

## HOMOSEXUALITY

But I don't care what they say And I don't listen to people Who say that all actors are gay Not that I don't think that's OK As far as I'm concerned Although it's not my bag If you wanna be a fag Be a fag y'know? Who am I to say Where you come And where you go<sup>88</sup>

Here is another topic surrounded by bigoted nonsense. Why people can't just mind their own business and live and let live is beyond me. Living a fairly closeted childhood, I first became aware of homosexuality as an issue in the 1970's when the Naked Civil Servant<sup>89</sup> was shown on television. My reaction was that of initial curiosity, followed by the conclusion that although it wasn't for me, what was all the fuss about?

I guess it is a combination of the usual suspicion and fear of anything people struggle to relate to – like black skin, turbans etc. – and the disgust engendered by Leviticus and other religious scripture. It is a vile sin, end of story. But herein lays the essence of the problem. It is a sin because supposedly sacred texts say it is. Why? Because it is, so there! No rationale; just small-minded prejudice.

Religious homophobia has a huge influence on people's attitudes. It is just one strand of my antithesis to faith schools. Michael Cashman MEP, who played one of television's first gay characters, Colin in Eastenders, has made the following point:

“Within faith schools we are still getting a message of anaesthetised hatred – ‘we don't hate these people but they are not equal’. If that is said enough, it softens the brains of young people and that's so dangerous. And it's a message echoed by sections of press.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> From Mitsubishi Colt by Tim Minchin. <sup>89</sup> Quentin Crisp's autobiography, the same title, is still worth a read. <sup>90</sup> Reported in a BBC News Magazine article entitled Is Gay Bashing on the Rise?

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A recent report by the gay rights group Stonewall<sup>91</sup> found that bullying of gay pupils rose significantly in faith schools. I wonder what queer-bashing kids grow into as adults. Onward Christian soldiers perhaps.

Just what is the problem with homosexuality? If you don't like celery, then don't eat celery. But you cannot label everyone who then eats celery as weird/evil/perverted, can you?<sup>92</sup>

The problem rarely seems to be with someone loving someone else of the same gender – loving in the sense of the emotional bond and mutual dependence between two people who care about each other. It is, after all, unreasonable to knock such positive feelings, isn't it? So instead we are asked to focus on things that can be seen as stomach turning and threatening by those of a sensitive disposition. Yes, I am referring to cocks in bums.

At this point you may be recoiling in horror, and those of you tainted by religion are probably uttering a quick prayer of contrition for even reading such words. Alternatively, you may be chuckling to yourself. But in either case, why? It is a patent absurdity to be personally threatened by anyone else's gender orientation. Be threatened by a rapist or a paedophile, not a homosexual.

Personally, I will admit to being somewhat anally retentive. I don't like anything near my bum hole (other than my right hand and loo paper) in much the same way that I hate people touching the soles of my feet. But I have no problem with other people enjoying their feet, or their rings, being tickled, their toes being sucked and/or their anus being rimmed and probed. Whatever floats your boat.

Another strange thing is that many heterosexual men find the idea of bugging a sexy woman very appealing. I am not totally sure, but I don't think the Bible has anything to say about this particular sexual permutation. But is there any significant difference between fucking a female arse compared to a male arse? Am I missing something?

Personally, I find it a little odd to want to shove your cock in any shitty hole, but especially when there is a nice pussy just inches away. But hey! Each to their own. And who am I to deny the pleasure patently enjoyed by most willing buggerees? Many men often view women that enjoy it up the bum as some sort of 'holy grail'. As Ali G pointed out to

<sup>91</sup> Reported in The Independent on 13/01/2010.<sup>92</sup> I have to confess to being a celeriphobe – it makes me want to vomit!

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the Beckhams, football crowds chanting 'Does Victoria take it up the arse?' can actually be construed as a compliment. Respect!

The bigots get so hung up about these things that they seem to assume that every gay man wants to bugger them. How conceited can you get? Do they think every heterosexual woman fancies them? Do they think every heterosexual male wants to fuck their wife? Some are so small- minded, deluded and arrogant that they possibly do!

