ANTI-ANONYMITY SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN MORE SERIOUSLY THAN OTHER POSITIONS ON GAMETE DONATION

SIR,

In a recent response to my debate article (Pennings, 2022) on the forgotten group of donor-conceived persons (DCPs), Daniel Groll intended to show that my claim that ‘people who accept the anti-anonymity position should also accept the anti-donation position’ (the ‘equivalence argument’) is wrong (Groll, 2022). However, I did not make that claim (Pennings, 2022). Most of his argument is directed against a ‘straw man’ construction that makes a much stronger claim than the one I actually made. This ‘rephrasing’ of my main point makes it relatively easy to score. I (merely) argued that the anti-donation position should be recognized as equivalent to the anti-anonymity position as it is supported by the same type of arguments. This is a weaker claim that assumes no logical or dialectical pressure from one position to another.

The reply offered by Dr Groll to that point is far from clear. He acknowledges, and I fully agree with him on that point, that the voices of DCPs have no epistemic authority. Lived experience cannot ground epistemic authority on many different aspects of gamete donation such as parental responsibility or the importance of genetic information. He concludes that we should not defer to the views of the DCPs but that we should take them very seriously. The problem is that he does not explain what ‘taking views very seriously’ means.

But the problem goes deeper than that. When he recognizes that the views of DCPs have no special epistemic authority, he needs to explain why we should, nevertheless, take these views very seriously. He gives four reasons. One reason is that their voices have been comparatively absent. However, that cannot be a justification to why we should include these views, or any other view for that matter. Another reason is that we cannot get access to these views without asking the DCPs. That is correct, but the question was why (not how) we should take these views into account in the first place. A further reason is that the DCPs did not voluntarily participate in their conception. However, Dr Groll recognizes that this is the case for everyone, not just the DCPs. This lack of voluntariness creates an asymmetry between the procreators and the procreated. Again, although correct, no explanation is offered about what the implications of this asymmetry are, for DCPs and all other people. So that leaves us with the remaining reason: DCPs have a substantial interest. I accept this reason and I also believe that we need to talk to the DCPs in order to find out what these interests are. DCPs who believe that they are harmed because of a rule or measure that is part of the practice of gamete donation have a strong reason to try to change the rule or measure to avoid harm. However, not only are there several parties involved (DCPs, intended parents, donors), but within each party there are different opinions. All of these parties have a substantial but differing interest. As I have argued, the harm and interest are connected to the ideological views of the DCPs and DCPs hold different ideologies of the family (Pennings, 2022). Anti-anonymity DCPs have a substantial interest in knowing the identity of their donor and may be harmed when their donor is anonymous because they adopt a view of the family in which genetic relationships are important and/or because they consider this knowledge as important for their identity. Pro-anonymity DCPs may be harmed when donor anonymity is abolished because the donor may interfere in their family life and cast a shadow on the relationship with their parents. The anti-donation group may be harmed because they believe that children should be raised by their genetic parents. What I miss in Dr Groll’s reply is why the views of the anti-anonymity group are taken very seriously and not the others.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST
None.

REFERENCES


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