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Sexual Ethics

*In an attempt to build up a new sexual morality, the first question we have to ask ourselves is not, How should the relations between the sexes be regulated? but, Is it good that men, women and children should be kept in artificial ignorance of facts relating to sexual affairs? . . . Sexual morality, I should say, must be such as to commend itself to well-informed persons and not to depend upon ignorance for its appeal.**

THE “PROBLEM” OF SEX

It is curious that many, if not most, moral matters are referred to as issues, concerns, or questions; only the most troublesome are labeled “problems.” In the minds of generations of people, sexual matters frequently fall within the “problem” category. Until recent years, informed conversations and questions about human sexuality have been hushed at best, and no doubt a large portion of the citizenry wishes that the near silence still prevailed! Even newspapers reported modestly that so-and-so was arrested on a “morals charge.” The public knew what *that* meant; no bank robbery here! Some public media remain modest in this regard.

The uneasiness about sexual issues stems in part from a sense of privacy which holds that some concerns about life are not for public airing or display. A sense of shame has also accompanied much reflection on sex; as an illustration, read an influential 5th century theologian’s words.

Of the shame which attends all sexual intercourse, Lust requires for its consummation darkness and secrecy; and this not only when unlawful intercourse is desired, but even such fornication as the earthly city has legalized. . . . What! does not even conjugal intercourse, sanctioned as it is by law for the propagation of children, legitimate

*Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals* (1929; rpt New York: Liveright, 1970), p. 93.

and honourable though it be, does it not seek retirement from every eye? . . . This right action seeks the light, in so far as it seeks to be known, but yet dreads being seen. And why so, if not because that which is by nature fitting and decent is so done as to be accompanied with a shame-begetting penalty of sin?¹

Augustine was convinced that marital procreation was moral, but the accompanying lust or desires that activate the sexual organs is part of humanity's sinful nature. Successors to Augustine's thought and the various philosophies that shaped his thinking are legion in Western civilization; their legacy has promoted a sense of shame surrounding human sexuality.

CELEBRATING SEXUALITY

THE BRIDE

My Beloved is fresh and ruddy,
to be known among ten thousand.
His head is golden, purest gold,
his locks are palm fronds
and black as the raven.
His eyes are doves
at a pool of water,
bathed in milk,
at rest on a pool.
His cheeks are beds of spices,
banks sweetly scented.
His lips are lilies,
distilling pure myrrh.
His hands are golden, rounded,
set with jewels of Tarshish.
His belly a block of ivory
covered with sapphires.
His legs are alabaster columns
set in sockets of pure gold.
His appearance is that of Lebanon,
unrivalled as the cedars.
His conversation is sweetness itself,
he is altogether lovable.

¹St. Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 1950), book XIV, sec. 18, pp. 466–467.

Such is my Beloved, such is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.

From the Fourth Poem in The Song of Songs 5:10–16, The Old Testament.
The bride's poem is appropriately sensuous, uncharacteristic of later
Victorian ladies!

Add the individual's need for being considered "normal" to possible senses of privacy and shame and sex becomes anything but a dispassionate subject. One viewpoint combining all three feelings (privacy, shame, and insistent normality) is exemplified by Archie Bunker's sexual sophistication: in his view, sex is not to be discussed, sheepish modesty accompanies intimacies, and nobody is more normal than he! For persons unaffected by extremes of privacy and shame associated with sex, normality is a sufficient concern preventing a neutral reflection on sexuality. An insistence on viewing one's own sexuality as the standard for all humanity may invoke all the obstacles to clear thinking: tradition, common sense, propaganda, authoritarianism, generalization, universalization, *ad hominem* arguments, prejudice, and impatience. (See Chapter 2 and consider how these obstacles cloud much thinking about sexual issues.) Another reason sex is a "problem" is the conviction of many persons that sexual morality has become too permissive; the "problem" is reflected in moral chaos.

THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION IN SEXUAL ETHICS

Your answer to "What is the primary purpose of human sexuality?" determines to a large extent your conclusions about sexual normality, naturalness, and morality. Whatever is consistent with your understanding of sexuality's basic purpose will be judged normal, natural, and moral; whatever is inconsistent will be interpreted as abnormal, unnatural and immoral. Four primary purposes represent the contrasting views.

Four Representative Views

Procreation. The position that having babies is the primary purpose of sexual relations is harmonious with Augustine and other medieval scholars' attitudes toward sex. According to this singular objective, only those acts leading to possible conception are normal, natural, and good. Stimulating events leading to a culmination in sexual intercourse may be justified; however, sperm deposited anywhere but vaginally is abnormal, unnatural, and immoral. The typical expression of the procreative view in Western civilization includes these eight assumptions:

(1) seminal discharge defines the essence of sexual intercourse; (2) the only moral function of sexual intercourse is procreation (hence, the emission of semen in any way that in itself prevents procreation is unnatural and immoral); (3) procreation naturally completes itself in the generation of an adult; (4) those who engage in sexual intercourse should provide whatever is necessary to rear any creature they procreate; (5) an unadulterous monogamous marriage is the best environment for rearing offspring to become adults; (6) females are inferior to males; (7) the male acts as the female's governor in marriage; (8) divorce is improper. . . .²

Variations within the procreative view are possible. The removal of assumptions five through eight would allow for an unmarried couple living together to direct their intimacies only to procreation. As doubtful as this may seem in actual practice, it is a theoretical possibility as a variation on the procreative view more customarily limited to marriage.

Procreation and Unitive Affection. A different view combines procreation with "making love" as the primary purpose of human sexuality. Love that unites the man and woman in mutual self-giving is added to procreation to form the integral purpose of sexual acts. Those acts that are not within the context of both unitive affection *and* procreative possibilities are abnormal, unnatural, and immoral.

Western religious views normally require that expressions of love and procreative intent be within a monogamous marriage. However, other interpretations of this norm could justify polygamous and nonmarital contexts. As long as conception and unitive affection constitute the inseparable components of the purpose of sex, various forms of marital and nonmarital applications of the norm are logically conceivable. For example, a commune of unmarried, sexually expressive men and women could utilize this norm as could the more traditional Jewish and Christian communities requiring monogamous marriage.

SEX FOR PROCREATION AND UNITIVE AFFECTION

Now in fact the Church throughout her history has always considered a certain number of precepts of the natural law as having an absolute and immutable value, and in their transgression she has seen a contradiction of the teaching and spirit of the Gospel.

