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## THE ORIGINS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

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**Abstract.** Homosexuality is defined as a state of sexual attraction to an individual of the same sex. This behaviour does not only concern humans, but also all animal species on earth. But it is interesting to ask whether homosexuality can be limited to this definition? If so, then what about the married man with several children who has never had a homosexual relationship, but secretly spends his time on gay websites? What about this woman who is equally attracted to women and men? These are all questions that call for greater insight. The issue of homosexuality is more complicated than it seems. It is inappropriate to look at sexuality without addressing the fantasies and other urges that surround it.

**Keywords:** *Homosexuality, heterosexuality, lesbianism, social roots, studies of sexuality, homophobia, non-heterosexual sexuality, Catholic Church position, pederasty, sodomy, sexual practices, transvestites, transsexuals, gay pride parades, HIV-AIDS, monogamy, queers.*

**Rezumat.** Homosexualitatea este definită ca o stare de atracție sexuală față de o persoană de același sex. Acest comportament nu se referă doar la oameni, ci și la toate speciile de animale de pe pământ. Dar este interesant să ne întrebăm dacă homosexualitatea poate fi limitată la această definiție? Dacă da, atunci cum rămâne cu bărbatul căsătorit cu mai mulți copii care nu a avut niciodată o relație homosexuală, dar își petrece timpul în secret pe site-uri gay? Dar această femeie care este atrasă în egală măsură de femei și de bărbați? Toate acestea sunt întrebări care necesită o perspectivă mai bună. Problema homosexualității este mai complicată decât pare. Este nepotrivit să privim sexualitatea fără a aborda fanteziile și alte îndemnuri care o înconjoară.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *Homosexualitate, heterosexualitate, lesbianism, rădăcini sociale, studii de sexualitate, homofobie, sexualitate non-heterosexuală, poziție în Biserica Catolică, pederastia, sodomie, practici sexuale, travestiți, transsexuali, parade ale mândriei gay, HIV-SIDA, monogamie, ciudati.*

### Introduction

Even today, homosexuality remains associated with something disturbing, stereotypical, sickly, sinful, or a wrong choice [1]. Because homosexuality is disorderly, because it contains a subversive potential, because its lifestyle is worrying, because it is

fought against, because it is regularised, we try to find out where it comes from [2, 3]. But this question implies that it is a copy of the original heterosexuality, that homosexuality or lesbianism are problematic [4]. Thus, the nature-culture debate has not spared the study of homosexuality, but the ideological divides have become blurred. Essentialists have sought to determine who homosexual people are, what their origin is, unique or plural, while constructivists have sought to determine the social roots of hetero/homosexualities or the workings of homophobia.

Homosexuality appeared in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the classification of perversions, established by psychiatrists. To respond to illness and exclusion, it was necessary to demonstrate that homosexuality was a fact of nature, a condition that had always existed; it was necessary to place it in the categories of the universal. The Germans, Hirschfeld and Bloch, conducted a series of studies on sexuality and founded an institute. The essentialist strategy of the pioneers, and of those who were to follow them, however, entails its risks of confinement and its paradoxes; the constructivist approach does not escape this either. If it is true that homosexuality is an innate problem (hormonal, physiological or genetic), it becomes treatable. A huge amount of ingenuity has been invested in intervening with homosexuals, chemically or surgically, in order to cure them. In the face of the craze, even Freudian bisexuality has been a reason for patients to develop a unique desire for heterosexuality. However, the psychological approach suggests a major shift in the conception of sexual identity [5 - 8]. The focus shifts from the notion of species to that of sexual orientation. But, without questioning the heterosexism of the psychodynamic model, or homophobia, the idea of sexual orientation can lead to a redirection towards an adequate object of desire, the resolved Oedipus complex, or to a halt in personal development, in the case of the failure of such a goal. Although marginal, reversionary therapies remain. They carry the overtones of the psychiatrisation of homosexuality. Burke argues that similar therapies are used with children and adolescents whose gender does not match their biological sex. Their dissonance is seen as a risk of moving towards an abnormal, i.e. non-heterosexual sexuality [9]. Moreover, the essentialist approach allows one to validate one's hypotheses without having to move to the terrain of legal, medical or human science experts. It has become part of popular discourse. So, if you ask someone why they are gay, they may say that it is because they are "the same", that it is in them, that they were probably born that way. They may also ask you if you ask the same question to heterosexual people... Nevertheless, just because homosexuality has gone from being a social evil to a social fact does not mean that it is accepted. It is, at best, tolerated. Ethical reflection is always close when it comes to the place of homosexual men and women in society. Is it necessary to recall that the Catholic Church adopts an essentialist position that limits such widespread rights as those to marriage or reproduction [10]. Boswell's scholarly research has shown, however, that the Church began to crack down on homosexuality in the late Middle Ages [11]. Prior to this, the Church tolerated rites and customs that dated back to Greco-Roman times.