This focus on buggery is presumably the reason for the much greater tolerance of female homosexuality. In fact, show me a heterosexual man who says he doesn't/wouldn't enjoy watching lesbian sex, and I will show you a liar or religious bigot in denial. It is such a visual feast, that few men can fail to be aroused. Visual stimulus is highly important to men. Maybe this is why godly

scripture, while often raging incandescently about male-on-male action, feels no need to condemn the girl-on-girl equivalent.

This allowed our lawmakers, who (historically at least) based their judgements of right and wrong on the Bible, to completely overlook consent laws for lesbians. These same lawmakers had no problem discriminating against gay men though. It is not that long ago that their age of consent was reduced from 21 to 18 yrs old – still two years older than for heterosexual girls. Just look at the mindset of these old fart lawmakers – they have no problem with girl-on-girl action; girls (their daughters) cannot consent to heterosexual sex before 16 yrs old, but boys (their sons) technically can; and boy-on-boy action is a real no-no. What inconsistent nonsense.

There is, of course, a line of argument that sees homosexuality as abnormal and even unnatural. If we were all to become homosexual, then we would, indeed, become extinct within a generation. This is one line of argument the bigots like trotting out. But it has a couple of pretty obvious flaws. Firstly, people do not ‘become’ homosexual and, secondly, homosexuality is perfectly natural.

On the first point, psychiatric and psychological research around the world tends to be pretty much unanimous. Most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation. It exists as part of the whole spectrum of human sexuality from exclusively heterosexual through to exclusively homosexual, via a mid point in the spectrum that

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would be completely bisexual. As such, sexual orientation is seen to be generally impervious to attempts to change it.<sup>93</sup>

This is not to say that there is an even distribution of people along this spectrum - far from it. It is certainly not the bell curve that represents a statistically 'normal' distribution. This would infer that bi-sexuality would be the norm. It would, perhaps, be nice if it were so that more people could enjoy 'the best of both worlds'.

Estimates of the occurrence of exclusive homosexuality vary considerably from one study to the next. It is a notoriously difficult topic to elicit frank, honest responses on. I have found estimates ranging from 0% to 20% of the population. The truth inevitably lies somewhere in between. Surveys over the last 20 years in the UK, however, seem to yield pretty consistent responses around the 6% mark. Figures for the U.S. tend to be around 4%. Remember, this is for people claiming to be exclusively homosexual.

Far more people will have had some degree of bisexual experience. In the UK, a 2008 poll revealed 13% of Britons have had some form of sexual contact with someone of the same sex (kissing or threesomes included)<sup>94</sup> but do not identify themselves as homosexual. Add on people who may have had homosexual urges or feelings, but not acted on them, and you can certainly imagine a figure of 20% being realistic.

The 0% figure is the patently anomalous one. This figure comes from Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, during a speech at Columbia University in 2007. He insisted that there were no gay people in Iran. He is, of course, wrong!<sup>95</sup> It may not be cock up his arse, but that is probably due to his head being up there already!

Whatever the figures, the reality is that sexual orientation is part of who we are, in a similar way that hair colour or body shape is. There is no rationale for persecuting ginger hair or rotund people, but the ignorant do so nonetheless. The fact that sexual orientation tends not to emerge until puberty and may not be identified until much later gives scope for some people to conclude that there is an element of choice, or even that indoctrination might be involved.

Ironically, it is the ‘indoctrinaires’ of the church that most often suggest this.

<sup>93</sup> [www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html](http://www.apa.org/topics/orientation.html) Answers to Your Questions About Sexual Orientation and Homosexuality. American Psychological Association.<sup>94</sup> Sex uncovered poll: Homosexuality. Guardian.<sup>95</sup> New York Times article of 30/09/2007 entitled Despite Denials, Gays Insist They Exist, if Quietly, in Iran by Nazila Fathi.

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In the narrow-minded and bigoted world we live in, homosexuality would not be a rational choice. This is why virtually everybody I know to be gay has had periods of torture and denial to cope with before coming to terms with the reality and ‘coming out’<sup>96</sup>.

