived to be) well-thought reasons for opposing homosexuality and homosexual couples. Corvino's prose is easy to understand and reads fluidly, even when explaining some of the weightier philosophical issues at-hand. Indeed, there are moments when the book invokes a smirk from its sardonic tone. This book provides the rhetorical rejoinders necessary to combat anti-gay prejudice wherever it's encountered.

Note: Reviewed copy was an ARC received through NetGalley.

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## **Peebee says**

If you have a homophobe in your life, I urge you to buy them this book, and then refuse to debate anything dealing with homosexuality until they have demonstrated that they've read the book. Unfortunately, that probably won't happen. But if you're regularly in a position of debating homosexuality with relatives, friends, or strangers on the Internet, you want to read this book. Corvino, in a very straightforward (pardon the expression), respectful, methodical, and humorous way devastates each and every argument that you'll find in the public discourse. By taking some of these arguments seriously (when they bug the hell out of most of us to even have to address), he has marshaled the arguments you will want to have at your disposal. An excellent reading choice as we enter gay pride season.

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## **Adam says**

*[John Corvino's What's Wrong With Homosexuality? is a short, concise book that debunks the most prevalent and misguided arguments against gay rights and gay marriage in modern American society, including its affects on children (there are none), the lack of similar same-sex attractions in nature (there are tons), and gay marriage as a gateway to society's moral collapse (ridiculous). Corvino, a philosophy professor, writes with a clear and often personal voice about why the arguments against gay rights have very little substance. In perhaps the book's most personal moment, Corvino discusses his own coming out story and how moments such as those can have the greatest effect at changing people's minds on this issue. In lieu of reviewing Corvino's book, which overall is very good, I offer my own story.]*

I came out to my parents on a Sunday, in a moment I'd planned the entire weekend around. It was something I should've done years before--after all, I'd known since I was 12, thanks in part to a random Internet pop-up ad (long story) and an obsession with reruns of *The Golden Girls* that my family accepted but did not quite understand--but didn't for a myriad of reasons, the greatest of which being a complete lack of faith in my parents. I didn't know how they'd react, and gay rights--or for that matter gay people--was a topic I never heard either of them mention once, even in passing. Had they taken a stand in any direction--they were fine with gay people, they hated gay people, they didn't care one way or the other--I would've at least known was I was up against, what to brace myself for. Instead, there was total silence on this issue. And it was in that silence that I spent years falling apart--emotionally, physically, spiritually--until I decided once and for all that the only way I could save myself and be truly happy was to come out to them, the two people who raised me, the two people who I loved more than anyone else (and who loved me just as much). I needed to do this in order to be a stronger, better, healthier person, whether my parents accepted me or not. And so it was decided: I would visit my parents, come out, and be done with it.

I don't remember how the conversation began--I didn't look right, I remember my mother saying at some point, like there was something bothering me. I told her it was true, there most definitely was something on my mind...but I choked on my words and didn't go any further, didn't elaborate. Ever the worrywart, my mother began to rattle off a litany of possible tragedies that could've befallen her firstborn son--fired from my job, an accident, a health scare--a list I assume she runs through constantly like some sort of protective-mom memory game. I denied that my problem was any of those possibilities, and before she could say any more, I blurted it out--two very simple, one-syllable words, tossed out with the same speed and dispassion of someone ripping off a Band-Aid. There was no great relief like I thought there'd be, no metaphorical or metaphysical weight lifted from my shoulders...but it was done, over, resolved. There was no going back, no erasing the words--the proverbial ball was in their court. I waited for them to respond, to say or do anything that let me know, finally, how they felt.

They said nothing.

