

compromising nature of successful espionage—and the fact that records of such operations belong to a nation's most secret and inaccessible files—will keep the full truth from being known for decades if not generations. Only the breakdown of society's taboos could genuinely alter the situation—and perhaps deprive a few homosexuals of the motive for mastering an exceedingly dangerous but sometimes psychologically and financially rewarding profession.

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ETHICS

Ethics may be defined as a body of moral principles which are capable of application to human conduct. The term also designates the branch of philosophy that studies such principles.

In recent times the general ethical upheaval in Western civilization occasioned by the decline of Christianity and the rise of relativism has substantially eroded the earlier consensus on ethical norms. The resulting pluralism and openness has had a leveling effect, making it possible for such formerly marginalized groups as homosexuals to have their concerns addressed on the same plane of seriousness as the mainstream. Nonetheless, the lingering sense of guilt that afflicts some gay men and lesbians may foster a gnawing sense that they are somehow deficient in ethical responsibility.

It is a notable fact that homosexuals, a stigmatized minority, nonetheless remain basically law abiding and respectful of the rights of others. They scarcely live in the profligate state of "unconditional self-surrender to the immoral" that is the caricature of the hostile ignoramus.

Ethical Dilemmas of Homosexuals. Few ethical questions are pertinent to homosexuals alone, but several need to be considered as they are of frequent occurrence in daily life.

Older analyses of the matter contain discussions about whether it is right to engage in homosexual activity at all. Those who take this position almost invariably base their arguments on some particular tradition of religious rigorism or asceticism. In the sense that human sex organs make the behavior possible, homosexuality is not unnatural; nor is it per se injurious. It is a reasonable assumption, in view of the collapse of the earlier consensus rooted in Judeo-Christian precepts, that the censorious view that homosexual acts are in and of themselves unethical will continue to recede in prominence and plausibility.

But once this negative and anti-humanistic approach is discarded, other concerns arise. For the practicing homosexual or lesbian, maintenance of the closet—the age-old habit of hiding heterodox sexual preferences—poses a challenge. Should one refrain from coming out to one's parents in order to spare them stress, or will they benefit from the disclosure in the long run? Should an individual refuse to take his lover on a holiday visit to his parents in order to save them emotional turmoil? Is the obligation to live a truthful life higher than the duty to avoid causing others distress? Should one reveal one's sexual identity to blatant homophobes, or to personal enemies who may use the fact to one's patent disadvantage? To what extent is it ethical to "pass" at all? In the heyday of gay liberation in the 1970s it was often maintained that every gay person's obligation is to come out. However, there is general agreement that coming out remains in the last analysis a personal decision; it is wrong to reveal someone else's homosexuality without his or her consent (this reservation is sometimes termed "closet rights").

Then there are issues of fairness to sexual partners. Some commentators grounded in conservative religious traditions hold that sexual conduct is only permissible with a partner to whom one has pledged lifelong fidelity. Such a conclusion is for the most part binding only within the context of a larger commitment to a religious tradition. Setting this restriction aside, other questions crowd in. Given the sexual pluralism to which many gay men are accustomed, are they not especially prone to sexual **objectification**? Is such objectification necessarily immoral in and of itself? What about "cheating" on partners? If one has been engaging in "extramarital" sex, what precautions must one take to protect one's regular partner from possible exposure to venereal disease? In practice questions of this kind can often be resolved by frank discussion with the partner, or in some settings by an implicit mutual agreement. Thus if two men meet at a gay bathhouse each can assume that the other has no reservations about sexual objectification.

It is difficult to say whether one should attempt to formulate a broader code of morality for homosexuals. Even this structure would probably be best accommodated in the larger framework of the values of the society. For example, in traditional China it was believed that each individual has a duty to his ancestors to produce offspring. The toleration of homosexuality that existed there reflected the fact that this precept was generally honored. Thus in China a homosexual ethic might include a concession to spending at least part of one's life in heterosexual marriage, a concession that Western homosexuals feel no obligation to make.

University courses in ethics rarely consider homosexuals and their distinctive problems, and extrapolations may be difficult. Further, homosexual writers and organizations—apart from religious groups—tend to neglect this realm. Even psychological questionnaire studies on truthfulness and honesty pose queries that

make virtually every homosexual seem to be living in a world of duplicity and moral unreliability. Fusing with existing prejudice, this outcome has led some hostile observers of the gay lifestyle to the mistaken conclusion that the homosexual is trapped in a maze of concealment and deception that makes him a dubious confidant or employee.