This business of coming to terms with your own sexuality when it is different to what you are surrounded with must be difficult at best, and it is little wonder that it can prove traumatic. I think that one way in which it is even harder than it is for other minority groups (such as ethnic and racial groups) is that most people are brought up in heterosexual environments. The vast majority of parents will be, almost by definition, essentially heterosexual. Add to this the levels of ignorance and hostility towards homosexuality in many communities and it becomes easy to see why the adolescent homosexual finds it difficult to know where to turn for support, understanding and role models.

I guess that there must be several stages to go through in terms of the awakening and coming to terms with ‘being different’ in terms of one’s sexuality. Based on people I know and have spoken to, as well as things I have read, most homosexual people would not have been aware of their sexuality at all before puberty, although some claim to have had an awareness of being different in some

way. Puberty is the time for sexual awakening for all of us.

In terms of coming to terms with one's self, the ease of this must depend on your circumstances. However liberal and open your family and friends are, there must still be difficulties in coming to terms with being different. By your teenage years it must be obvious to everybody that heterosexuality is the norm and that homosexuality attracts bigotry and hostility. This is why, I suspect, many enter a period of self-denial. By the end of puberty – young adulthood – we all generally know who and what we are. So, what next?

The next stage must be sharing the realisation with others. If anyone of any sexual disposition is ever going to experience satisfying relationships in their life, they cannot deny or hide their sexuality forever. So, at some stage there must be a 'coming out' to your nearest and dearest. Again, just how easy this is will very much depend on your circumstances.

<sup>96</sup>The term 'coming out' seems to stem from the use of the term 'closeted' for people that choose to keep their homosexuality away from other people. Thus, those that decide to disclose their sexuality to others are thereby 'coming out of the closet'

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How this phase goes will probably determine how quickly and easily going the 'whole hog' is and deciding to live openly without feeling the need to shy away from the truth of your sexuality. I would hope that this would not be the hardest step in this day and age.

There are not many circumstances where a person's sexuality and sexual preferences are of any relevance whatsoever. Modern legal statutes make it increasingly difficult to negatively discriminate on

the basis of sexuality. Indeed, many large organisations undertake positive discrimination in favour of all sorts of minorities and demographics to ensure their organisations reflect the national demographics (and tick all the boxes on their Investors In People application – but that is another load of bull I might come back to).

In some ways it is a sad reflection that some people feel uncomfortable about sharing their sexual disposition with the world, but I would fully defend their right to do so. As I said at the beginning of the chapter, it really is nothing to do with anyone else at all. So the practice of ‘outing’ people has to be seen as utterly despicable in most circumstances.

The exception to this would be with people who display homophobic attitudes in public while indulging in homosexual activities in private. Research<sup>97</sup> suggests that around 80% of homophobic men have homosexual tendencies to some degree. It supports long held theories that homophobia is often indicative of repressed, self-loathing homosexual feelings; and that they use their public homophobia as a smokescreen for their own homosexual activities.

In this situation, groups like OutRage! and their supporters, such as Peter Tatchell, feel justified in outing these people. It is justified in the following terms:

- The gay community is entitled to defend itself against homophobia of any sort.
- Homophobia from closet gays is particularly indefensible on the grounds of hypocrisy and the additional harm caused by not only under-representing the size of the gay population, but in the duplicity and bigotry exhibited by members of that population.
- Such behaviour is often most damaging from people in positions

of influence who out of (often misguided) self-interest are <sup>97</sup>

The biggest study appears to have been undertaken by Prof. Adams at the University of Georgia in the 1990s – reported in an article entitled Most Homophobes are Gay at [www.ipce.info](http://www.ipce.info) and in the US Journal of Abnormal Psychology, in 1996.

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prepared to pervert their authority to harm other gay people to protect their position.