To be honest, this was not entirely unexpected. My parents are and always have been quiet people, their emotions kept close to their chests. I have countless memories of them sitting around the kitchen table saying absolutely nothing to one another for hours at a time as they paid bills, read the newspaper, or looked over their children's homework...and being perfectly content doing so. It's not because they're sad, lonely, bored, or uninteresting people--they just don't see the need to talk that much, and strangely it's one of the few traits I inherited from them. So the pall of silence that fell over the three of us in that moment wasn't unusual, and it was more of a relief than anything else: they reacted to my news in the same way they reacted to *all* news, so at least what I'd said hadn't shaken them into immediate verbal hysterics.

Then my dad spoke. "Just because you don't like women," he said, "doesn't mean you're gay."

Now this *was* unexpected. Looking back now, it's more funny than anything else--after all, not liking women, and thereby liking men, is what makes me gay, totally and obviously. It's also a clear indication of how little my dad understood about gay people or gay issues in general, which I'd never considered

beforehand. Even at 12 and 13, long before I would even consider coming out to my parents, I was already immersed in what you might call gay-friendly culture...though at the time, I only knew it as something familiar and close, even if I couldn't put a name to it or explain why it was so comforting to me. Besides those reruns of *The Golden Girls*--I saw every one, and multiple times to boot--I also watched *Match Game* reruns solely for Charles Nelson Reilly, preferred baking and sewing to anything involving power-tools, and liked Madonna songs.\* My father, on the other hand, was familiar with almost none of this. One of 6 kids who grew up on a small-town farm, my father played football and wrestled in high school, served in the military, watches Fox News, listens to talk radio, votes Republican, and has to my knowledge never willingly read a book; he spends what little free time he has working on his truck, riding his snowmobile, and doing random construction jobs around the house...like the attached garage he built one summer single-handedly, after my mother complained about walking to her car on ice in winter. To say that my father is a skilled and talented man would be an understatement; to say my father knew a lot about gay people before I came out to him, however, would be an overstatement.

I realize this now, years after the fact; in the moment, however, I was horrified. Luckily, my mother was, too, and for the next few minutes they debated what it meant to be gay in front of their gay son...possibly one of the most surreal moments of my life. When that conversation--and, as it happened, the overall conversation--ended, I got in my car and drove back home, leaving them to discuss it among each other in their normally quiet home.

In the years that followed, not much else was said about my announcement--there was a question, asked by my mother over pizza, and a discussion between the two of them about whether or not Mitt Romney was a "bully" for cutting the hair of a gay classmate--but the news ultimately fell away into the chasm of silence where my parents stored *all* news, good or bad.

What I didn't understand or fully appreciate at the time, though, was that this one act on my part, done so deliberately to better my own life, had also done something for my parents. Even though they have never said anything more about my sexual orientation, the gulf that had always existed between us--because of my doubt, because of their silence--closed...not fully, but enough that we could now begin to see each other as the people we were and are. In the months afterwards, my dad and I spoke more easily and in more than just monosyllabic groans and with tortured shrugs. We joked around, usually about politics (and occasionally about my mother, who always seemed to overhear), talked about each other's jobs, and began biking and hiking with mom. And in maybe the most awkward moment of my life, he sat down with me and watched a Kathy Griffin stand-up routine on BRAVO--a noble attempt on his part to give "gay-friendly" TV a try and cross that divide between us, but after roughly 10 minutes of coarse, uncensored vagina jokes, we both silently realized there was a limit to that, as well.

It's only been in the years since, as I've read more and more about LGBT history and issues, and as the attention paid to those issues has gone mainstream, that I realize just how significant coming out to my parents was. Sure, they're only two people, and they may have not felt too strongly one way or the other to begin with--I've still never asked, and I don't plan to any time soon--but they're also my parents, they're good parents, and they had a right to know this important fact about their son, regardless of my own doubts and insecurities. And it's because so many other gay people feel this same way that public opinion on gay rights has begun to change; there are just as many gay people as there were decades and even centuries ago, but because we live in a more open society, people are starting to realize just how many gay people they know. They work with gay people, are friends with them, have gay sisters and brothers, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers; they encounter gay people in their daily lives--as doctors, nurses, cashiers, bankers, teachers, soldiers, elected officials--and understand what they didn't before: when you hate people for their sexual orientation, for who they love, you hate those closest to you. It's easy to hate a group of people when no one from that group is around; it's harder when they live openly in your community, and even harder still when they're your own flesh and blood.

