

## Off with his head

Kris King – July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012

<http://www.rantinaminor.co.uk/2012/07/off-with-his-head/>

This week's post has probably the most potential of anything I've ever written to cause the greatest level of discomfort and embarrassment – not just for me, but for nearly a full *half* of the entire human race. It's a subject that can hardly even be *mentioned* without all those who happen to be both in earshot, and in possession of the requisite dangly bits, want to cross their legs while enduring a sustained moment of pained wincing at the very thought of it. As a member of the aforementioned group, I find it especially hard to raise this subject, and not just for the reasons of physical awkwardness thus far stated; my innate stiff Englishness and general inability to be cock-sure and confident when addressing such issues means I am largely incapable of standing tremendously proud when I say, in the words of Kryten, the service mechanoid from "Red Dwarf" who temporarily becomes human and consequently has many questions about his new body, "I want to talk to you about my penis".

For those of you who have actually managed to click the "Read More" link and are even now reading this second paragraph, I would sincerely like to salute either your trust in me that I wasn't *really* going to spend any part of a blog post talking about my genitals or, in the absence of such trust, your unparalleled bravery in being prepared to face whatever willy-flavoured words and sentences I could possibly throw at you over the next sixteen paragraphs. There is a third option, naturally, and that's that you were genuinely interested in hearing me talk at length about the contents of my underpants, however I find this not just statistically unlikely but also slightly disturbing ... and, curiously, rather flattering – call me. Of course, in all seriousness, I'm not really going to discuss in any great detail the various aspects of my trouser-based entertainment system, at least not directly; what I actually wanted to look at, because it's something that's come up again recently, is the subject of circumcision.

In June, a regional court in Cologne, Germany, ruled that [the circumcision of boys for religious reasons constituted bodily harm](#), and was a violation of the child's right to "physical integrity". Naturally, Germany's Jewish and Muslim communities, as well as those around the world who heard the news, went proper, banana-scented apeshit. This, they told us in their usual calm and measured tone (the one they frequently use to inform us that entire nations will crumble into pink, sparkly dust if we don't let them continue with their centuries old traditions of hating gays), was an infringement of their religious freedom and that the ruling was "outrageous", "insensitive", "inadmissible", and all manner of other, carefully selected words that they had specifically chosen to, once again, cast themselves as the unfortunate victims of secular encroachment on their ancient traditions, rather than as the contemptuous apologists for, and practitioners of, a disgusting and barbarous form of child abuse that they actually are.

The idea that "religious freedom" could ever include the right of parents to sanction the mutilation of their child's genitalia for entirely spurious reasons is sickening, and so too is the [response from a Russian rabbi in Berlin](#) who, when asked to comment on the German ban, said it was "perhaps the most serious attack on Jewish life in Europe since the Holocaust", a claim that is as intellectually vapid as it is obscenely disrespectful to the millions slaughtered in concentration camps during the Second World War. Circumcision is a way of forever branding someone as belonging to a particular faith by making it impossible for them to truly escape having been marked (the procedure is irreversible), and it is done at a time in their lives when they are too young to be able to refuse *precisely* for that reason. Let's be honest, if Jewish boys weren't circumcised until their bar mitzvah ceremonies at the age of thirteen, there'd be a holy shit-ton more Jewish boys keeping their fleshy polo necks after having told the mohel to stick that todger-trimmer up his arse.

A ban on the performing of unnecessary, potentially dangerous, surgery on someone without their informed consent is not, in any sense, a restriction on religious freedom; if anything it's an *expansion* of it as it allows a child raised in the Jewish or Islamic faiths the opportunity to withdraw completely from the religion of their parents, just as the followers of other faiths who don't hack

pieces off of their children are able to do, should they ever wish to make that choice. I described the religious reasons for assaulting a child in this way as "spurious", and with good cause; they're entirely bogus, illegitimate, invalid – I couldn't give a flying fuck in a hurricane that this is something you've been doing for a couple of thousand years, you don't get to mutilate some kid's toilet technology and avoid the rule of law by saying it's what your god wants. To paraphrase Matt Dillahunty's beautifully concise expression, "My right to swing my arms ends at your nose", your religious freedom ends where my bedroom equipment begins; I won't let you sacrifice dick flesh to your god and call it "tradition" when the rozzers come calling.