I accept these arguments. I hate hypocrisy more than just about anything. Outing in these circumstances is going to make people face up to their hypocrisy and is therefore likely to be in everybody's long-term interests. The “outing” of ten gay bishops in 1994 forced the Church of England to begin a serious dialogue with the homosexual community for the first time. It has heralded a period of critical self-evaluation by the Church that has significantly changed attitudes to gay clergy and led to a wider review of attitudes to issues like women clergy. The whole establishment has been forced to become more circumspect with regard to overtly homophobic attitudes.

Thus, in exceptional circumstances, outing can very definitely be a catalyst for good. Following the outing of the Bishops, hypocritical, homophobic, closet gays in politics, business, the military, the judiciary and the police will need to tread more carefully. This should not be a threat to closet gays in general – just the hypocrites among them that need to reconcile their homophobic personas with their homosexual dispositions. Enough said.

Moving on to another thorny aspect within the nature versus nurture debate, there are some legitimate questions as to how a

genetic propensity for homosexuality can persist. The answer to this can be found in the journal *Evolution and Human Behavior*<sup>98</sup>. The authors of a 2008 study revealed that there is considerable evidence that human sexual orientation is genetically influenced. What is not known is how homosexuality, which tends to lower reproductive success, is maintained in the population at a relatively high frequency. They hypothesised that genes predisposing to homosexuality could confer some advantage in heterosexuals who carry them.

The research into this hypothesis showed that masculine females and feminine men exhibit two relevant traits. Firstly, they are more likely to be non-heterosexual (gay or bi-sexual). Secondly, when heterosexual, they tend to have significantly more opposite-sex partners. I can certainly

<sup>98</sup> *Evolution and Human Behavior* vol.29 pg 424-433 entitled Genetic factors predisposing to homosexuality may increase mating success in heterosexuals by Zietsch et al.

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relate to effeminate guys I know who seem to have constant strings of female partners.

It is possible to imagine all sorts of psychological issues involved in these trends, but most pertinent would appear to be the subliminal inferences that a relatively effeminate male makes a more attractive mate from the point of view of likely contributions to child rearing perhaps. This could also be behind the ever-growing body of evidence that homosexual couples are at least as good as heterosexual couples when it comes to parenting<sup>99</sup>.

All this merely confirms that a tendency towards homosexuality is

perfectly natural. Indeed, a growing body of research reveals that homosexual and bisexual behaviour are widespread in the animal kingdom<sup>100</sup>. Would you believe that homosexual behaviour has been witnessed in close to 1500 species and is well documented in around 500 of them?

Some of the behaviour witnessed would boggle even the most liberal of minds. (That has aroused your curiosity, hasn't it? Perhaps that is why the book referred to in the footnote is out of stock at Amazon as I write!!) Just to give you a little flavour of the rich diversity out there, how about gay whales fucking their partner's blowholes! The whale song afterwards translates, I speculate, as 'I'm forever blowing bubbles'!! Perhaps this is also what generated the slogan 'Nuke Gay Whales for Jesus'<sup>101</sup>.

The motivations for and implications of homosexuality in nature are far from fully understood. But what is clear is that there is much greater sexual diversity in the animal kingdom – homosexuality, bisexuality, masturbation and all manner of non-reproductive sex – than the scientific community has yet studied in any detail and far more than the religious bigots would be prepared to accept.

Having said this, there have been homosexuality-embracing human societies at various points in history and dotted around the world. For example:

<sup>99</sup> See Wikipedia article on LGBT parenting. (LGBT = Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender)<sup>100</sup> A particularly impressive review of the subject can be found in Bruce Bagemihl's encyclopaedic book (almost 800 pages) entitled *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*.<sup>101</sup> The phrase was coined to offend as many people as possible in one fell swoop in an irreverent parody of trendy political causes. Makes for a great t-shirt!