Since sexual ethics concern certain fundamental values of human and Christian life, this general teaching equally applies

²Robert Baker and Frederick Elliston, *Philosophy and Sex* (Buffalo, N Y : Prometheus, 1975), p. 3.

to sexual ethics. In this domain there exist principles and norms which the Church has always transmitted as part of her teaching, however much the opinions and morals of the world may have been opposed to them. These principles and norms in no way owe their origin to a certain type of culture, but rather to knowledge of the divine law and of human nature. They therefore cannot be considered as having become out of date or doubtful under the pretext that a new cultural situation has arisen. . . . the use of the sexual function has its true meaning and moral rectitude only in true marriage. . . . according to the objective moral order, homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality. . . . homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved. . . . masturbation is an intrinsically and seriously disordered act. The main reason is that, whatever the motive for acting in this way, the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside of normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the sexual relationship called for by the moral order, namely the relationship which realizes the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love.

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Catholic Conference Publications Office, issued Dec. 29, 1975); pp. 5-10.

Unitive Affection. Mutual self-giving in interpersonal love is a third primary purpose of human sexuality. "Making love" is the purpose; "having babies" (planned or at random) can occur between men and women but is not integral to the interpersonal union.

This purpose also has contrasting interpretations. One view would limit sexually expressed unitive affection to husband and wife. Other views may accommodate one or more of the following sexual alliances: an unmarried man and an unmarried woman, persons of the opposite sex living communally, persons of the opposite and/or same sex living communally, two individuals of the same sex, husband and wives in a polygamous marriage, and so on. As long as ingredients of interpersonal love are intended and basically present in the relationship, sexual expression is normal, natural, and moral.

Pleasure. A fourth representative primary purpose of human sexuality is pleasure. Neither reproduction nor interpersonal love is the basic goal;

an individual's own concept of pleasure, physical and/or emotional, is sought.

As with the other three primary purposes already represented, variations on this theme are possible, also. An individual may seek pleasure with a total disregard for the "object" or "objects" with whom the sexual encounter is taking place. Or the encounter may include mutual pleasure whereby both or all participants are clearly personal "subjects," not mere objects; but any sense of intentional or actual interpersonal love is not an integral consideration. However one is "turned on," pleasure is normal, natural, and good.

Variations

The four representative primary purposes surveyed do not exhaust the human imagination. They illustrate four familiar basic purposes and their implications for judgments of sexual normality, naturalness, and goodness. Variations on these four might conceivably include integrated, subordinate purposes in many combinations. For example, the purpose of pleasure may or may not include personal mutuality as a secondary feature, as was mentioned in the previous paragraph. Or any of the four representative purposes may or may not include the strengthening of the marital bond as a secondary purpose. It is no wonder that the lay public as well as scholars cannot reach a clear consensus on what is normal, natural, and moral in human sexuality; several philosophies of human sexuality compete with evangelical fervor for our loyalties.

SEX RESEARCH: A HELP TO ETHICS?

The current biological and psychological research into human sexuality is impressive.³ From a purely descriptive point of view, information about human sexuality is enlightening. For example, it has been found that brains may differ in women and men; the extent to which any differences affect behavior is uncertain. Chemical differences have been found when some heterosexual persons are compared with some homosexual men and

³See the articles under the general theme "Sex Research: Where Are We Now?" in *The Humanist* (March/April 1978) and those in the category "Sex Therapy and Sex Research" in the *Encyclopedia of Bioethics*. Also useful are the following books: Eleanor Emmons Maccoby and Carol Nagy Jacklin, *The Psychology of Sex Differences* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1975); Robert May, *Sex and Fantasy: Patterns of Male and Female Development* (New York: Norton, 1980); John Money and Anke A. Ehrhardt, *Man and Woman/Boy and Girl* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1972); Martin S. Weinberg, ed., *Sex Research: Studies from the Kinsey Institute* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1976).

women and also with transsexuals; whether the differences cause or accompany the particular sexual orientation or condition is unknown.

The sexual preference or orientation spectrum ranges from persons exclusively heterosexual to men and women exclusively homosexual; the large category of "bisexual" or "ambisexual" falls between the extremes. Persons are categorized on the spectrum whether or not they have actually had genital relations with anyone; the inclination classifies a person (e.g., as heterosexual) whether or not the individual has had physical contact.

Reports claiming to be descriptive about sexual conditions and practices (ranging from incest to necrophilia, child molestation to adult rape, sado-masochism to celibacy, anal intercourse to cuddling, prostitution to fidelity, virginity to transsexualism, transvestism to nudity, and other topics) add to the data bank of existing varieties in human sexuality. However, normative ethics does not simply affirm the status quo. Instead, moral judgments are made on the basis of what *ought to be*. A claim that "I was born that way" or "I've been conditioned to behave in such-and-such a way" as justification for a particular sexual expression does not satisfy the ethicist. Perhaps you *are* that way, for whatever reasons, but perhaps you *ought* to change! Siamese twins are born requiring surgery; some babies need transfusions at birth; and abnormal and unnatural sexual conditions and behaviors ought, whenever possible, to be corrected.

The dilemma presents a dilemma in itself, valuing some behaviors as normal/natural/good and others as abnormal/unnatural/bad. No one seriously claims that the majority of anything is always automatically normal, natural, and good; a worldwide consensus on any issue simply describes what *is* among beliefs and practices, not necessarily what is good. And so we return to philosophy *not* for the undoubtable Answer, but for the wisdom to understand that any approval or sanctioning of a sexual condition or practice depends heavily on one's answer to "What is the primary purpose of human sexuality?" Disapprovals (including labeling a condition or practice as abnormal/unnatural/bad) and taboos occur when someone or something is inconsistent with a particular answer about sexuality's purpose.

Sex research supplies many data, interpreted in various ways, about the diversity of sexual expression among human beings. Because of their empirical methods, however, descriptive sciences cannot tell us how human sexuality *ought* to be expressed.

HOLY WRITINGS: A HELP TO ETHICS?

"The Bible says . . ." is sometimes intended to settle once and for all whatever issue is addressed. The same intention may be in the speaker's mind who says "The Holy Koran says . . ." or "The Holy Scriptures of Hinduism/Buddhism/Confucianism/ and so on tell us . . ." To each com-

munity of faith, its own writings are inspired, revealed, and/or enlightened. The ethicist is confronted with many claims of "moral truth" by the various world religions (as well as by secular philosophies); most of the faithful appeal to their own holy writings as a major source of objective moral standards. A comparison among them results in contrasting emphases and incompatible conflicts as to the primary purpose of human sexuality.⁴

Within a particular religion there may be significant variations on several important matters: What do the scriptural words mean as intended by the author? Was the author writing for a specific event or historical period, or was he communicating a message literally applicable to all people forever? Are the words in the quotation below binding today on those persons who regard them as scriptural? What did the author intend by this passage?