This neglect of ethics on the part of gay organizations is in part a legacy of the ignorance of earlier decades followed by the "anything goes" mentality of the 1960s, but it may reflect a deeper sense that morality is a matter of personal privacy and judgment, or of justifiable diplomacy in private life. Admirable as such restraint may be in principle, it tends to leave the young person in search of guidance with only slender resources. In practice one may obtain some help from a sympathetic counselor, but the value of such advice depends on the competence and insight of the giver.

Research Problems. A different set of problems arises in connection with social-science research conducted on homosexual subjects. In order to obtain optimal samples, modern techniques require random selection of the members of the survey "universe," with replies from all or almost all of those queried. In speaking to those who are planning to vote in an election for president this goal is not difficult to achieve, but with a private (even for some persons still taboo) realm such as sexuality the obstacles are almost unsurmountable. In the course of his research for a monograph on *toilet sex, Tea Room Trade* (Chicago, 1970), Laud Humphreys noted the licence plate numbers of the patrons (who had come by car) and, after tracing them, interviewed the participants in their homes. Although the names were not disclosed, some other scholars felt that an invasion of privacy had occurred. In the 1980s concerns were raised about the ethics of testing new drugs for AIDS. With increasing sensitivity among researchers to ethical practices with human subjects,

inappropriate procedures are likely to be subjected to vigorous criticism and subsequent corrective action—at least in democratic societies.

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ETHNOLOGY

See Anthropology.

ETHNOPHAULISM

This rare term (coined by Abraham Roback) serves as a useful designation for the chauvinistic practice of human groups to attribute the origin—or at least prevalence—of social failings to neighboring groups or peoples. Thus we speak of German measles, of taking French leave, and of going Dutch. In former times Italians blithely dubbed syphilis the *mal francese* (or *morbus gallicus*), while Frenchmen returned the compliment with their *mal florentin* (or *mal de Naples*).

In the case of homosexual behavior, ethnophaulism is not only a type of group slander, but it also reflects a curiosity to trace the custom to its purported source, in keeping with "popular diffusionism," which overlooks the possibility that such behavior patterns are human universals. Thus, in eighteenth-century England, when native homosexual behavior had been documented for centuries and when important innovations seem to have been occurring in the conceptualization of homosexual acts, the fashion continued to ascribe the custom to Italy.

Divided as they were into many competing city states, the Greeks were given to ascribing unusual sexual predilections to neighboring, but distinct Hellenic groups, as well as to foreigners. Ostensibly special proficiency in fellatio obtained among the inhabitants of the island of Lesbos (its association with female homosexuality became commonplace only in comparatively recent times) and the alien Phoenicians. At various times unusual fondness for pederasty was remarked in

Crete (Plato and others held that the institution began there), at Sparta, Chalcis, and the island of Siphnos. To become blatantly homosexual was sometimes called "taking ship for Messalia," after the ancient Greek colony on the site of modern Marseille, which perhaps acquired its renown through propinquity with the notoriously homosexual Celts. The Scythians, northern neighbors of the Greeks, were associated with a particular type of effeminacy. Among a basically tolerant people such as the Greeks, these ethnophaulic appellations have more the character of a bemused chiding than harsh reproof, much as we would say today "X is German and likes to work hard," or "Y's Scottish background makes him thrifty."

In the first century B.C. the Roman writer Cornelius Nepos seems to have been the first to describe pederasty simply as "Greek love." The Romans themselves were often charged with special devotion to the "posterior Venus" with various wordplays on the palindrome Roma = Amor.

In later times in Europe there were various expressions associating sodomy with Italy. In 1422 the Zurich *Rat- und Rechtbuch*, a legal text, designated the practice by the verb *florenzen*, suggesting that the city of Florence had developed a particular reputation in this regard. Pierre de Brantôme (ca. 1540–1614) described the fashion for lesbian liaisons in sixteenth-century France with the Italian phrase "donna con donna" (lady with lady). At the courts of Louis XII and XIV male homosexual proclivities were traced to Italy, as in the Sun King's sarcastic comment "La France devenue italienne!" In England Sir Edward Coke (1552–1634) thought that Lombard bankers had introduced sodomy in the late Middle Ages, while in the eighteenth century Italian opera was held to be a source of new infection. Ironically, Mussolini was later to reject a proposal to criminalize homosexuality in his country on the grounds that its practice was limited to rich foreign tourists. The rural