

# AVENues

## Asexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which is a choice, asexuality is a sexual orientation.

## AVEN:

The Asexual Visibility and Education Network, an online community and resource archive striving to create open and honest discussion about asexuality among asexual and sexual people alike.

## AVENues:

A monthly publication available online, created by members of the AVEN community in order to further showcase our thoughts and promote discussion by and about asexuals.

**For more information,** visit <http://www.asexuality.org>.

## Contents

- News from January – pg. 2
- From the Forum – pg. 3
- Food For Thought – pg. N
- Featured AVENite: “Amcan” – pg. 4



*Asexuals crowd around a computer at an AVEN meetup – photo by DELADESASTRE*

## Stirring Sexual Coffee:

A look at the thermodynamics of innocence

by DAVID JAY

A simple understanding of physics tells us that all systems tend towards entropy. Once you’ve stirred cream into your coffee there is no way to stir it back out again, systems tend from a state of “order” to one of “disorder,” and getting them back again is almost impossible. I can’t help thinking of entropy when a friend asks me, as often they do, whether I have experimented with sexuality. I feel as if I am being tested for innocence; under current sexual thinking the only way that someone can be uninterested in sex is if their coffee hasn’t been stirred, as it were.

The idea that sexuality entails irreversible chaos is the core of modern sexual discourse. Once relationships cross the line from being “just friends” to sexual intimacy, there is no going back; sexuality brings with it an onslaught of emotional turbulence that will shake the simplicity out of any relationship it encounters. Even when nothing-but-friends engage in sexual activity this turbulence is braced for; relationships that were once undefined are now laboriously outlined. On a national scale, the Christian Right gather

support against what it terms “the Gay Agenda” by showing crowds of half-naked, writhing bodies in which the chaos of sexual pleasure has, presumably, burst out of the marital bedroom and into the streets. To the writhing Queer bodes that the Christian Right has so eagerly documented the logic is much the same: writhing half-naked in the street is politically powerful precisely BECAUSE it creates an irreversible state of sexual chaos, because it disrupts the order of day-to-day homophobic culture. If sex is entropy, then sex drive is nothing more than the second law of thermodynamics; all people are driven toward sex, because sex is chaos.

Under this line of thinking asexuality is intrinsically ordered, contained and “frigid.” When I am asked if I have experimented with asexuality and I answer “Yes, but it was dull” I am demonstrating my own rigidity. If I think sex is dull, it must be because I am incapable of letting myself be swept up in the chaos of sexual pleasure. At best this inability to experience sexual pleasure is written into my DNA, and marks me for a well ordered, emotionally simple life. At worst it represents sexual repression wrapped in the guise of the gay rights movement, a stubborn pathological unwillingness to “let myself go.”

To me the idea seems preposterous. An arbitrary set of acts, vaguely centered around some sort of penetration, constitute the natural disordered state of humanity? There is, somewhere, a desire to engage in them so basic that once it has (inevitably) mixed itself into my system I will be unable to entangle it? In my day-to-day life, I have learned to act sexual in order to get by in social situations. There are times when I’ve actively flirted with people, kissed them or made out with them. The feeling was not one of being released, but one of climbing into a complicated, awkward machine that I did not know how to (and had no real desire to) operate. My sexual friends tell me that this is normal. I think it is indicative.

How can sexuality simultaneously be the degenerate state of humanity and so highly constructed? If most sexual people have to learn to like sex (not “discover their innate sexuality”) then how could not liking it be unnatural, confining and (f)rigid? The answer seems simple enough: sex is constructed, and the pleasure that results from sex is learned, but performing sexual activity lets people access something that they would otherwise be unable to. Sex drastically, almost invariably, changes relationships, and sexual relationships behave in and are thought of in ways that nonsexual relationships do only rarely. Rarely do nonsexual friends constantly and actively affirm their commitment to one another, rarely do they plan on raising children together. Sex isn’t entropy, sexual relationships are. In our society, friendships are confined. There are things that, emotionally speaking, they can’t do unless they become sexual. The sense of chaos and inevitability that surrounds sexuality isn’t about sex but about sexual relationships. Sexual activity is merely a way to gain access to that state of higher entropy, one which is arbitrary, constructed. Ordered.