If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not listen to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and even when they punish him still will not pay attention to them, his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of the town at the gate of that place. And they shall say to the elders of his town, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious and will not listen to us; he is a wastrel and a drunkard." Then all his fellow citizens shall stone him to death. You must banish this evil from your midst." (Deuteronomy 21:18-21)

Or this passage:

Slaves, be obedient to the men who are called your masters in this world, with deep respect and sincere loyalty, as you are obedient to Christ . . . (Ephesians 6:5)

Or this:

Similarly, I direct that women are to wear suitable clothes and to be dressed quietly and modestly, without braided hair or gold and jewelry or expensive clothes; their adornment is to do the sort of good works that are proper for women who profess to be religious. During instruction, a woman should be quiet and respectful. I am not giving permission for a woman to teach or to tell a man what to do. A woman ought not to speak, because Adam was formed first and Eve afterward, and it was not Adam who was led astray but the woman who was led astray and fell into sin. Nevertheless, she will be saved by childbearing, provided she lives a modest life and is constant in faith and love and holiness. (I Timothy 2:9-15)

It is possible to interpret these writings literally as binding on all persons living at the time they were written and for the indefinite future. It is also

⁴See Geoffrey Parrinder, *Sex in the World's Religions* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980); Cherry Lindholm and Charles Lindholm, "Life Behind the Veil: Sexual Codes in the Moslem World," *Science Digest* (Special ed., Summer 1980), pp. 42-47, 106-107.

possible to discover contrasting views on many matters, including human sexuality, in the Bible. In these instances, which passage prevails? A controversial study by a Roman Catholic theological commission includes the following summary of its chapter on "The Bible and Human Sexuality":

The foregoing survey, schematic as it is, demonstrates clearly that the Bible does not provide us with a simple yes or no code of sexual ethics. No single text or collection of texts constitutes anything like a coherent biblical theology of human sexuality. Scripture is not even concerned with sexuality as such, regarding it instead as one aspect of life, properly viewed only within the context of the whole person and the whole of human life with all its relationships and responsibilities.

The Old Testament contains such a plurality of customs, laws, and insights related to sexuality, that no single voice can be said to prevail. Throughout the Old Testament, however, one can clearly perceive the influence of taboos regarding cultic purity and of the patriarchal form of marriage and society. While monogamy seemed to be held up as an ideal state (Gen 2:24), polygamy and, for the male, even concubinage were tolerated. Only adultery with the wife or betrothed of a fellow Israelite was consistently condemned, and this in such a way as to make clear that the reason for the condemnation is to be found not in the nature of human sexuality but in the familial and societal responsibilities owed to members of the same community. The Old Testament view of women ranged from regarding them as chattel (Exodus) or objects of disdain (Sirach) to the affirmation of their personhood (Deuteronomy). Women function in the biblical narratives in a variety of ways from leaders, prophets, and judges to mere sex objects. Recognized as good in itself, sexual activity was condemned when even remotely associated with the fertility rituals of Israel's heathen neighbors. Yet marriage and erotic imagery were often used (Hosea, Cantic of Canticles) to describe the sacred covenantal union between God and Israel.

As in the Old Testament, every statement in the New Testament regarding human sexuality is historically occasioned and conditioned. Jesus did not proclaim any new sexual ethic as such. Of indirect but profound significance for any Christian ethics of sexuality, however, are Jesus' teaching on the essential equality of men and women, his prohibition of divorce affirming fidelity within marriage for both sexes, and the primacy he gave to the law of love; in short, his personalism. Jesus' affirmation of human dignity led him to resist legalistic casuistry and to insist on the "weightier matters" of the Law, namely, its spirit and intent. Jesus humanized the Law in the sense that, for him, it was precisely our joy, our holiness as wholeness, human welfare and well-being, that constituted the will of God.

Jesus' affirmation of human dignity and his attitude toward law resounded in St. Paul, particularly in his championing of Christian equality (Gal 3) and freedom (Gal 4). In opposition to exaggerated asceticism, St. Paul affirmed the goodness and lawfulness of sex (1 Cor 7) but unhesitatingly expressed his personal preference for celi-

bacy in light of the return of Christ in glory, which Paul regarded as imminent. St. Paul's eschatology, the depraved moral climate of his day, and the influence of Stoic philosophy on his thought must all be kept in mind for the correct interpretation of his references to marriage and sex related matters.

Employing the historical critical method of interpretation, contemporary biblical scholarship makes it clear that we cannot validly abstract statements regarding sexuality out of their biblical context and use them as proof texts to validate any twentieth-century theology of human sexuality. It is not that Scripture has failed to answer current problems and questions regarding premarital sexual intercourse, masturbation, birth control, and the like. Our questions simply were not asked by the biblical authors; hence, answers to these questions should not be expected from them.

Looking at the plurality of the statements and attitudes on human sexuality in the Bible, the inconsistencies among them, and the historical circumstances that gave rise to them, critical biblical scholarship finds it impossible on the basis of the empirical data to approve or reject categorically any particular sexual act outside of its contextual circumstances and intention. In view of the weight of contrary historical evidence, anyone who maintains that the Bible absolutely forbids certain forms of sexual behavior, regardless of circumstances, must likewise bear the burden of proof.

This is not to say, however, that the Bible leaves us without ideals or any guidance whatever. Scripture provides us with certain fundamental themes as a basis on which to construct a modern theology of human sexuality. Despite changing historical circumstances and perspectives, the biblical authors consistently give common witness to the nature of God as gracious and loving, and to the ideal of fidelity as a foremost expression of our loving response. While the Bible does not provide absolute dictates about specific sexual practices, it declares that sexual intercourse is good, always to be seen, however, within the larger context of personhood and community.⁵

Because this contemporary study as a whole offers conclusions supporting a "unitive affection" purpose of human sexuality, it represents a shift from the modern Roman Catholic "procreation and unitive affection" stance. "Official" theology has not shifted and has disavowed the Commission's findings. This example of one religious community's diverse philosophy of human sexuality serves to illustrate well the scholarly pluralism within one conservative religious tradition; the Bible itself has not settled once and for all the issues of human sexuality, even for all Roman Catholics. On a global basis we can discover other communities of faith using their holy writings with similar divergencies. The ethicist will discover applications and var-

⁵Anthony Kosnik, et al., *Human Sexuality: New Directions in American Catholic Thought*. A Study Commissioned by The Catholic Theological Society of America. (New York: Paulist, © 1977), pp. 29-32.

iations of the four primary purposes of sex among holy writings but neither unanimity nor an obviously superior presentation of one particular viewpoint.