Ultimately, though, all this talk of religious freedom is irrelevant; it's just a smokescreen that clouds the real issue and enables the knob-chopping god-squads to set the agenda by defining the argument in their terms (namely that they're the target of anti-theistic oppression as opposed to being little more than a gang of psychopathic, pious wang-manglers). What we're talking about here is the wilful, unnecessary, permanent physical modification of another human being *against their will* – it should be a no-brainer. You may take umbrage at my, arguably emotive, use of the word "mutilate" in the previous paragraph, but you would be entirely wrong to do so; to mutilate is to "inflict a violent disfiguring injury on" – irrevocably changing the physical form of someone's plonker with the aid of a sharp knife definitely counts as violent and disfiguring, and the fact that demonstrable, needless harm is caused absolutely qualifies as an injury.

"Wait a minute!" you interject, and rather rudely I might add. "What do you mean by 'unnecessary'? I thought there were good reasons for circumcising someone?" Well, there are reasons, yes, but many would quibble with the use of the word "good"; certainly there are valid medical justifications for dispensing with a person's foreskin – there are, for instance, [a number of conditions for which circumcision is considered a reasonable solution](#) (if not actually a preferred one), and some for which it is required. Absent any of these scenarios, the so-called "reasons" for performing such a procedure become merely "excuses"; pitiful attempts by guilt-ridden parents for wantonly depriving their child of an important part of their anatomy at a time when they're unable to defend themselves against the advances of a man in scrubs with an ultra-shiny, medical-grade bolt-cutter, and a gleam in his eye that hints at an unquenchable passion for rearranging other people's basement furniture.

So, if none of the legitimate medical situations apply, and the parents aren't resorting to the bogus religious excuses, what are they *actually* thinking is the reason they're surgically interfering with the helmet of their child's tiny fireman? Even amongst the non-religious, particularly in countries like the United States of America, tradition and culture are still often given as the most common excuses for getting a doctor to tamper with their kid's junk. As has been expressed before, the idea that one would do *anything* simply because it's what everyone did before you, especially when you restrict it to your own particularly narrow field of social, geographical, or ancestral vision, is probably one of the more logically feeble methods for justifying immoral, unethical, or outright stupid behaviour. Think about it; "we're going to slice a small piece off our baby's pee pistol so that he can be like all the other men in his family" – doesn't that sound like something you'd hear in a documentary about dodgy cults?

This leads me neatly on to another reason I've heard bandied around for lunging murderously with a pair of scissors at a boy's wedding tackle, and it's a view which, to my shame, I once defended in the past (fortunately, I very quickly realised my error and subsequently re-adjusted my patently dickheaded opinion). It can be best exemplified with the phrase, "Well, his father is circumcised, and we didn't want him to grow up with awkward questions and a possible stigma about why his winky looks different to his daddy's". This is, in many ways, possibly **worse** than trying to defend the practice from a standpoint of religious tradition; in order to spare the parents a few brief moments of embarrassment in having to explain father-son phallic discrepancies, and because they can't be fucking bothered to address the issue with the child *honestly* and give them the necessary reassurance that, no matter what, every little boy is different in that department, no two are completely alike, they'd rather tear off the tip of his tent peg and forever alter the future sex lives of both him and any partners he might one day have.

I can only apologise for having briefly supported this point of view; it is an opinion that, along with the notion that a circumcised pleasure probe is more aesthetically pleasing, is merely a grotesque attempt at championing a barbaric practice for entirely *cosmetic* reasons, something that, were we to be talking instead about performing these alterations on female girls of the lady woman gender, we'd be quite rightly nailed upside-down to the nearest tree by our ball-bags for even contemplating the idea (seriously, why not suggest fitting your new-born baby girl with silicone tit implants for cosmetic, or even religious, reasons and see how far you get with your love-spuds still in the same

place you left them this morning?) It doesn't matter that your kid's royal sceptre looks different to his dad's – you're going to have to explain the hair thing anyway – grow up and stop taking out your insecurities on your child by butchering his pocket rocket.

Before we move all the way away from the subject of differences pertaining to gender, I should just quickly dip my toe in the dangerous quicksand of female circumcision. It's a subject that rightly provokes a sense of utter revulsion in pretty much everyone, yet the same cannot be said when it comes to the male version of the procedure. Why? Are the two not exactly the same? "Ah, but with women they take the whole clitoris, whereas guys only lose a bit of useless skin off the end", comes the reply from people who need their bottoms sewn up to prevent them from saying anything so fucking stupid ever again. This is not Top Trumps, you repugnant, festering anus; it doesn't matter a single, deep-fried duck bollock whether you're taking the entire cardboard box or just the lid flaps, you're still carving up someone's family jewels for no fucking reason. Male or female, it doesn't matter, if you can defend circumcision for one gender then you damned-well better be prepared to defend it for both because there's **no** difference.