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- In pre-colonial Africa, women in Lesotho engaged in socially sanctioned lesbian relationships, known as 'motsoalle'. The Azande warriors of the Congo routinely took young men into their households as home helps and to shag when wanting sex without the risk of a pregnancy. The first recorded homosexual couples in history were depicted in ancient Egypt.
- The indigenous people of the Americas had a form of same-sex spirituality centred on the concept the Two-Spirit individual. Overtly homosexual and transgender individuals were common and accepted in Latin American civilisations including the Aztecs, Mayans and Quechuas. Indeed, the Spanish conquerors (Catholics) were so horrified by such open practice of sodomy; they crushed it with stiff penalties that included public execution by burning or being torn to pieces by dogs. What else would you expect from good Christians?
- In eastern Asia, homosexuality has been recorded throughout history. It is an integral part of monastic Buddhist life and the Samurai tradition in Japan. In Thailand, Kathoey (more commonly known as 'ladyboys') have been a feature of society for many centuries. Thai kings are known to have taken male as well as female lovers.
- Attitudes to homosexuality were quite liberal in ancient Greece and ancient Rome. Plato equated the acceptance of homosexuality with democracy and its suppression with despotism in his Symposium. All Roman emperors, bar Claudius, are known to have taken male lovers. Renaissance Italy was renowned for widespread same-sex relationships – although frowned upon by the (Catholic) authorities.

- In Persia (modern day Iran) public displays of homosexual and homoerotic expression were common in the Middle Ages. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism has pushed it ‘back into the closet’ with Iran, along with Muslim nations Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Mauritania, Sudan and Nigeria, now being among the only 10 countries with the death penalty in place for same-sex intercourse.
- In many Melanesian societies, especially Papua New Guinea, homosexuality has been celebrated. Until the middle of the last century, the Etoro tribe, for example, regarded homosexuality as a preferable state to heterosexuality. In some tribes, young boys

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would be paired with older adolescents as mentors who would ‘inseminate’ the young boys to ‘help’ them achieve puberty!

So, here in western ‘Christian’ societies (Europe and USA) our attitudes to the natural phenomenon that is homosexuality tend to be inconsistent, bigoted and riddled with unnecessary guilt and anxiety. Things may be changing slowly, but it can still be painful to watch. There is even some evidence that gay bashing may be on the rise in parts of Britain.<sup>102</sup>

I was amazed to find that Catholic Poland was one of the first countries to de-criminalise homosexual acts, back in 1932. It took until 1967 for the UK to follow suit, just after the Scandinavian countries.

Prohibiting discrimination has been even slower. Quebec was the first place to legally ban discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, in 1977. Most developed countries caught up in the

1980s and 1990s, but the situation is still grim in many parts of the world. The war against narrow- minded bigotry is still to be won.

There is current uproar about Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Bill, going through its parliament as I write, in early 2010. It is the most draconian attempt at fascist legislation since God knows when (he says with deliberate irony). It has been encouraged by local Christian leaders and funded, according to Peter Tatchell<sup>103</sup>, by US evangelical ministries. So, just what are these nice Christian folk proposing?

The bill before the Ugandan parliament proposes the death penalty for "aggravated" and/or "serial" homosexuality. Aggravated homosexuality is defined as gay sex involving under 18s or disabled people, or by anyone with HIV, irrespective of condom use. Serial homosexuality is having same sex relations more than once. Life imprisonment used to be the more lenient punishment for same-sex intercourse, but that is now the fate for anyone caught indulging in any form of homosexual behaviour, such as kissing or holding hands, or even living together in a same-sex (but possibly sexless) marriage. Condoning or promoting homosexuality will get you five to seven years.

<sup>102</sup> BBC News Magazine article entitled Is Gay Bashing on the Rise? There was an 18% rise in reported attacks in the East End of London in the summer of 2009. The police claimed that this partly reflected improved relations with the gay community making them more comfortable in coming forward and reporting incidents.

<sup>103</sup> See Peter Tatchell's letter, on behalf of OutRage!, in the Jan/Feb 2010 edition of New Humanist under the heading 'Witch Hunt'.

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Why, oh why, oh why? They are not far from a 'final solution' to

eradicating the perceived menace. Sound familiar? Hopefully the international community will get its act together sooner rather than later this time around. But then again, I expect we will see the Christian and Muslim fundamentalists sitting on their hands on this one, much as the Roman Catholic Church, and others, sat on their hands when faced with the Holocaust.

Welcome to the asylum of the universe.