PLURALISM AGAIN⁶

"Between consenting adults" and "do no harm" are minimal moral standards undergirding most legal and ethical systems. Because four primary purposes of human sexuality (and their variations) are plausible among reasonable people, American social law today is reluctant to enforce one of them as the norm for all citizens. To promote a particular view as the only outlook is to support one faith or philosophy among others, thereby denying a latitude of informed belief intended by American law. Not all local communities are convinced of the legitimacy of such pluralism and its implications, nor have all states and the Congress enacted laws that embody the pluralism we have suggested. If pluralistic sexual philosophies are ever recognized by law, they will no doubt incorporate such moral norms as "between consenting adults" and "do no harm." Pluralism does not foster chaotic license wherein one citizen may impose on another; consent and a freedom from harm are essential for civilized expressions of diverse sexual philosophies.

"Abnormal," "unnatural," and "immoral" as value judgments will acquire meanings according to the particular view of the primary (and secondary) purpose(s) of human sexuality. A particular behavior or act forced on another person or a medically harmful act will be likewise labeled. Such value judgments find justification within the frame of reference of a particular philosophy of human sexuality.

HOMOSEXUALITY: A PERVERSION?

It is not clear whether homosexuality is a perversion, but it seems unlikely. For such a classification would have to depend on the possibility of extracting from the system a distinction between male and female sexuality; and much that has been said so far applies equally to men and women. Moreover, it would have to be maintained that there was a natural tie between the type of sexuality and the sex of the body and that two sexualities of the same type could not interact properly.

Certainly there is much support for an aggressive-passive distinction between male and female sexuality. In our culture

⁶See the discussion of philosophic pluralism in Chapter 2.

the male's arousal tends to initiate the perceptual exchange; he usually makes the sexual approach, largely controls the course of the act, and of course penetrates whereas the woman receives. When two men or two women engage in intercourse they cannot both adhere to these sexual roles. The question is how essential the roles are to an adequate sexual relation. One relevant observation is that a good deal of deviation from these roles occurs in heterosexual intercourse. Women can be sexually aggressive and men passive, and temporary reversals of role are not uncommon in heterosexual exchanges of reasonable length. If such conditions are set aside, it may be urged that there is something irreducibly perverted in attraction to a body anatomically like one's own. But alarming as some people in our culture may find such attraction, it remains psychologically unilluminating to class it as perverted. Certainly if homosexuality is a perversion, it is so in a very different sense from that in which shoe fetishism is a perversion, for some version of the full range of interpersonal perceptions seems perfectly possible between two persons of the same sex.

From Thomas G. Nagel, "Sexual Perversion," *Journal of Philosophy* 66, no. 1 (Jan. 16, 1969).

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SAME-SEX ORIENTATIONS: VARIATION OR PERVERSION?

Popular and scholarly articles and books on human sexuality are available in a new explosion of interest and research. Never before has so much information been gathered and published, and the traditional "marriage and the family" is no longer the only suitable subject for discussion. In 1975 (Sept. 8) the cover of *Time* magazine jolted some sensibilities with its picture of a uniformed member of the armed services captioned "I Am A Homosexual." In March of the same year a psychologist had boldly proposed "Homosexuals May Be Healthier Than Straights" as his essay's title

in *Psychology Today*. To conclude the year, the Episcopal Bishop of New York ordained a professed homosexual woman as a deacon (and early in 1977 as a priest)! The topic, which had been among the most hushed yet joked about aspects of life, became a living ethical issue among the military, psychologists, clergy, and the public at large.

Although it is among the most controversial “problems” in sexual ethics, we have chosen same-sex orientations as a “case study” for several reasons: (1) it is a living ethical issue; (2) much new information is available about homosexualities; and (3) it can serve well as an example of an ethical examination of an emotionally explosive sexual issue.

We shall proceed by reflecting on some obstacles to clear thinking about same-sex orientations, by reporting some information about this human experience, and by reflecting on some ethical implications.

Obstacles to Clear Thinking

Masculinity–Femininity. In Chapter 5 we discussed the masculine and feminine masks that many men and women wear as components of their identities. We should not underestimate the importance of “masculine” appearances and behaviors, as culturally defined, to the American male, who defines his maleness by his “manliness.”

The public has confused masculinity/femininity, manliness/femaleness with being male or female. Actually, one’s genitals have little to do with a man or woman’s masculinity or femininity! According to cultural traditions, certain attributes labeled “masculine” are linked with males and others labeled “feminine” are linked with females. We reinforce our sense of maleness with masculine characteristics and our sense of femaleness with feminine characteristics. These traditional assignments are so precious to us that we often become outraged at males who appear at all “feminine” and, at best, unamused at females who appear too “masculine.” On reflection, we may realize that our hostilities are aimed at any apparent role reversals, such as an expressive male gracefully dancing the ballet or a hard-faced female lifting weights.

Homosexual men range from very “masculine” to “feminine” as do heterosexual men; homosexual and heterosexual women range from very “feminine” to “masculine.” We are as likely to be annoyed at an effeminate heterosexual male as an effeminate homosexual male; we are as likely to be perturbed by a butch heterosexual female as a butch homosexual female. Our animosity exists regardless of who we think their sexual partners may be! “Fag” is shouted at a male’s feminine behavior and appearance even if the name-caller knows the male is sexually active with women. The mistaken association of an individual’s sex or sexual orientation with a person’s degree of masculinity or femininity is an obstacle to clear thinking; if we can

admit to our impatience or anger about alleged “misplaced” masculinity or femininity, we can consider more clearly *the separate issue of sexual orientation*.

Aesthetics. A husband and wife may enjoy many sexual acts, yet one or both of them may find certain other physical expressions disgusting. One’s aesthetic response to sexual expressions is highly individualistic and personal, a matter of taste for the most part. Nibbling gently on an ear may be highly erotic to you, yet revolting to someone else. Yet you would resent it if someone labeled you “sick” because you were stimulated by such contact. We propose that an individual’s condemnation of any act solely on the grounds that it is personally repugnant is an obstacle to clear thinking; one’s own aesthetic response is not the norm for humanity. Sexual expressions between persons of the same sex may be aesthetically pleasing to one individual and revolting to another; therefore, neither person can morally condemn the acts by other than his own response.

Intimacy. Some individuals fear that emotional and sensual intimacy and genital sex are synonymous; they need not be. It is very possible for an adult to deeply love another adult or a younger person of the opposite or same sex without that love being expressed genitally. Buddying, hugging, walking arm-in-arm, even (literally) sleeping together can be beautiful expressions of such intimate mutual affection. If one does not understand that such same-sex intimacies as well as opposite-sex intimacies are healthy, one could panic at one’s own inner emotions or another’s displayed feelings of love; to assume that all persons of the same sex showing emotional and/or sensual *intimacy* are leading one inevitably to genital relations is utterly foolish. The fear that genital contact is the goal of all same-sex affections can prevent some deep relationships of love; such fears can result in a blanket condemnation of in-depth same-sex friendships and a misplaced disapproval of homosexual men and women. In other words, mistaking healthy feelings of love toward friends of the same sex for fears of genital eroticism can evoke confusions; homosexual men and women can become scapegoats for those who are unable to distinguish between intimacy and genital sexuality. Clear thinking is prevented if one fails to make such a distinction.