It's almost as if we're supposed to "man up" and take it – as if it's no big deal – hence the common, and ignorant, dismissal of how the foreskin is "useless". It contains a greater density of nerve endings than any other part of the penis (and is therefore an important part of the sexual experience), is home to specialised cells found nowhere else, and provides a considerable amount of protection from infection and harm. It is fused to the main body of the penis in such a way that removing it involves shoving a blunt object down there to separate the two. For the guys reading who are now feeling a little bit light-headed at the thought of that last part, feel free to pause for a moment to regain your composure before continuing (maybe have a drink of water or something). Regardless, we are often told that it's all okay and, in fact, we actually shouldn't complain at all really because, I bet you didn't know this, but, there are a great number of medical benefits to being circumcised. Is that so?

Yes it is. Well, it sort of is ... a bit ... actually, it kind of isn't, really. The supposed health benefits claimed by those in favour of circumcision, primarily the suggested reduction in both urinary tract infections and HIV contamination, as well as (according to some) a generally better standard of cleanliness for the old chap, have largely been disproved or, at the very least, have been shown to be too insignificant to risk the potential complications that can arise from the procedure. A marginally lower chance of developing an infection that makes you feel like you're pissing battery acid for a few weeks is hardly worth the risk of [bleeding to death](#) or [dying after inadvertently contracting herpes](#). As for the HIV and hygiene arguments, well, wearing condoms, having a wash occasionally, and not dipping your button mushroom in a bucket of chlamydia every morning before rinsing it off with a generous splash of liquid clap will achieve the exact same health benefits, and all without having to surrender an inch off the end of poor Mr. Toad.

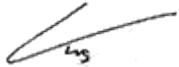
The potential loss of life, blood, sensation, or a normal sex life as a result of circumcision are the sweet royal icing on the cake of the argument against it. To perform, for non-medical reasons, an entirely unnecessary surgical procedure on a child that is unable to give informed consent and will, despite whatever promised health benefits may or may not materialise, be irreversibly physically mutilated against its will, is unethical, immoral, and a gross dereliction of the duty of care by both the child's parents, and the surgeon responsible. There really is **no** argument here – if you support the non-therapeutic circumcision of minors, you're advocating for child abuse. But, then, what kind of position am I to say all this? I'm just some grumpy atheist looking to bash religion again, right? Maybe I had my dinky de-cloaked as a child in some Abrahamic faith ritual that I'm deeply bitter and resentful about?

I am both sorry, and extremely pleased, to be able to disappoint you with the admission that I was, in fact, circumcised at the age of 13; it was for entirely medical reasons, and I have no bad feelings about having undergone the procedure *whatsoever*. I was fully informed by my GP of what the operation involved, what to expect during recovery, the potential risks (and the likelihood of them occurring), and what I could expect afterwards. At no point was I forced by anyone into making the decision to go through with it – I *always* had the choice, and it was always **my** choice to say yes or no. Was I nervous? Absolutely, but it wasn't really the thought of going in to hospital for an operation that scared me; it was more that I feared losing the fantastic new functionality that I'd discovered only the year before 😊 If anything, I was quite looking forward to the prospect of getting out of doing P.E at school for at least six weeks (although I didn't fancy telling everyone else in my year exactly *why*).

Fortunately, I didn't need to worry; my best friend very helpfully filled in pretty much the entire school, earning me the nickname "Snippy" for a while (I hated it at the time, but I have to give credit to whoever came up with it – it's quite a good nickname). I never really experienced any kind of stigma for being different; there was at least one other boy in the year who'd had it done as a child, and we were all going through puberty at that time anyway – picking on someone for anything relating to the contents of their running shorts would be like putting a couple of bullets in each foot, and we knew it (the opportunity to be ridiculed for some aspect of our physical development was, after all, going to visit each and every one of us at some point). The only things I could happily have lived without are the weeks spent peeing through a scab, and the hugely misjudged play fight with my sister that resulted in a dislodged scab and bloody pyjamas (please don't think too hard about that bit unless you're sitting down and with oxygen on standby).

To be completely honest (although this may qualify as being a bit too honest) I actually *prefer* things since the operation. In my opinion, it looks nicer, and doesn't really feel any different than it did before (any issues I might have with its function are down to nothing more than being an over-excitable pervert); if I had the choice, I'd rather those partners I may have who possess outies instead of innies were also similarly riding with the hood down (so to speak). I'd never demand it of anyone, nor would I force it upon anyone ... it's their appendage, so it's their choice – just as it was mine. If you're the parent of a child who fulfils the necessary criteria for this particular form of elective mutilation, I can say only this; leave it alone. Keep your hands off your kid's penis – it's not yours, it's his, and you should let him decide for himself what he wants to do with it.

Just politely advise him to keep it away from priests (whether they have scalpels in their hands or not) ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized, cursive letter 'A' followed by a small mark that appears to be 'ing'.