### **Hetero/Homosexualities or the Workings of Homophobia**

To speak of 'homosexuality' during antiquity would be anachronistic [13]. Indeed, was it not then a question of pederasty, sodomy, a celebration of beauty and freedom? But several researchers trace the presence of a homosexual culture back to this period. De Cecco and Elia point out that men who practised sodomy with adolescents did not change the social hierarchy [14]. The adolescent adopted female passivity. As an adult, he became dominant.

He could then engage in homosexual practices and get married. He fulfilled his social role, although the interpretation of the latter was of the sexual margin. On the other hand, the Greeks, like the Romans, condemned a man who adopted a passive posture made adult or a woman who actively expressed her desire [15]. The definition of homosexuality in terms of sexual practices, species or identity thus mobilises different interventions depending on the perceived threat and the objectives of social control pursued by the authorities [16]. Constructivists therefore focus their attention, admittedly on the lifestyle of 'homosexuals' at various times, but more on the discourse.

How it is that love between men preoccupies different public authorities over time? From what perspective and in what ways do ecclesiastical, legal or medical authorities operate? What can we think of the fiscal control that is nowadays established over same-sex couples? What is the discourse on the recognition of gay couples? Constructivists conceptualise homosexual identity as a cultural variable that depends on the identity categories in force in a given space-time. In other words, I know that I am gay or lesbian to the extent that I have access to the discourse that represents me, names me as such [17]. Relationships to norms and community space are key aspects of this approach. As Weeks argues, sexuality emerges in as many local histories as there are narratives [18]. Yet, if identity categories are constructs, models can be deconstructed, questioned and relativised from the outside as well as the inside. Several feminists have stressed that the model of homosexuality, as it was medically constituted in the 19th century, does not apply to lesbianism, as lesbians constitute a minority divided between the homosexual and women's movements [19].

Moreover, lesbians have not provoked the same ire or attention as their male counterparts. It is only recently that it has been conceived that women's sexuality could exist outside of men [20]. However, in the early days, Rueling and Stocker called for independent research on lesbians at the German Institute for Sexuality. These activists called for women's sexual freedom outside the legal controls of men. But they also argued that the women's movement should address the issue of homosexuality, since reflections on the autonomy of the female body included lesbian relationships [21, 22]. The lesbian feminists of the 1970s would take up such a discourse by arguing that there could be no women's liberation without lesbian liberation, and vice versa [23 - 25]. While the fight against sexism became the priority of liberal, conservative and radical feminists, it was not until the latter came out of the wardrobe that heterosexism was questioned. But the critique of heterosexism will also continue within the gay movement.

### **Homosexuality as Emergence**

"Coming out" is the leitmotif of the gay movement. As a "confession of the name, coming out is a pivotal step in the realisation of the homosexual identity [26]. It is an ethical choice for authenticity, militant in moving the boundaries between the private and the public. It is about bringing "what is not said" out into the open. To do this, one must be prepared to face a diversity of reactions. Since ignorance is widespread, as is concealment, saying one's homosexuality and living it in everyday life inevitably leads to educating those around one about this condition. Like a stigmatised characteristic, like certain disabilities or illnesses, the affirmation of homosexual orientation takes on the appearance of sharing a secret [27]. The gay movement believes that the more people disclose their homosexuality, the more effective

the demystification will be. The more socially respected people come out, the more effective demystification will be.