Other Obstacles. In addition to masculinity/femininity traditions and personal aesthetics clouding a fair consideration of same-sex intimacy, other obstacles are employed by self-appointed moral guardians. One 1977 crusader against homosexuality effectively combined several obstacles and myths to convince much of the public of homosexuality’s alleged menace to the country. This particular moral guardian, totally sincere and committed, proclaimed that innocent children needed protection from recruiting

homosexual predators; holy writings were quoted, *ad hominem* attacks were utilized, and so-called 'traditional American religious and family values' were invoked. Sincerity, an alarming need to protect the innocent, quoted Scripture, character assassination, and appeals to nation, family, and religion are (especially in combination) powerful obstacles to clear thinking; a man or woman who has a public forum can produce mindless responses when these techniques are employed and misinformation is aired.

Building on good intentions, fears, ignorance, traditions, and falsehoods, anyone as wise as a serpent can victimize a large portion of humanity for virtually any cause. When the object of the crusade is homosexuality, such idols of the mind persuade a public ready to vent its rage on an "enemy," real or imagined. We may read newspaper accounts such as "Hunting Gays in Central Park," (in New York City's *The Village Voice*, July 24, 1978), in which these shocking words report:

A gay man claimed he saw the gang clubbing away at another man and shouted, "Why are you beating him?" "Because he's a fag," was the answer. "Just like you." The inquirer didn't linger for a further response. Dialogue was sparse throughout the rampage. Each attack was guerilla-like—swift and without warning. Quick clubbings, then onward to the next target.

One can only speculate about the personal phobic insecurities of individuals who hunt and club unarmed human beings admittedly different in some respects from themselves. Why such hate? Whatever the reasons, homosexual persons have not only been hunted in New York's Central Park but also by Hitler as objects of extermination along with Jews, anti-Nazi intellectuals, Poles, Russians, and Gypsies. The Holocaust, known primarily for its brutal destruction of several million innocent Jews, was also responsible for the annihilation of hundreds of thousands of innocent homosexual individuals.⁷

Information About Same-Sex Orientations

Definition Problems. If someone were to proclaim "I am heterosexual," we would know little about the individual. We may wonder (1) what that label means to the person, (2) whether (s)he is well-adjusted psychologically, (3) if (s)he is celibate or sexually active, (4) whether (s)he has one or more partners inside and/or outside of marriage, (5) what the individual's philosophy of sex is, and so on. We may suspect that at the very least the person is trying to communicate that (s)he is attracted eroti-

⁷See Edward McNall Burns et al., *Western Civilizations*, 9th ed. (New York: Norton, 1980), pp. 862 and 890; Ira Glasser, "The Yellow Star and the Pink Triangle," *New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1975, p. 45; John J. McNeill, S.J., "Homosexuality and Violence," in *The Church and the Homosexual* (Kansas City: Sneed Andrews and McMeel, 1976), pp. 138–141; Heinz Heger, *The Men with Pink Triangle* (Boston: Alyson, 1980).

cally to some members of the opposite sex. We assume that this individual is capable of various important levels of relationships with members of the same sex but that other significant emotional and genital expressions are oriented toward the opposite sex.

If someone were to proclaim "I am homosexual," we would know as little about the individual. The meaning of the label, the individual's psychological adjustment, possible celibacy or activity, partner(s), commitments, philosophy of sex, and so on are unknown on the basis of so little information. We may suspect that at the very least (s)he is trying to communicate that (s)he is attracted erotically to some members of the same sex. We assume that this individual is capable of various important levels of relationships with members of the opposite sex but that other significant emotional and genital expressions are oriented toward the same sex. The recent study *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* suggests that just as differences exist among heterosexual people, one cannot accurately stereotype homosexual men and women.⁸

Bisexuality. We might become very uncomfortable if someone were to disclose "I am bisexual." Men and women who feel oriented toward both sexes defy the neat classifications "heterosexual" and "homosexual." Stereotyping is less possible among these people, and a bisexual (or "ambisexual") revelation may confuse us all the more!

One set of professional definitions may be helpful:

bisexuality: originally a concept of Freud's indicating the belief that components of both sexes could be found in each individual. Today the term is often used to refer to persons who are capable of achieving orgasm with a partner of either sex.

homosexuality: sexual orientation toward persons of the same sex. Not a psychiatric disorder as such.

sexual orientation disturbance: an official diagnostic category for individuals whose sexual interests are directed primarily toward persons of the same sex and who are either disturbed by, in conflict with, or wish to change their sexual orientation. To be distinguished from homosexuality and lesbianism.

lesbian: homosexual woman.

lesbianism: homosexual activity between women.⁹

WHAT ONE HOMOSEXUAL WOMAN WANTS

The only difficulty in being lesbian is the fact of falling perhaps for a woman and not knowing whether she is also gay. This can

⁸See Alan P. Bell and Martin S. Weinberg, *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1978).

⁹Shervert H. Frazier et al., *A Psychiatric Glossary*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Assoc., 1975), pp. 27, 62, 140, 96, and 97.

be tricky and not always turn out satisfactorily. Heterosexuals do not have this trouble. Man meets woman and vice versa, and there is nothing to bar their way if they wish to have an affair. However, when woman meets woman there is an interim period of uncertainty, unless of course one meets with an [homosexual] organisation like Kenric.

I would like to settle down with a woman eventually, someone about the same age as myself with whom I am able to share my life and its interests, becoming part of and sharing hers. . . . I don't like one-night stands—they can be cheap and often one can be hurt. Relationships in the homosexual world should have a time for courting as heterosexuals do. Maybe I am old-fashioned in having this view, but it's the way I see things.

From an anonymous interview in Charlotte Wolff, M.D., *Love Between Women* (New York: Harper, 1971), pp. 264–265.

With these minimal definitions we can communicate in only the most general terms; little is known about men and women to whom these categories apply unless they are individually self-disclosing or are observed at close hand.

Incidence. Among lower animals (such as some birds, apes, and porpoises) homosexual behavior has been observed. In many civilizations past and present and among all classes of society, homosexual behavior has been recorded. The exact number of homosexual or bisexual men and women at any given historical moment is subject to enormous debate and can obscure the ethicist's task. As we have suggested before, what *is* (whether abundantly or scarcely) does not tell us what ought to be.