That doesn't mean that people don't still try. Bullying is a major issue in schools, a vast majority of states and countries still don't have gay marriage, you can still lose your job in certain places because of your sexual orientation, and LGBT teens are still being abused and kicked out of their homes for who they are. And as much as I love and appreciate my parents, and as warm and accepting have been about me, there's still that small, nagging voice in the back of my head saying, "Just wait." I can't predict the future, even one involving my often predictable mother and father, but just being myself allows me to debunk people's expectations and preconceived notions. It's a small battle, often waged in living rooms and kitchens across the country--across generations--between a handful of people. But these battles are slowly being won, peacefully, and with the best of outcomes...and someday, hopefully soon, we will live in a society so progressive in its attitude towards gay rights and gay people that books like the ones written by John Corvino--a serious book that debunks seriously-held misconceptions about gay men and women--will seem like awful relics of an era that is long and thankfully gone.

\*Thankfully, I am far less stereotypical as a gay adult, though not by much.

This review was originally published at There Will Be Books Galore.

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## Mark Flowers says

SLJ review:

\* CORVINO, John. What's Wrong with Homosexuality?. 224p. notes. Oxford Univ. Mar. 2013. Tr \$22.95. ISBN 9780199856312.

Adult/High School--Corvino has been debating the title question with hundreds of people since his teens, and here he collects what he sees as the most common and most powerful arguments he's seen against homosexuality and sets about to absolutely demolish each in turn. Starting with what would seem to be the most intractable argument, the argument from Biblical authority, and moving through arguments about the supposed risk of homosexual activity, natural law, genetics, and the slippery-slope argument, Corvino offers succinct examples of his opposition's position and then lays out counter arguments grounded in basic logic and rational reasoning. He admits that his arguments are highly unlikely to change the minds of the most committed opponents of homosexuality, but for those who are questioning, or simply have an open mind, this book should be an eye-opener. Meanwhile, for those already committed to gay rights, who may think, as Corvino puts it, that "we shouldn't even be having this discussion," the author explains why the conversation is still necessary, offers a view into just what opponents see as so bad about homosexuality, and gives allies some excellent rhetorical tricks to use. Finally, for teens who have not be introduced to formal logic, this book is an easy first introduction to the basic concepts of how to construct a logical argument. A must read.--Mark Flowers, John F. Kennedy Library, Vallejo, CA

<http://blogs.slj.com/adult4teen/2013/...>

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## Peter says

I really loved this book. I always thought I was one of those weird gay people who didn't care what science or psychology had to say about homosexuality as it related to the acceptance of homosexuality. Don't get me wrong - I love psychology and science and am very interested as to what they say about homosexuality in general, but, I never thought the acceptance of homosexuality should be based upon whether there is a gay

gene or not. Even if there were a gay gene, that wouldn't automatically mean all our "acceptance" issues would go away. Many argue that there are genes that promote us to do a variety of negative things. Those who oppose homosexuality would just argue that very point if a gay gene were to be found. In my eyes - I don't care if homosexuality is determined by nature or nurture or both. My opinion, closely related to the opinion of the author, was always that one should look at the ending results of homosexuality to make an opinion on whether to accept it or not: it makes gay people happy to have homosexual relationships, it does not harm heterosexual relationships, homosexuals are capable of having stable families, etc... The author talks about many other things that homosexual opposers bring to the table about homosexuality: it being a mental disorder, a non-reproducing way of sexual expression, an unbalanced dynamic, a higher rate of STDs, etc... He effectively argues his side on all these points. John Corvino (the author) is a college Philosophy professor and he routinely debates well known people who are indifferent to homosexuality.