Let’s get back to coffee, and me being asked if I’ve tried sexual activity. As an asexual, my friend thinks, I must be innocent. Once I’ve experimented with sexual activity (and gotten the construct to work) there will, presumably, be no going back. The opposite is true. Asexuality is not, as my friend imagines, about staying within the confines of friendship. For me it is about breaking down the highly constructed system of activities by which relationships other than friendship are accessed. Asexuality is about falling in love over a conversation. Living as an asexual not about refusing to open a door, it’s about carving out new ones. I look across the table at my friend and wonder whether they would be able to go back if they experimented with asexuality.

## News from January

New members have been appointed to the AVEN Project Team and elections are expected to get underway shortly. If you'd like to join the Project Team and have a hand in official AVEN projects (such as this newsletter), send in your info! Details are in the Announcements forum: <http://www.asexuality.org/discussion/viewtopic.php?t=20907>

Many new members came to AVEN after AVEN members were featured on the Montel Williams show. The action looks like it will continue with a possible segment about asexuality on MTV News.

AVEN now has an official Myspace page: <http://www.myspace.com/asexualvisibilityandeducationnetwork> Also, David Jay's podcast, “Love from the Asexual Underground”, ranks sixth among health podcasts on digg.com.

## Food For Thought

*Last issue, we asked our readers the following question:*

How has the asexual community helped you out personally? Do you think it gives you perspectives you wouldn't otherwise have? Information to which you wouldn't otherwise have access? Or just the peace of mind of knowing that other asexuals are out there? Let us know!

*Some of the responses we got are listed below.*

I feel more at ease as myself. I find it gives me perspectives from other people I wouldn't otherwise find, has introduced me to many different people who I consider my friends, discussions of topics considered taboo or at the very least people I know in real life just don't want to talk about. Having many sexual friends, it gives me an avenue to be myself and to express myself. I love the peace of mind I get from knowing that there are other people like me and I'm not a freak.

*-SpirallingSnowy*

AVEN has given me a greater appreciation for the spectrum of sexuality that's out there; before I joined, my understanding of sexuality was fairly limited. AVEN is also a community that I feel connected to -- and other forums don't give me that sense of social fulfillment. AVEN does.

*- smellincoffee*

Tears overwhelmed me when I watched the Montel Williams show on Thursday, 04 January 2007. I had seen the advertisement for the program the prior day, and was very surprised and just had to watch it. I had never before heard of such an organization.

Although all my life I have liked men, I have never really been sexually attracted to them, nor had a sex drive, nor the desire to be physically intimate with anyone. I am attracted to people from the inside out.

As a matter of fact, most of the time, I do not even like to be touched.

When I confess to people that I am not interested in sex and having that type of relationship, I get severely ostracized; people tell me there is something seriously wrong with me. Well, since I have faced some recent health challenges, I have had virtually everything checked out, and there is nothing physically wrong with me, I am simply not interested in having that type of relationship with anyone. I am wired differently emotionally. As one person put it on the show, "that's just the way God made me."

My last boyfriend, in a heated argument, yelled at me that I was asexual. At first, I took offense to that statement, but, as time has worn on, my pondering and introspection have confirmed this. It's been a long, painful, arduous, and lonely journey for me. I have always felt different and quirky because of this. I have never been able to sustain a "romantic" relationship for any significant length of time due to my disinterest in sex, and some people have called me a freak when I tell them.

So, now I have chosen to keep quiet, and simply tell people that I have been set apart for God...I am a truth seeker and a very spiritually minded person. I was thrilled to see your organization on the Montel Williams show, and finally felt, for the first time in my life, that I was not alone, that there are people out there who understand how I feel and what I'm going through. Thank you so much for creating this organization and promoting awareness of this topic.

*- Angel*

*This month, we have a new question for you:*

Sexual people like to describe their sexual encounters as intimate experiences, but sex isn't the only way to be intimate with someone. What methods and activities do you use to create intimacy with other people, and how well have they worked for you?

Send your answers to [newsletter@asexuality.org](mailto:newsletter@asexuality.org). Please put "Food for Thought" in the subject line and indicate what name or nickname you would like to be credited under.

Food for Thought answers belong to their respective authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network.

## From the Forum

*A selection of posts from the discussion boards on the AVEN website*

I love the cake model.

Let's say that there's someone who has never had cake before. She's heard all of her friends talking about the kinds of cake they love, and how chocolate cake is totally better than pound cake (because it IS), and how they would eat cake all the time if they could. Our main character, though, is not impressed, and has no desire to eat cake, for whatever reasons she has.

But, one day she gets curious. She's never had cake, so she really can't say whether she would like it or not. Sure, she'd be putting herself at risk, because eating too much cake makes you fat, but she decides to take the risk and see for herself whether she truly doesn't like cake, or whether it's something you need to eat to decide if you like it.