Causes. Several theories as to the causes of sexual orientations have been advanced: heredity theories propose that sexual orientation is inborn; environmental theories assert sexual orientations are conditioned; and hormonal theories suggest that one's hormone balance fixes a person's sexual orientation. No contemporary researcher suggests that an individual simply chooses at random a location on the heterosexual-bisexual-homosexual continuum. Researchers in the field of human sexuality clearly do not know for sure which cause(s) bring about any man's or woman's sexual orientation, including any one of the same-sex orientations. (The plural is used here because different degrees of same-sex orientations appear to exist among homosexual and bisexual men and women).

Genital Activities. The aesthetic range of physical pleasures is as wide and varied among homosexual persons as among heterosexual people. An act is heterosexual when performed between individuals of the opposite sex and homosexual when performed between individuals of the same sex. There is no such thing as a "homosexual act," only human acts classified according to the participants' sexes. The only impossible act for same-sex participants is vaginal intercourse possibly leading to procreation, which requires male and female partners.

Life Styles. Homosexual men and women are in all walks of life, as are bisexual and heterosexual persons. The bisexual or homosexual ten-year veteran running back (for the San Francisco Forty-Niners, the Detroit Lions, the Washington Redskins, the New Orleans Saints, and the Green Bay Packers) David Kopay wrote:

People are always asking me now about the "three quarterbacks" in professional football who are supposed to be homosexual. First of all, I would never have limited the number to just three. The *Washington Star* said that, not I. I don't know if there are three or thirty. Stiles once told me about making it with several other players, and more than one has come up to me recently and confided, "I'm just a big closet case myself—but right now I can't deal with it."¹⁰

Same-sex inclinations, whether bisexual or homosexual, can be found among athletes (which confounds men dependent on "masculinity" for a sense of manliness), housewives, physicians, soldiers, and so on. No life style is exempt; the diversity is enormous.

One life style, that of unpublicized same-sex couples, experiences some unique restrictions not affecting opposite-sex couples. Two male or two female "lovers" ("lovers" in this context implies a commitment paralleling a marital bond) cannot readily attend family gatherings as an accepted covenanted couple, be invited as a family to weddings or other social events, be observed too often together at the movies or a concert, worship together on a regular basis, refer to themselves as a "couple" or as "we," show strong emotional support in public in times of crisis (family deaths, hospitalization of one partner, and so on), claim legal rights to the partner's estate, visit or make an emergency decision as "next of kin," travel on a family plan, insure a second automobile on a single policy, frequently use each other's cars publicly, publicly share significant birthdays or anniversaries, often go shopping together, obtain a home mortgage together from many banks, greet each other or say goodbye near a visible door or window, receive emotional support from the community when a partner is ill or dies, invite many others (such as co-workers) to a shared home, live

¹⁰David Kopay and Perry Deane Young, *The David Kopay Story* (New York: Arbor, 1977), p. 148.

together visibly in one apartment or house, or readily find a good counselor in the "Yellow Pages" if their relationship needs some support or sorting out. To imagine the social prohibitions on a same-sex couple, heterosexual couples might try to live publicly as a "proper" brother and sister or as a celibate priest in the company of a celibate nun!

A CHRISTIAN BISHOP'S THOUGHTS ON SEX

I believe sexuality to be a mysterious gift by which we are led to love one another. It also is a gift by which men and women are made different and through the exercise of which new persons are brought into the world. Sexuality, the psychologists teach us, invades all our affective lives, all our desires and emotions of love. Its power, some believe, is the same power from which our longings for God Himself come forth. Tradition uses the love song of the Song of Solomon as a paradigm for Christ's love for the Church.

I personally feel that the day may come soon when a responsible homosexual relationship will be seen as not contrary to God's will. However, at this point in time, an official statement or action to that effect would be premature and inappropriate.

Since all of us are still far from understanding the mysteries of personality and theology, it is most important that every part of the Church continue to study, to talk and to pray that we find God's will.

Paul Moore, Jr., *Take A Bishop Like Me* (New York: Harper, 1979), p. 184.

The Right Reverend Paul Moore, Jr. (b. 1919) has been Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York since 1972. Educated at Yale and the General Theological Seminary in New York, Bishop Moore is a trustee of Yale and also author of The Church Reclaims the City.

Cures. If one's philosophy of human sexuality includes procreation integral to the primary purpose of sex, it follows that nonprocreative sexual expressions are abnormal, unnatural, and immoral; within this perspective, same-sex genital expressions are in themselves symptoms of a deviant, immature, or sick personality. Celibacy or a cure of the perversion

would therefore be appropriate. However, changes in actual orientation lack clear documentation. Persons diagnosed as having a sexual orientation disturbance might achieve apparent success in establishing significant heterosexual relationships. This route offers hope to men and women who have been emotionally hurt by unrewarding same-sex relationships, who cannot tolerate society's attitudes toward their orientation, who are plagued with self-contempt rooted in their own incompatible philosophies of human sexuality, and/or who have been psychologically damaged by some pressures associated with their sexual orientation. Successful heterosexual adjustments are most likely to occur among men and women who are to some degree bisexual; their orientation is not necessarily changed, but their same-sex inclinations can be sublimated.

The "unitive affection" or "pleasure" philosophies of human sexuality can accommodate homosexuality as a normal, natural, and moral variation within the spectrum of human sexual behavior. Interpersonal love is the standard for the unitive affection position; pleasure itself for the pleasure philosophy. If as secondary purposes to either philosophy heterosexuality is injected as a "taken for granted" view, homosexuality would not be a variation, but a perversion.

We must recognize, however, that those *philosophies that embrace homosexuality as a variation do not thereby sanction all expressions of same-sex relations*. Likewise, those philosophies that propose only heterosexuality as normal do not sanction every conceivable expression of opposite-sex relations. Heterosexual or homosexual incest, sadomasochism, promiscuity, rape, and so on are not given a Goodhousekeeping Seal of Approval just because the basic orientation is acceptable! What one does with one's heterosexual or homosexual inclinations is a moral matter, and pathologies can be found in either. Within philosophies accepting of same-sex relationships, cures can be sought for those expressions (e.g., injurious sadism) diagnosed as "sick."