However, families rarely consider that they will have to deal with homosexuality. The lesbian or gay man has no role in the family. They have to deal with this role, while they are accused of threatening the family institution. The child who discloses his or her homosexuality often has to face a renunciation, similar to a mourning. Also, exclamations such as "You'll never have a child! I'm not going to be a grandmother" are very common. However, the homosexual person could have children if the law allowed it, if the experts' evaluations, during legal battles or adoption applications, approved his parental competence. But his or her sexuality breaks with the "device of sexuality", the procreative sexuality as developed in the naturalist paradigm. Doubts and fears are raised [23 - 25]. The parents therefore experience shock, negation which can be expressed through hostility, rejection and distance. They feel guilt and shame. If the parent remains at this stage, the relationship with the child will deteriorate. It is therefore recommended that the young person disclose his or her homosexuality only if he or she is prepared and ready to assume this disclosure. Many families who want to move forward, however, enter a restructuring phase. They greatly appreciate information on homosexuality and lesbianism, which allows them to acquire knowledge and to evaluate their prejudices and those of their entourage. Neisen reports that families with support are able to engage in a process of learning and adaptation that can lead to the integration of homosexual identity [28]. This support, often professional in origin, has an interest in presenting itself as knowledgeable about gay issues so that family members can easily turn to it. Support groups are also very popular, because they allow people to share their experiences and to play down the drama. The weight of silence is realised and new friendships can be made. These are valuable in getting through the ordeal and can replace the traditional support network. Furthermore, different stages in the development of gay identity have been identified. They do not necessarily follow one another, are often cyclical, repetitive and a source of back and forth. First, there is the stage of questioning one's sexual orientation. This is a period of confusion, cognitive reorganisation and demystification. Many comparisons are drawn between oneself and heterosexuals, often called straights [29]. One experiences fear, guilt, sometimes shame depending on one's previous education and socialisation. But the discovery of desire can also become a challenging journey. Between heterosexual public life and homosexual private life, one seeks a middle ground, one seeks to express oneself. This is the stage of affirmation. It is often very difficult for a person to identify as gay or lesbian because of prejudices and their socio-sexual path. This person may have been married, is raising children, refuses to be confined by identity categories, and does not identify with the values and representations of the "gay world". However, a certain tolerance is built up as relationships are forged, as acceptance into the homosexual community develops. Lovers' relationships are forged [30]. Experimentation, outings and involvement in the community follow. Pride sets in, as does the conviction to claim one's rights. We assert ourselves, we assert a way of loving: heterosexual men and women no longer have a monopoly on love. The boundaries between straights on the one hand and gays and lesbians on the other are being transformed and renegotiated.

However, several authors qualify the imperative nature of the "coming out", putting a brake on politicised identity. Coming out is not so much a performance, a rite of passage, as a series of rituals, a repetitive process that takes place on cognitive, emotional and behavioural levels [31]. These dimensions also correspond to the types of isolation that the

homosexual person may experience. The aim is to develop an approach that combats stigmatisation and seeks to understand the effects of heterosexism on the experience. Resistance to revealing one's homosexuality comes from the fact that one may not accept oneself well, from an internalized homophobia, but also from the fear of being directly discriminated against. Moreover, this discrimination falls on those close to one's family and on one's children. Moreover, the family and, to a lesser extent, friends and colleagues follow a similar process of disclosure. Coming out of the wardrobe is therefore a risk calculation and depends on circumstances and places; it is full of ambivalence and paradoxes [32].

Thus, not affirming one's lesbianism is a means of adaptation for some as much as of affirmation [33, 34]. By placing too much emphasis on the affirmation of homosexuality as an indicator of good mental health among gays, therapists risk psychologising heterosexism and singling out homophobia [35]. Furthermore, practitioners should consider ways of de-pathologising the taboo surrounding homosexuality and take note of the contradictory demands their clients must meet. Also, as early as the 1970s, therapists from all schools of psychology had recognised the importance of helping homosexuals and lesbians to develop a positive image of their sexual orientation [36]. Validate emerges as the golden word. Also, valuing words, welcoming coping and resistance strategies of people whose realities are obscured. By emphasising the quality of the links that homosexual people form, the worker reveals their power of action, their creativity. The determination of health professionals and psychologists has led to the removal of homosexuality from the list of morbidities [37, 38].