So, she goes over to a friend's house, who pulls out a beautiful seven-layer cake, with creamy cake and gooey chocolate fillings with those yummy chocolate crunchy things. He cuts a small slice and gives it to her, who cuts a piece off the end and takes a bite.

She finishes the slice, but isn't satisfied. Thanking her friend, she goes back home, happy that she's now tried cake and successfully decided that she didn't like it...

And, well, you might be thinking, "well, she has to like cake! Why would she eat it if she didn't like it?" Well, doing something doesn't mean you like it. I go to chemistry class, and I don't like it!

So, basically, virginity means nothing. It's a good idea to try stuff out to make sure you do or don't like it, but it's unimportant... It's your own choice, whether to try the stuff you're unsure about or not.

- Charlie of the Opera, Thu Jan 11, "20/20 – official page" in World Watch



*photo by GHOSTS*

Maybe we shouldn't try to categorize love. Love and sex aren't the same thing. You can love anybody, and maybe it is the same whether you love your family or someone outside of it. I think we get confused (or sometimes into trouble) when we try to separate love into different types... romantic love versus platonic love. How's this... plain old love, with or without a side of romance?

Or maybe the confusion is caused by the English language only having one word for "love."

Maybe this all doesn't matter.

- artistic\_trees, Tue Dec 26, "Difficulty Defining Romantic Attraction/Sexuality?" in Asexual Relationships

Okay - here's what AVEN has provided me, besides a place to discuss a specific sexual orientation. More than anything, it's allowed me to talk about how I structure my relationships outside of a sexual way of thinking about things that doesn't necessarily take sexuality into account. It's about how our society places a lot of importance on sexuality when talking about relationships- that's how we generally categorize them... So, I think AVEN has provided a place to think and talk about relationships non-sexually, if that makes any sense.

We can move away from that system... in this new discourse that some people are creating, sexual people could also think of their relationships differently. And some might feel like they can form intimate and close relationships that are nonsexual- whether or not the other person is sexual/asexual/whatever.

- ghosts, Thurs Dec 28, AVEN FlashChat

Food for Thought answers belong to their respective authors and do not necessarily express the official views of the Asexual Visibility and Education Network.

## Featured AVENite: “Amcan”

*A personage from the forums that you'd like to get to know better*



**Name:** Amcan

**Age:** 24

**Location:** A borg cube not far from Stockport, UK.

**Preferred Label(s):** 8 of 10 primary adjunct of unimatrix zero one. And Warning: May contain nuttiness.

**Bio:** I'm known as the borg penguin, a long and involved story I don't have time to relate here (a tip: it may or may not have something to do with my avatar). I'm also one of the admins, which means my name is orange and I get to send spammers to an alternate dimension, which is always fun. I do like fun! I credit the just for fun forum for my scarily high post

count (word association in particular). You can probably tell that I also like posting. I'm a bit of a goof who enjoys randomly mentioning purple bananas and squeeing over penguins; life is too short to take everything seriously. I'm an aromantic asexual with aspirations to be a cat lady later in life. I feel like AVEN is a home away from home on the internet, kind of like a comfy pair of jeans I can slip into and be myself in.

**How she came to AVEN:** I found AVEN via wikipedia. I forget what I was originally looking up.

**The most important thing about AVEN:** AVEN is a place where people can find out about themselves; they aren't broken or alone.

**Advice for newcomers:** AVEN is a place where you're bound to find people who know what you're feeling. And cake, of course.

**Other thoughts:** Yes, does anyone know where I can get a juggling aardvark from?

Are you asexual, questioning, and/or interested in asexual topics? AVENues wants your feedback!

**Format:** Letters, articles, short stories, poetry, essays, comics, photography, visual artwork.

**Topics:** Asexuality in general, the life of an asexual, asexual relationships, sexuality and asexuality in the media, advice for asexuals, things you've learned about or from asexuals and/or AVEN, asexual humour, etc.

You can also nominate people or posts for our From The Forum and Featured AVENite sections, bring asexual visibility-related news to our attention, or make general comments and inquiries.

Send all of this stuff to [newsletter@asexuality.org](mailto:newsletter@asexuality.org).

**IMPORTANT:** If we receive any email from you, we will send a reply within 3 business days. If you don't get a reply, it may mean that there is a glitch in our email system. If you suspect that we haven't received something you've sent us, please contact Hallucigenia (the AVENues editor-in-chief) or another member of the Project Team.