Proclaiming One's Same-Sex Orientation

From our study of identity (Chapter 5) we learned that people tend to view themselves and others according to something they do, some label which announces that they do certain things. Some labels seem to imprison individuals in their own eyes and/or in the view of others. Accepting one's identity as a homosexual is as shallow as accepting one's identity as a heterosexual; neither has much depth. Both can accentuate one's sexuality as a preoccupying focus engulfing whatever persons and places reinforce that identity. Accepting one's identity as a unique person or a unique child of God, whose sexual orientation is such-and-such, is another matter; in this view one's genital urges do not determine exclusively one's relation-

ships and life events. Accepting one's sexual orientation, unless it conflicts with one's philosophy, is one thing; elevating it as one's ultimate concern is quite another! To inflict on family, friends, and the public a misunderstood and perhaps repelling same-sex orientation may in most cases include the consequences of being identified from that time on not as a unique person or child of God, but as a homosexual (the most positive label) or as a fag, dyke, queer, and/or pervert. As one sociologist noted:

To "come out" and accept any identity is not freedom but a renunciation of freedom. The ultimate freedom of a human being is to become what he chooses and wishes to become, restrained only by forces that are genuinely beyond his control. There is no alcoholic, heterosexual, or homosexual identity. There are only people who behave in a given manner, at various times of their lives, in some cases over an entire lifetime. The behavior is real, but the identity is an invention. It is an invention believed in so thoroughly by some people that they have become what they were improperly tagged as being.¹¹

To come out of the closet and publicly accept a deviant label is self-limiting, not freedom-giving, in the long run. Regretfully, in our culture we are what we "do," what stands out about us most in the public (or our own) mind. Honesty with one's self and selected others is different from proclaiming insensitively and indiscriminately a self-defeating, superficial label. Some men and women believe that for their own mental health and integrity, they must provide such information; all the consequences of such disclosures cannot be expected to be positive and fulfilling to anyone at this time in history.

Ethics and the Homosexual Person

Those philosophies that take for granted procreation or only heterosexuality as integral to any acceptable purpose of human sexuality would exclude same-sex expressions. Homosexuality does not logically fit within such purposes and therefore would be judged immoral or at best "sick." However, within those philosophies not insisting on procreation or heterosexuality, same-sex relations may be approved by a variety of logically compatible moral standards such as interpersonal love or pleasure among "objects."

¹¹Edward Sagarin, "The High Personal Cost of Wearing A Label," *Psychology Today*, 9 (March 1976), pp. 25-27. See also Lorenzo Middleton and Anne C. Roark, "Campus Homosexuals: Out of the Closet but Not Out of Trouble," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* XXII, 21 (July 13, 1981), pp. 3-4; "How The Military Hunts For Homosexuals" in *Civil Liberties*, no. 338 (June 1981), p. 6.

A SECULAR HUMANISTIC MORAL PRINCIPLE

Sexual morality should come from a sense of caring and respect for others; it cannot be legislated. Laws can and do protect the young from exploitation and people of any age from abuse. Beyond that, forms of sexual expression should not be a matter of legal regulation. Mature individuals should be able to choose their partners and the kinds of sexual expression suited to them. Certain forms of sexual expression are limiting and confining, for example, prostitution, sado-masochism, or fetishism. However, any changes in such patterns, if they are made, should come through education and counseling, not by legal prohibition. Our overriding objective should be to help individuals live balanced and self-actualized lives. The punishing and ostracizing of those who voluntarily engage in socially disapproved forms of sexual conduct only exacerbate the problem. Sexual morality should be viewed as an inseparable part of general morality, not as a special set of rules. Sexual values and sex acts, like other human values and acts, should be evaluated by whether they frustrate or enhance human fulfillment.

From "A New Bill of Sexual Rights and Responsibilities," *The Humanist* 36, no. 1 (January/February 1976, p. 5).

This bill of sexual rights was signed by several humanists as listed with the entire document in The Humanist.

GUIDES TO MORAL SEXUAL CONDUCT

Theologian W. Norman Pittenger has provided a summary of ethical standards for heterosexual and homosexual men and women. From a Christian theological view affirming the basic goodness of sex, he offers food for thought within the "unitive affection" philosophy of human sexuality; those who view the unitive affection philosophy other than in a theological context may discover a usefulness for Pittenger's reflections (just delete the theology!).

1. Whatever one does, in terms of sexual manifestation, is to be an expression of love, rather than an effort to satisfy the merely animal

lusts. Yet we must not forget that those "animal" desires are part of the total human structure, in themselves good, but needing right control lest they get "out of hand."

2. In all sexual activity, coercion and pressure can have no place, for they are a denial of love. This rules out seduction of the unwilling and any form of "rape."

3. Cruelty, whether subtle or vicious, is the denial of love and cannot be permitted. Sadism and masochism are the extreme cases of such cruelty, inflicted either upon others or inflicted (or desired) on oneself: in whatever form these show themselves, they are inhuman.

4. Nobody should be urged into kinds of sexual activity that are offensive to him or seem wrong in his own eyes. Whatever sexual practices are adopted, they must be pleasing to both parties involved.

5. In any and every sexual activity, those who engage in it must accept the responsibility for whatever it entails, whether this is the emotional state of the other person, a child who may result from that contact, or anything else. We cannot contract out of this responsibility without showing ourselves callous, indifferent, hence inhuman and unloving. To attempt to contract out is to deny our responsible manhood and to cut off the possibility of growth.

6. For most people, most of the time, in most places, the usual way of finding sexual satisfaction will be through a commitment in married life. That commitment will arise from love one for the other; the sexual activity, in the physical sense, will then be an expression and a strengthening of the love they share. There will be some (in actual figures, a considerable number) whose only way of sexual expression is homosexual, with another person of their own sex. In their case, the aim should be at establishing a relationship with another that will be as permanent as possible, marked by the same qualities of commitment, mutuality, giving-and-receiving, union, and tenderness, as will be found in the heterosexual relationship.

7. When a man or a woman "sins," sexually speaking, by actions which deny his faithfulness, mutuality, commitment, tenderness, etc., he may be restored to the path of proper and healthy growth. Ultimately, this forgiveness is from the divine Lover whom we call God; that Lover accepts the "sinner" in the confident hope that through the influence of divine grace (i.e., the empowering possible to those who open themselves to, and ask for, continuing love) something good may be won, in spite of what has been wrong in the past. Proximately, forgiveness is through acceptance in love by other human beings, who surround the "sinner" with their concern and provide opportunities for him to make a fresh start.

8. In sexual life, as everywhere else in man's existence, he is part of society. Hence any decisions he makes, any good that he achieves, any failures that he makes too, affect others and seriously influence the social life. Thus one must ever be mindful of the wide-range consequences of actions for which one decides.

