

See also **Authoritarian Personality; Discrimination; Myths and Fabrications; Stereotype.**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.** Gregory Herek, "Beyond 'Homophobia': A Social Psychological Perspective on Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 10 (1984), 1-21; idem, "Violence Against Lesbians and Gay Men: Gaybashing, Public Policy, and Psychology," *American Psychologist*, 44 (1989), 948-55; Kenneth Plummer, *Sexual Stigma: An Interactionist Account*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975; Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present*, London: Quartet, 1977.

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### HOMOSEXUAL (TERM)

For at least half a century *homosexual* has been the most generally accepted designation for same-sex orientation. The cognate forms enjoy a similar status in all the major Western European languages, and in others as well (e.g., Russian and Turkish). Etymologically, the word homosexual is a hybrid: the first part, homo-, being the Greek combining form meaning "same"; the second (late) Latin. (The mistaken belief that the homo-component represents the Latin word for "man" has probably contributed to resistance to the expression among lesbians.)

The term homosexual began its public life in two anonymous German pamphlets published by Károly Mária Kertbeny in 1869. (He used the term in private correspondence a year before.) *Homosexual* probably owed its inspiration in part to the term bisexual that had been introduced into botany in the first decade of the nineteenth century with the meaning "having the sexual organs of both sexes" (of plants). Writing in opposition to a proposed extension of a Prussian antisodomy law to the whole of the North German Confederation, the writer was by no means a disinterested observer. A polyglot and translator (not a physician as usually

claimed), Kertbeny contrasted *homosexual* and *normalsexual*. His coinage might have gone unnoticed had not Gustav Jaeger, a lifestyle reformer and professor of zoology and anthropology at the University of Stuttgart, popularized it in the second edition of his *Entdeckung der Seele* (1880). Thus the term homosexual was not born under the aegis of pure science as one might suppose, but was the creation of a closeted advocate of homosexual rights. It is a curious irony today that some gay liberationists of the second half of the twentieth century oppose the word homosexual as a label imposed on them by the enemy.

In the period of its introduction, Kertbeny's term had to compete with other German creations, notably Karl Heinrich Ulrichs' *Urnigum* and *Uranismus* (uranianism) and K. F. O. Westphal's *die conträre Sexualempfindung* (contrary sexual feeling). Given its obscure origins, why did the term homosexual ultimately prevail? Uranian and its congeners enjoyed currency for a time, but were too arcane for the ordinary speaker, while the antonym Dionian (= heterosexual) never achieved the slightest acceptance. Westphal's cumbersome expression was doubly isolated: it was usable only in German and lacked the matching terms of the series. By contrast, the set *homosexual/bisexual/heterosexual* that finally emerged seemed to encompass (and trisect) the semantic field. Moreover, the abstract nouns *Homosexualität/Homosexualismus* which Kertbeny also devised served to denote the condition. All these forms, being grafted onto the trunk of the Latin adjective *sexualis*, had no difficulty in gaining international currency. And so in the first decade of the twentieth century—in the course of reporting the Harden-Eulenburg-von Moltke-Städele affair in Wilhelmine Germany—journalism adopted the Greek-Latin hybrid *homosexual* and made it part of the everyday vocabulary, while the expression *sexual inversion* remained limited to psychiatric circles.

Thus it was under the name homosexuality that the subject became known to the general public at the time when the German sexual reform movement founded by Magnus Hirschfeld was beginning its long campaign to change the law and public opinion in favor of those whose sexual activity was still stigmatized and outlawed under the name of **sodomy** or crimes against nature. The tireless activity of Hirschfeld and his associates consolidated the status of the word among professionals (physicians, sexologists, psychiatrists, and psychoanalysts) and among the public at large.

In English-speaking countries some controversy has arisen over the question as to whether the word homosexual is both a noun and an adjective or an adjective alone. Behind the seeming pedantry of such grammatical quibbling lies a conflict between those who claim that homosexuals are a "people," or at least a stable minority, and others who insist that there are no Homosexuals, only homosexual acts, which individuals—who should not otherwise be labeled—elect from time to time. John Boswell has persuasively traced this difference back to the medieval philosophical dispute between the realists (or essentialists) and the nominalists. However this may be, the first position (homosexuals as a people) may lead to separatism, the second (individuals engaging in elective behavior) may counsel integration. If homosexuals really are profoundly different they should form separate institutions; but if, despite the negative stereotypes with which they have been burdened, those engaging in homosexual behavior remain in the last analysis "just folks," they may look forward to fitting in as lefthanders, say, have done. Here we enter the realm of the homosexual concept, on the one hand, and that of political strategy, on the other, with the battleground the sense of identity.

Whatever one may think of the battle of the essentialists and the nominalists, which has been much waged in con-

temporary debates on **social construction**, it does not seem likely that the use of the word homosexual as a noun will be extirpated. The English language has no Academy to dictate such matters of usage. And in Romance languages any adjective may be used as a noun without special permission.

Existentially, for any human being to affirm "I am a homosexual" is both an act of courage and an acknowledgment that this attraction is a central element in one's personality. In other times and climes, sexual orientation seems to have been or is relatively labile and peripheral. In Western society, however, where the term engenders strong and often negative emotional responses from the general public and from those wielding power over homosexuals' lives, there are many who feel subjectively that homosexuality—or gayness—is a crucial personal attribute. What role words, as tools not invented by those to whom they refer but given to them and wielded against them, may play in the reinforcement of this perception is hard to determine, but one cannot deny the bearers of such sentiments the right to express them.

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## HOMOSEXUALITY

In the sense used in the present Encyclopedia, the term homosexuality embraces the entire range of same-sex relations and affections, male-male and female-female. Some writers prefer to restrict the terms homosexual and homosexuality to the male, while female-female relations are designated **lesbianism**. Since there are in fact significant phenomenological differences, a good case can be made for separating the two phenomena. In ear-