

## ***Liberating Sexual Desire***

**Everyone is potentially bisexual; the struggle for lesbian and gay equality is about the right of all people to share the joy of same-sex relationships without guilt or anxiety, and without the fear of prejudice and discrimination.**

Q: What's the difference between heterosexual and homosexual sex? A: A few inches of flesh.

Perhaps that is a slight over-simplification. However, to reject out of hand the idea of falling in love with someone of the same sex is surely irrational and illogical. It just doesn't make sense to automatically exclude the possibility of emotional and sexual relationships with half the population. Nevertheless, that's exactly what a majority of people do, and it's lesbians and gay men who pay the price for their sexual phobias and repressions. We have to suffer the devaluation and denigration of our lives in order that those heterosexuals who are anxious about their own sexual identity can feel secure and superior in their exclusively opposite-sex relationships.

Thankfully, most lesbian and gay people are more generous than these heterosexual supremacists. Our suffering has taught many of us the virtue of compassion and understanding. We are thus fighting for homosexual equality not only for our own sakes, but *also* for the sake of heterosexual men and women. For they, too, are diminished by the system of sexual apartheid which preaches the supposed superiority of heterosexuality, and which seeks to justify itself as 'normality' and 'human nature'. Exclusive and compulsory heterosexuality is neither of these things. Nor is it humane or civilised: it requires the perverse suppression of all sexual feelings towards people of the same sex.

The struggle for sexual liberation is ultimately about the right of *all* people to express the full range of emotional and erotic desires – both heterosexual and homosexual – which are intrinsic to the human condition.

The radical wing of the lesbian and gay movement has always had a vision of a sexually emancipated society in which the bisexual potential of all people is recognised and accepted. It's a vision of a future where individuals no longer feel the need to repress their attraction to people of the same sex, and where everyone feels free to express their homosexual desires without being racked by guilt and humiliated by discrimination.

Is that really such a shocking idea? If not, why is society so hung-up about people 'promoting' and 'flaunting' their homosexuality?

Perhaps it's because, deep down, even arch homophobes recognise that the human capacity for emotional tenderness and sexual fulfilment is not limited to male-female relationships. Indeed, the hysteria against homosexuality is an implicit acknowledgement of the fragile and tenuous nature of exclusive heterosexuality. After all, if same-sex relations really are so unnatural and loathsome, why do they have to be negated and repressed by the combined forces of parliament, police, press, and pulpit? And why does heterosexuality have to be so vigorously promoted

with special privileges, such as the monopoly of moral validity and financial and legal advantages?

The anti-gay bigots are right. A positive affirmation and acceptance of lesbian and gay sexuality is likely to lead to an increase in the proportion of the population having same-sex relationships – not necessarily for their entire lives but certainly for significant periods. The number of people who are exclusively heterosexual and exclusively homosexual would probably decline. For the majority, bisexuality would become the norm.

Where's the evidence for this suggestion? Despite heterosexual proselytising, and the vilification of homosexuality, same-sex relations are *already* incredibly common.

This is borne out in research by Kinsey, Masters and Johnson, Pomeroy and others. Their findings suggest that in western societies about:

- \* 10 per cent of the population is exclusively or predominantly homosexual.
- \* 15 per cent are bisexual for all or part of their lives.
- \* 25-35 per cent have at least one homosexual experience leading to orgasm during their lifetime.
- \* 50 per cent experience emotional attraction and / or sexual arousal towards people of the same sex.

If homosexual desire is this widespread in a homophobic society, imagine how much more common it would be in a gay-positive culture. With the cultural taboos removed, nearly everyone would savour its delights.

And why not? Shouldn't people be free to choose their sexual partners? Shouldn't their choice be respected? After all, there's no rational reason why exclusive heterosexuality should be the majority sexual practice. With artificial insemination by donor, the argument that we need heterosexuality to reproduce the human species is no longer tenable. Even if there was never again a single act of heterosexual intercourse anywhere in the world, the perpetuation of new generations could readily be assured by the technique of donor insemination (all it takes is a willing woman, some donated sperm and a teaspoon! ).

The liberation of heterosexuality from the function of human reproduction, together with the equal validation of homosexuality, would mean that sexual free will could at last triumph over biological necessity and social repression. As a result, male-female relationships would become more of a conscious choice and a rational pleasure, rather than a traditional expectation and moral obligation. Same-sex love would cease to be a minority desire and instead find expression in most people's lives.

The creation of a society which celebrates fluidity, ambiguity and diversity is in everyone's interest. Without it, prejudice and repression will continue to thwart enlightenment and emancipation to the detriment of human happiness. With it, free ranging desires can transcend the exclusivity of the hetero /homo divide to the erotic and emotional enrichment of us all.

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