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## **George Slade says**

John Corvino is obviously an intelligent and logical man. I enjoy that in an author, when the main point of their writing is supporting opinions or positions on issues.

Unfortunately, homosexuality and its acceptance in society is still a debate raging into the 21st century. The fact that books still need to be written about it is a sad reflection of how far we have not come. The fact that books are allowed to be published about it is something to be happy about, but we need to do better.

This book is a short examination of the major arguments against homosexuality currently popular in today's world and the author's response to each.

One thing I enjoyed is that even though the author is not a religious person, he does not simply dismiss the religious objections, which would be easy to do. He gives them the same attention he gives the secular arguments.

I won't rewrite the book here and illustrate all of the points and counter points of the book, but I can say that I think he approached the matter with the right amount of attention and detail.

What I will say to Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Witches, Warlocks, Atheists, Agnostics, Italians, Blacks, Whites, Purples, Blues, Martians, Ewoks and all the other lifeforms out there, we need to learn to live with each other free of condemning the things that we do, unless we are causing harm to others.

Preach more love; Stop preaching hate.

Embrace differences; stop fearing them.

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## **Adam Ross says**

John Corvino is gay, and a moral philosopher. He travels around the country frequently debating Focus on the Family and so on. This book is the fruit of many years of thinking carefully about this issue. What is valuable about the book is his ability to clearly (and calmly) parse through the rhetoric regarding same-sex marriage and activity in order to come to the deeper issues, and he does so with warmth, reasonableness, and wit. He tackles the seven biggest claims against same-sex relationships (i.e., "It isn't natural," "If we approve of this, we'll have to accept pedophiles and bestiality," and so on). Unlike many same-sex advocates who



simply refuse to believe that conservative voices can ever have anything constructive to say, Corvino does not spare his side any less than the other when it comes to sloppy thinking and poor reasoning. Conservatives are sure to be comforted by the fact that Corvino often points out counter-claims to his own side which they themselves have used. For example, Corvino sounds like fundamentalists when he says that the morality of an action has nothing to do with genetic predisposition and gay activists who appeal to genetic causality (as most of the science currently suggests) as a basis for the morality of the behavior have not proven their point, since many disordered impulses are genetic as well.

But for all the wrangling, the book is surprisingly clear and easy to read, and it does much to cut through the confused landscape and provide compelling philosophical and moral reasons for accepting same-sex relationships and marriage. As an agnostic, the weakest chapter by far in the book is the chapter on the Biblical arguments, but that is neither here nor there to the other arguments in the book.

## Rayna says

John Corvino is a gay man who has spent 20+ years passionately endorsing gay rights. I like his approach to defending homosexuality. As a philosopher, he doesn't engage in simplistic, dismissive arguments of moral relativism, but rather addresses and analyzes why the moral objections to homosexuality are based in ignorance, faulty logic, poor reasoning, and all too often, blatant lies. In this way, he carefully tears apart every imaginable argument against homosexuality, from the religious to the secular. Finally, Corvino doesn't just argue that homosexual relationships aren't morally bad, but that they are *morally good*—seeing as they offer homosexual people meaning, fulfillment, and happiness just as heterosexual relationships do for heterosexual people.

The book is divided into chapters based on the different arguments he addresses: Chapter 1 is about why morality does matter in the debate about homosexuality (as morality matters in any debate about human rights). Chapter 2 tackles biblical arguments against homosexuality, with the added caveat that the Bible isn't necessarily a reliable source on morality to begin with. Chapter 3 is about the alleged risks of the "homosexual lifestyle," in which he debunks some badly conducted studies, including one that attempted to show that the average gay man's lifespan was 30 years shorter than the average straight man's. Chapter 4 gets into the first part of the nature vs. nurture arguments, where he criticises the oft-cited claim by both religious and nonreligious gay rights opponents that gay sex is "unnatural" because it does not result in procreation. He also criticises the "appeal to nature" logical fallacy where "natural" is equated with "good" and "unnatural" is equated with "bad." Chapter 5 continues the nature vs. nurture argument, the "born this way" view of sexual orientation and the failures and harms of conversion therapy. Chapter 6 discusses the "slippery slope" fallacy whereby gay rights opponents claim that acceptance of homosexuality will lead to acceptance of polygamy, incest, and bestiality. Chapter 7 concludes with a hopeful entreaty for more fair and honest dialogue that does not treat gay people as evil or disgusting. He cites the anti-gay organisation, Focus on the Family, describing homosexuality as a "particularly evil lie of Satan" and explains how characterising homosexuality this way hurts teens who are just discovering their same-sex attraction.