### **The Social Movements**

Punctuated by numerous debates, the saga to de-psychiatrize homosexuality began in 1973 with a vote held at the American Psychiatric Association [39]. It continued until the removal of homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R), the book of diagnostic criteria in psychiatry, when its revised edition was published in 1987. In 1992, the World Health Organisation removed homosexuality from the list of diseases. But this victory would not have happened without the work of grassroots communities and their allies, men and women. The visibility of homosexuals, which confuses gender relations, has varied over time. Until the late 1960s, homophile organisations sought to confer a certain respectability on homosexuals. Through print and radio, they fought against criminal and pathological accusations about homosexuality by developing strategies of assimilation. Their successors reproached them for a certain moralism that was appropriate for the post-war period. Homophiles established networks of relationships, the precursors of lobbies, with politicians, church people and professionals. The artistic and literary world, more open to the liberalisation of morals, remained close to homosexuals and lesbians. However, most of the social life of homosexuals was clandestine, in Québec as elsewhere. Bars were seen as meeting places for experimenting with relationships that transgressed traditional male and female codes. There was also a certain democratization of sexual relations, as the following interview evokes when talking about a Montréal bar at the end of the 1950s: "At the Tropical Room [...] you had the opportunity to meet all strata. I saw a television star there, writers. [...] It was the democracy of sex; you got to see everybody. I had random encounters there that I wouldn't have had otherwise. I danced with a future minister at the Tropical! [...] Monroe [a female impersonator] used to do his shows there, on Sunday or Saturday nights, maybe every night. [...] And the guys were daring; there was a corner [...] in the back where we used to handle each other a bit. It was the place where most things

were done outside the rules. Furthermore, Maheu mentions three factors that have marked the American gay community and its demands [40]. These factors also had an impact on Québec communities. The first factor concerns the effervescent period of contestation of the established order in all its forms, in the 1960s and 1970s. The second factor is repression, where the Stonewall bar raid became a turning point. It was transvestites and transsexuals who sounded the alarm against the police. The demands for a positive identity would henceforth mark the movement, as illustrated by the gay pride parades. In Canada, in 1969, the Omnibus Bill partially decriminalised homosexual practices. In Québec, sexual liberation also benefited from an important catalyst with the national affirmation. In 1977, sexual orientation was included as a ground for non-discrimination in the Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. However, linguistic divisions within the gay and lesbian communities have become more pronounced [41, 42].

The third factor is the advent of HIV-AIDS, which has mobilised public opinion, medical science, health institutions and care practices [43]. Many lesbians who were already working in social and health care are joining gays in the fight against homophobia. The racial and ethnic diversities become more prominent and complete the heterogeneous picture of the homosexual community. The outings of black feminists, Latin American feminists, and gay men without money are shaking up the models put forward by activists, namely white women and men, middle-class citizens whose community ties are not multiple [44]. These critiques will relativise discrimination based on sexual identity, racism and economic exclusion, which are seen as fundamental problems. But the resistance against the anti-gay backlash, stimulated by fear of epidemic, homophobia and the search for blame, remains a priority for activists, and especially as prevention of HIV transmission and responsible virus and the adoption of responsible behaviour depend on it [45].

In the 1980s, the gay and lesbian communities restructured at the national level. Medicine continued to scrutinise homosexuality, especially male homosexuality, through epidemiological research and the discourse on safe sex. But sexual liberation no longer appears to be only an end. A new quest for meaning accompanied this awareness among homosexuals [46, 47]. They are bereaved, in debt, doubly and triply stigmatised, the importance of the network, of families of origin or recreated families, and the validation of emotional and financial commitments becomes even more important. The recognition of same-sex couples is now on the agenda.

On the other hand, the reproduction of the conjugal model, which values monogamy, economic interdependence and mutual support, suggests a hierarchy of conforming gays and lesbians on the one hand, and other members of the community on the other. Furthermore, without reform, this recognition of couples will re-confirm class relations inherent in the current tax system and social programs. In general, gay couples will continue to be better off financially than lesbian couples, and it is not yet clear what the power relations will be between spouses.

In Québec, a bill was unveiled in May 1999 to rectify some twenty statutory laws in order to grant the same rights and duties to women laws so as de facto to grant the same rights and duties to common-law couples, regardless of their sexual orientation. However, this bill continues to discriminate against homosexual men and women who would like to become parents or who are already parents. Even though heterosexual couples no longer form for the sole purpose of procreation, this dissociation between conjugality and parenthood is not institutionalised [48 - 50].