9. In any and every yearning really to love, really to be open to another's love, God is present and God is at work. This tells us that

no human being should be *afraid* to love or *fearful* of accepting love. At the same time, since God as Love seeks always the right growth of his human children, their proper movement toward fulfillment, their genuine "making" of personality in social intercourse, this also tells us that we need to be alert to his "guiding." The "guidance" of God is not dictation nor verbal direction; it is found when a man keeps his eyes open, uses his head, and thus sees opportunities for good opening before him. One of those opportunities is given when he meets another with whom he can share life. Yet the sharing of life itself demands that one shall be loyal, controlled, ready to sacrifice for the other—even to sacrifice what may appear attractive possibilities of sexual contact with a third person. And it is right there that love demands more even than control: it demands difficult decisions of a negative sort, precisely in order that the earlier positive decision for the loved one may be maintained.¹²

Each philosophy has its own spokespersons and moral rules or guides. Pittenger is but one example of one particular philosophy. A challenge for decades to come will be the clarification of our capacity to accommodate reasonable philosophic pluralism in our laws so that justice¹³ is accorded to men and women whose informed faiths differ about sex; perhaps someday, sex will be less of a "problem" and more of an issue about which we can agree to differ.

INTEGRATING SEX AND LIFE

The basic problem of sex today is what it always has been—to integrate it properly into the whole of life. We have erred in the past by imposing undue restrictions. Since we found it hard to accept sex as a real and proper part of life, we made it a kind of disreputable relative who had to be acknowledged, but was admitted through the back door and had to live in the cellar. No wonder that we have had not only revolt, but a constant emphasis, by well-intentioned but mistaken people, that sex is necessarily wholesome and good.

Today, the problems of sex arise mainly not out of undue restrictions, but from the assumption that sex can run "hog-wild" without being significantly related to the rest of our lives. Sex is hereby dissociated from its relationships to, and its effects upon, the values and goals of our society. We fail to understand that sex is part of the total personality structure. . . .

The task of the educator and the religious leader is not to beat

¹²W. Norman Pittenger, *Making Sexuality Human* (New York: © 1970 United Church Press; © 1979 the Pilgrim Press), pp. 87–89.

¹³See chapter 15 in this book, pp. 317–338.

the drums on behalf of a misguided liberalism, or to seek a resurrection of the past taboos. It is, instead, to help people, young and old, to fit their sex interests and behavior into a total and constructive concept of self and life, and to develop the moral standards that are required by valid personal, social, and lasting goals. We rightly begin by discarding the fictions that still delude us; but before us lies the far greater task of developing those deeper insights that will enable us to make sex a happy and meaningful part of our lives.

From Sylvanus M. Duvall, "Sex Fictions and Facts: A Social Scientist Destroys Some Myths," *Look Magazine*, 24 (April 12, 1960), pp. 47-48, 52.

Sylvanus M. Duvall (b. 1900) has taught in the fields of the social sciences and religion at George Williams College since 1933. His specialty is in family and marriage relations, and his writings include Before You Marry; Men, Women, and Morals; and The Art and Skill of Getting Along With People.

CHAPTER REVIEW

A. The "problem" of sex

1. For generations, sexual matters have been viewed within the "problem" category of life.
2. Privacy, shame, and individual senses of normality combined with obstacles to clear thinking and fears of permissiveness contribute to the view of sex as a problem.

B. The fundamental question in sexual ethics

1. "What is the primary purpose of human sexuality?" is the fundamental question in sexual ethics.
2. A particular answer to this question implies a standard for normality, naturalness, and morality.
3. Four representative views are procreation, procreation and unitive affection, unitive affection, and pleasure.

4. Variations on the four representative views are possible in several combinations.
5. Several possible philosophies of human sexuality prevent a clear consensus on what is normal, natural, and moral.

C. Sex research: A help to ethics?

1. Sex research supplies many data, interpreted in various ways, about the diversity of sexual expressions among human beings.
2. Because of their empirical methods, descriptive sciences cannot tell us how human sexuality *ought* to be expressed.

D. Holy writings: A help to ethics?

1. The ethicist is confronted with many claims of "moral truth" by the various world religions as well as by secular philosophies.
2. Most of the faithful appeal to their own holy writings as a major source of objective moral standards.
3. On a global basis, we can discover the various communities of faith using their respective holy writings with much diversity; unanimity within a religion or among religions cannot be expected.

E. Pluralism again

1. Because four primary purposes of human sexuality (and their variations) are plausible among reasonable people, we are faced again with pluralism.
2. Pluralism does not foster moral chaos, but rather broad legal boundaries among civilized people.

F. Same-sex orientations: Variation or perversion?

1. We have chosen same-sex orientations as a "case study" because it is a living ethical issue, much new information is available about homosexualities, and it can serve well as an example of an ethical examination of an emotionally explosive sexual issue.
2. Obstacles to clear thinking include confusions about masculinity and femininity, aesthetics, intimacy, and other obstacles.
3. Hatred of homosexual human beings has led to many murders of homosexuals by gangs and by Hitler.
4. Labels such as "heterosexual" or "homosexual" reveal little about a person; just as differences exist among heterosexual people, one cannot accurately stereotype homosexual men and women.

5. "Bisexual," denoting men and women who feel oriented toward both sexes, can also be a confusing label.
6. Researchers do not know for sure which cause(s) bring about any man's or woman's sexual orientation.
7. Sexual acts are classified according to the participants' genders; there is no such thing as a "homosexual act."
8. Homosexual men and women are in all walks of life, as are bisexual and heterosexual persons.
9. Same-sex couples experience many unique restrictions not affecting opposite-sex couples.
10. The degree of normality, naturalness, and morality of homosexual orientations and expressions depends on one's answer to the fundamental question in sexual ethics.
11. Philosophies that affirm homosexuality as a variation of human sexuality do not necessarily approve all expressions of same-sex relations.
12. A general announcement of one's homosexual orientation will probably, at this time in history, result in one's being perceived primarily as "gay" instead of as a person; however, for their own mental health, some homosexual men and women choose to "come out" publicly.

G. Guides to moral sexual conduct

1. Theologian Norman Pittenger has suggested a summary of ethical standards; his view is within a "unitive affection" philosophy and may be useful, minus his theological convictions, to humanists, as well as to those of a Judeo-Christian faith.
2. Perhaps someday, sex will be less of a "problem" and more of an issue about which we can agree to differ.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Baker, Robert, and Elliston, Frederick. *Philosophy and Sex*. Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus, 1975.

The essays in this book cover such topics as an analysis of our vocabulary about sex; the pros and cons of promiscuity, monogamy, and birth control; the meaning of perversion; adultery; feminism; and abortion.

Boswell, John. *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1980.

Yale historian Boswell shows that Roman Catholic Europe of the Middle Ages was not hostile to homosexuality and that there were centuries when the church accepted and even canonized homosexual persons; the origins of opposition are also explored.