The NNL [New Natural Law] theorists insist that in non-coital sex, "the physical activities (stroking, rubbing) are chosen merely as extrinsic means of producing an effect (gratification) in consciousness, *the only thing chosen for its own sake*." But they give absolutely no evidence for this strange claim, and it is not the sort of thing one can know from one's armchair. This point raises another question, about how to determine exactly which acts NNL prohibits. The example just cited relates to female orgasm, about which natural law theorists say very little. Instead, following [Thomas] Aquinas—and nearly every other philosopher who writes on these matters—they tend to focus on male orgasms and semen. (As legal philosopher Andrew

Koppelman notes, "The possibility of female orgasm appears to be an embarrassment to the theory.")

This one is always a winner. All those homophobic arguments about how homosexuals "use their genitals against the *natural* order à la penis-in-vagina sex" ignore the differences between male and female sexuality. They simply put reproduction on a pedestal without regard for the other very obvious reasons that people have sex in the first place. The sole purpose of the clitoris is pleasure, so you can easily argue that lesbian women are indeed using their genitals as God/Nature intended. As a matter of fact, the subject of female homosexuality + female orgasm could have been a chapter of its own.

Corvino actually introduced a new dimension to the "nature vs. nature" debate that I had never thought of before.

1. How do people become gay? (By genetics? Hormones? Early environment? Some combination of the above?)

and

2. Can they change it (i.e., choose to be otherwise)?

...[T]he question conflates an *etiological* issue (what's the cause or origin of sexual orientation?) with a *phenomenological* one (how do you experience your sexual orientation?). These two issues vary independently. My hair color is genetically determined, but I can change it. The fact that I understand English is environmentally determined, but I can't change it. (Of course I could learn a new language, but it would never subsume my native one at this point.) Some "choices" can be undone, some cannot; some biologically "hardwired" attributes can be "re-wired," some cannot. That an attribute feels deep and fixed tells us little about how it got there.

[...]

The crucial point is that the leap from "I don't choose my feelings" to "I was born this way" is a nonsequitur. It forces a decision between (A) voluntarily chosen and (B) genetically hardwired, without entertaining possibilities like (C) acquired but nonvoluntary.

Corvino says that he doesn't know why he's gay and doesn't really care, but he does know that he's always been that way and can't change it. Which is fine. But I wish that he explored the idea of sexual orientation being "acquired but nonvoluntary" further. He explicitly rejects the notion that homosexuality is caused by early experiences with parents like domineering mothers or absent fathers, so what early experiences does he think might form sexual orientation? And how would they differ between homosexual people and heterosexual people? For if homosexuality is an acquired trait, then so is heterosexuality. I firmly believe that I was born lesbian. Since both gay and straight people go through every possible combination of life experiences and environments, I don't find the idea that sexual orientation is caused by environment (or partly by environment) convincing at all. But I respect Corvino's willingness to consider the possibility without undermining the realness and stability of sexual orientation.

I also wish Corvino had criticised the homophobia of queer theory, since he brought it up in the "Born This Way" chapter.

All in all, this book is a solid defense of homosexuality that leaves opponents with very little leg to stand on. I found the nature vs. nurture debates the most interesting, and although I agree that our rights shouldn't hinge on *why* we're homosexual (and that it shouldn't matter any more than why heterosexuals are heterosexual) I would actually be curious to know more about it. The heteros will never make us disappear, no matter how hard they search for a "gay gene."