The current bill does, however, establish such a dissociation for couples. But a recent Supreme Court of Canada ruling struck down a section of Ontario's family law legislation that distinguishes between same-sex and opposite-sex couples. This ruling will therefore significantly influence the family legislation of the various Canadian provinces. This calls into question the progressive nature of the Québec project and calls into question a step-by-step activist strategy, even in an area as sensitive as family representations.

In addition, alongside this emergence from the homosexual ghetto by the public clandestinity and the need for anonymity are certainly factors that have contributed to a rationalisation of sexuality, at least among gay men. The cruising environments – bars, saunas, parks, cinemas and restaurants – have developed according to the specialisation and diversification of sexual practices. The ideal of marital sentimentality may be difficult to achieve in the presence of a sexual market, free of emotional “affective ‘constraints’ [51, 52]. Moreover, St-Père and Julien argue that gay men will maintain a higher marital satisfaction if their relationship is open. Gay men usually have an intense sexual life between the ages of 20 and 40 [53].

The drop in activity is said to be part of the myth of youth. Lesbians experience promiscuity in a different way. As with heterosexual women, sexuality and affectivity are usually less separated among lesbians. These lesbians favour monogamy even though they may change partners frequently in their social network. However, for both women and men, there is a relative indifference between active and passive roles and the maintenance of friendships after romantic separations.

### **Intervening with Queers: Some Paradoxes**

It is always risky to make generalizations, especially about populations that remain difficult to reach. Empirical research has been sidelined since the early 1990s, when gay and lesbian studies were institutionalised. Empirical research, often conducted in sociology, aimed to document the oppressed experience of gay and lesbian people. However, this notion of oppression has shifted, particularly under the influence of the work of Michel Foucault [23 - 25]. Also, an important cultural, philosophical and literary current, called queer, born mainly from semiotic and deconstructionist approaches, has aroused the interest of many researchers. A debate is currently raging between moderns and post-moderns, that is, between gays, lesbians and queers. Queers argue that, in order to actualise themselves, they must manifest themselves outside the producer-reproducer, sexuality-creation relationship, outside the binary polarity of patriarchal identities; this is where queers may already be, in an epistemology of desire. Queers therefore reject an essentialist conception of gender and science as an obligatory passage to knowledge. The queer current deconstructs and criticises the liberal politics of modern social movements which, in exchange for rights and protection of minorities, promote rigid identity categories in the public space. “Homosexuality becomes normalized and enters the field of technocratic domination” [54, 55]. Queers therefore argue against the current tolerance of homosexuality, pointing out that homosexuality is tolerated as long as it conforms to a certain model [56]. The ambiguity of the relationship between men and women, gays and lesbians, blacks and whites, rich and poor has been reinforced by the dominant activist discourse. Moreover, transgender, transsexual or bisexual people have been left out of the picture, whereas sexual liberation was about breaking out of the categories of gender and sexual orientation for all. The queer current claims to join the rampant marginality with its overflow of labels, and to transgress the traditional relationship

of representation [57]. Yet, and this criticism is directed at postmodernists in general, how can power relations be articulated without clearly defined political interlocutors? But the question is: for whom, when and how are stable collective identities necessary for social action and change? Do some social movements fear deconstruction? For queers, homosexuality becomes a challenge to itself, not just to heterosexual society [58]. The speakers are thus called upon to question their objectives. Are they their own or those of their clients? To what extent does the pressure to come out not amount to reproducing dichotomies between heterosexuality and homosexuality, in order to conform to what and to whom? Do these dichotomies serve to create therapeutic distance? How can counsellors help the people who consult them to name themselves without fixing them in an identity category? The conception of homosexuality, as well as the ethical approach of the counsellors, makes it possible to accept the love choices of the other, to grasp his or her movement [59, 60]. As we have seen, this conception of homosexuality and lesbianism is based on scientific and militant discourse, and evolves according to the times. It is multiple and decisive for the intervention. In Québec, where courses on homosexuality are just beginning to be given in educational institutions, it remains to be seen how intervention with a homosexual population will develop [60]. Paradoxically, working with queers may require the construction of an ethic that is no longer based on the identity categories of gender or sexual orientation.

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