## Terra Videre says

I was raised in a doctrinally conservative church and this book gave me so many answers and so many more questions. I absolutely loved it. One of my all-time favourites.

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## Rose says

**Initial reaction:** I'll have to think a bit on how I want to approach this review, because, like a lot of non-fiction reads I've had in the past year, it left my mind buzzing with so many jumping points that I don't exactly know where to start. Ha! I will say, for beginning notes, I thought John Corvino approaches the issues with a great helping of food for thought, sensitivity, constructive arguments and even humor (and there were more than a few times when I chuckled while reading this).

### Full review:

Take note, all: the title may be very misleading, but then again, I think it's an apt summary for what John Corvino intended to show in this very enlightening account on homosexuality within our present society, attitudes taken against it, and knocking down many arguments and misconceptions made in the discussions surrounding this. I personally had exposure to many arguments Corvino makes in this narrative from my studies on gender, identity and health that I took in a few undergraduate classes at uni. For me, I think it was an eye-opening narrative with Corvino's wit, eloquence and presentation on a number of different factors concerning attitudes on homosexuality - including religious, social, health, political, historical, philosophical among other measures.

One thing I'm going to say before I delve a little further into what Corvino addresses here, is that in the dimensions of identity and health, sexuality plays a vital role, one I think is quite undervalued and often misrepresented in so many ways. Sexuality is a more complex measure than just considering the physical dimensions of it. When I'm discussing sexuality at large, I don't mean simply the factor of "who sleeps with who" or the terms that people place on it based on specific ideal constructions, which is what so many people place emphasis when bringing up the topic. Rather, I refer to the expressions of it in larger examinations of culture, expression, personal worth/value, and extensions of gender. That might sound like a mouthful, but I think it's something that people need to consider when noting the different dimensions of sexuality that exist in our society, and that understanding the root of those expressions is vital to the acceptance of how it occurs, is expressed, and ultimately valued and rooted in its diversity in our society.

I really have to commend Corvino in recognizing the multidimensional rationales here, because he does a great job of presenting very clear cut evidence that refutes arguments against multidimensional expressions of sexuality, specific to homosexuality - and it's notable in its terms of starting larger constructive conversations. He first approaches it from a personal place, as he himself identifies as gay, a gay-rights advocate, and a philosophy professor who has written and debated on the topic for more than 20 years. He then delves specifically into moral arguments that have root in religious and moral terms and how they affect public policy and attitudes. He also explores the harm of negative attitudes towards the expression of sexuality specific to same-sex relationships. Some of the examples he gives are heartbreaking because it examines how the negation of the roots of sexual identity and their expression can be harmful on a social as well as self-worth value to the individual, group, and rooted relationships.

Corvino supplements his arguments with a wit and charm that I found amusing as I perused the narrative, with specific attention to contradictions in certain arguments while still informing and educating the reader

on the dimensions of the topic. I haven't read a peer narrative this intuitive on the subject matter in one concise volume. If there were a critique to give to it, I wish it were longer to expand on other expressions of sexuality to be able to give weight to the multidimensional nature of its importance and function in the dimensions I mentioned above and beyond. Still, I think it's a good starting point, and I think it's a read that people can take much from in its considerations.

Overall score: 4/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from the publisher Oxford University Press.

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### **Hale says**

One of the best introductions to deconstructing religious and secular opposition on the subject.

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### **Rob says**

While I disagree with the author's conclusion about homosexuality, I give him five stars because of the sensitive, respectful way he presents his case. I can talk with someone like this, and I hope I am as sensitive and respectful in how I present my case.

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### **Kat Ice says**

I loved this book!! I received this from netgalley and was so excited to read it. This is a professor that debates gay rights. He talks about all of the arguments against gay rights and says how they are wrong! I think everyone should read this. It is a really short but important book!!

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